

# Visionary Mapping: Cartography in William Blake's Networks, Poetry, Visual Art, and Reception

Two Volumes

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## Abstract

This thesis relates the visual-verbal art of William Blake (1757-1827) to the history and theory of mapping. From half-sketched London sites to expansive mappings of the entire cosmos, Blake exhibits a persistent, if agonistic, impulse to map the world around him.

Although eccentric, Blake's cartographic imagination was far from isolated in the culture of his day. In this study, I characterise Blake's spatial thought as by turns cartographic and anti-cartographic, positioning him as both a participant in and a critic of eighteenth-century mapping practices. Perhaps owing to the idiosyncrasies of Blake's mythography, neither Blake scholars nor map scholars have sought fully to understand his cartographic imagination. Blakean worldmaking is habitually othered, which has the effect of upholding Blake's reputation as a Romantic isolationist existing somehow outside of time and space. Attempting to bring Blake back down to earth, I characterise him as a fundamentally networked figure, focusing on his demonstrable connections to the cartographic culture of his day. In doing so, I hope also to open up little-explored literary and artistic byways in the history of cartography.

The cartographic aspects of Blake's work have arguably survived and thrived to a greater and richer extent in the creative reception of his work than has been acknowledged in Blake scholarship to date. I turn to this reception in the final chapter of this thesis, tracing the afterlives of Blakean mapping within contemporary networks of small-press and independent publishers in London. These individuals and groups have often been highly attuned to the cartographic affordances of Blake's work, carrying forward Blake's "golden string" in ever-evolving mappings of an ever-evolving London.

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## Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and that I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

An earlier version of the section on Plate 57 of *Jerusalem* (Chapter Three) was published as "Forming the Fluctuating Globe': Weaving Women and Corporeal Cartography in Blake's *Jerusalem*," *VALA: The Journal of the Blake Society*, 2 (2021): 104-7. Other articles extending but not substantially repeating material from Chapters Two and Three have been published in *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* ("Diagrammatic Blake: Tracing the Critical Reception of 'The Mental Traveller,'" *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 54, no. 4 (2021): 30 paragraphs) and *Literary Geographies* ("Mapping Bunyan, Mapping Blake: William Blake's Anti-Cartographic Imagination," *Literary Geographies*, 9 (2023): 69-100); these are cited in the thesis where relevant. An article reproducing edited sections from Chapter Four ("Blake and Independent Publishing in London: A Chronology," "Blakean Exhibitions," "Counterculture and DIY," "Independent Blake?" and "The Politics of Space and Place") is currently under review for the journal *Publishing History*.

Several of the interviews cited throughout Chapter Four have been published, in edited form, on Jason Whittaker's blog *zoamorphosis.com*; see my author page on the website: "Caroline Anjali Ritchie," *Zoamorphosis*, accessed November 3, 2022, <https://zoamorphosis.com/author/carolineritchie/>.

## Introduction

Maps are best understood as works in progress.<sup>1</sup>

Here on the banks of the Thames, Los builded Golgonooza,  
 Outside of the Gates of the Human Heart, beneath Beulah  
 In the midst of the rocks of the Altars of Albion. In fears  
 He builded it, in rage & in fury. It is the Spiritual Fourfold  
 London: continually building & continually decaying desolate!  
 (William Blake, *Jerusalem* 53: 15-19, E 203).<sup>2</sup>

William Blake was not in the business of making easily navigable guides to an easily navigable world. His depictions of physical space and place are bewildering often to the point of conjuring, to use Saree Makdisi's formulation, seemingly "impossible landscapes."<sup>3</sup> They are constantly shifting in their terms and forms, themselves the objects of "continual building & continual decaying," as Blake describes the emergent mythical city of Golgonooza in the lines quoted above from *Jerusalem*. These lines are typical of Blake's use of geographical tropes: despite the apparent clarity of the deictic "Here," pointing to a recognisable landmark ("the Thames"), Blake enfolds into his mapping of Golgonooza both human anatomy ("the Gates of the Human Heart") and a vast and mythic geographical plane ("the rocks of the Altars of Albion"). The weirdness of Blake's geographical imagination seems a far cry from a normative definition of "the map" as a "stable and fixed" (and principally graphic) object, a characterisation that Matthew Edney finds to be typical of statements about the nature of cartography when understood as a consistent ideal.<sup>4</sup> Instead, Blake self-consciously presents his maps as always already incomplete and continually evolving—as works in progress.

In this study, I propose that Blake, in all his weirdness, does indeed engage in a process of mapping and, concomitantly, in a self-conscious enquiry into some of the problems and

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Edney, *Cartography: The Ideal and Its History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 40.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to works by Blake follow David V. Erdman's edition of Blake's works: William Blake, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, rev. edn, ed. David V. Erdman (New York: Anchor Books, 1982). Citations will be given in-text, including plate numbers and line numbers where relevant, followed by a page reference to the Erdman edition (preceded by "E," common practice in Blake scholarship).

<sup>3</sup> Saree Makdisi, *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 240.

<sup>4</sup> Edney, *Cartography*, 74.

potentialities of mapping as he saw it practiced in his day. What might be called Blake’s “cartographic imagination” is also in a strong sense *anti*-cartographic, advancing a serious critique of the onto-epistemological and political dimensions of eighteenth-century mapping practices that Blake would have encountered. It will be illuminating to compare, even briefly, Blake’s above-quoted lines and eighteenth-century maps and plans of London such as those by John Rocque (1746) (figure 1) and Richard Horwood (1792-99) (figure 2), both often seen as era-defining examples of “Enlightenment” cartography.<sup>5</sup> Blake’s mappings self-consciously seek to unsettle, whereas Rocque’s and Horwood’s plans, with their neatly gridded lines and smooth geometries, seek to rationalise. Through such feats of anti-cartographic cartography, Blakean mapping can be said to anticipate or reach out towards the sociocultural critiques of maps advanced in recent decades by the likes of marxist and poststructuralist theorists especially—often leading to what Martin Brückner has called the “maps are bad syndrome.”<sup>6</sup> However, I argue, Blake was deeply immersed in the cartographic culture of his day, and his visionary mappings often find intersections and analogues in contemporary maps. In fact, far from rejecting mapping outright, Blake seems to have been drawn to its potentialities as a means of modelling and, in the process, of effecting both mental and actual transformation in the world.

In its broad conception, this study has four main aims. These are:

- to bring Blake into dialogue with recent efforts to “rethink” the nature of maps and mapping,
- to historicise Blake by situating him and his work within networks of maps and their makers,
- to elaborate a critical reading of Blakean mapping, and
- to trace the legacy of Blakean mapping in the work of creative practitioners up to the present day.

The first aim listed here calls for sustained engagement with the marxist- and poststructuralist-inflected debates of the last few decades, as well as more recent strides in, for instance, anthropology and ecophilosophy.<sup>7</sup> Since many of the insights and puzzles

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Matthew H. Edney and Mary Sponberg Pedley, ed., *The History of Cartography, Volume 4: Cartography in the European Enlightenment* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 1569-72.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Brückner, “Beautiful Symmetry: John Melish, Material Culture, and Map Interpretation,” *Portolan*, 73 (2008): 30.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Robert Kitchin, Martin Dodge, and Chris Perkins ed., *Rethinking Maps* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

emerging from these debates are with increasing frequency being brought to bear on (and are in the process often nuanced by) art- and literary historical studies, this thesis is also energised by engagement with scholarship across both fields.

Central to all these aims is an understanding of mapping as situated across a networked set of people, places, texts, and practices. I believe that Blake's texts actively encourage this conception and that a network framework accordingly befits an attempt to map the networks in which those texts participate. In this, I draw upon aspects of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), as chiefly theorised by sociologist and historian of science Bruno Latour and as developed upon and debated by numerous respondents and interlocutors, such as Michel Serres and Tim Ingold. While these theories do serve the strongly internalist orientation of the central chapters in this thesis, they are also compatible with the historical focus of the study, as I situate Blake's texts within some specific networks of mapping and map-making.

The phrase "visionary mapping" is intended to tune into a tension in Blake's work between idealist rhetoric (the stuff, one might suppose, of "vision") and materialist practice ("mapping," understood as a set of practices, from inscriptional to gestural, that attempt to represent or model particular spatiotemporal relations in the world). Blake's own often idealist-sounding rhetoric, I propose, has been at the root of a tendency among Blake scholars, which is gradually going out of fashion, to view Blake as an idealist with a wish to transcend fallen time and space and to escape to Golgonooza or indeed to Eden. Blake's mappings may not be easily navigable in a narrowly literal sense, but they certainly and vehemently assert themselves as being of this world both in the basic fact of their materiality and in their frequent reference to real times and places. In contrast to idealising Blake scholars, more recent scholars such as Matthew Green, the title of whose *Visionary Materialism* (2005) is echoed in my own title, have begun to explore similar tensions in Blake.<sup>8</sup> Several poets and artists have also picked up on this doubleness in Blake's work, allowing the two elements to coexist, as we see for instance in the title to Sophie Herxheimer and Chris McCabe's Blake-inspired book, *The Practical Visionary* (2018), which I discuss in Chapter Four, where I explore the manifold afterlives of Blakean mapping.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew Green, *Visionary Materialism in the Early Works of William Blake: The Intersection of Enthusiasm and Empiricism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Sophie Herxheimer and Chris McCabe, *The Practical Visionary* (London: Hercules Editions, 2018).

## Historicising Blake

This PhD project arose out of conversations taking place in the lead-up to and following the recent blockbuster Blake exhibition held at Tate Britain (*William Blake*, September 11, 2019 – February 2, 2020). Since its original conception as a Collaborative Doctoral Partnership hosted by Tate Britain and The University of York, the intention of the project was to re-examine Blake’s status as an isolated, self-sustaining genius and to investigate the historical networks in which he and his work participated. Mapping has supplied a particularly rich opportunity for such enquiry, not least for its capacity to bring Blake down to earth in quite a literal sense. Moreover, as I propose in the final chapter of this thesis, mapping and networks are twin through-lines from Blake’s life and work to that of Blake-influenced creative practitioners to this day, which allows for fresh enquiry into Blake’s posthumous reputation. In all these regards, the project is intended to build upon the historically oriented direction that Blake studies have taken in recent decades.

The “idealist Blake” described above was the hero of many late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Blake scholars, from William Butler Yeats and Edwin Ellis in the late nineteenth century to Northrop Frye in the 1940s and Kathleen Raine over the course of the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> But the mid-twentieth century also saw the appearance of David V. Erdman’s landmark historical study *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* (1954), which was long lauded as the most thoroughgoing attempt to situate Blake’s poetry and art in relation to contemporaneous history and politics.<sup>11</sup> Just over thirty years later, the editors of *Critical Paths: Blake and the Argument of Method* (1987) still saw Erdman’s study as comprehensive: “in one book, Erdman fully establishes the historical dimensions of Blake’s art and the political commentary pervading it.”<sup>12</sup> Although not strictly a dedicated Blake study, E. P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), which built upon

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<sup>10</sup> See William Butler Yeats and Edwin Ellis, *The Works of William Blake* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893); Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947); Kathleen Raine, e.g., *Blake and Tradition*, 2 vols (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) (originally published 1969).

<sup>11</sup> David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954).

<sup>12</sup> Dan Miller, Mark Bracher, and Donald Ault, ed., *Critical Paths* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 6.

Erdman's observations, had also done much to expand knowledge of Blake's historical situatedness.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the '80s, a welter of post-structuralist and linguistically minded studies of Blake appeared, epitomised by Nelson Hilton's *Literal Imagination* (1983) and Robert N. Essick's *William Blake and the Language of Adam* (1989), which were internalist in focus and tended not to take such an interest in placing Blake alongside eighteenth-century primary sources.<sup>14</sup> It was not until the following decade that "New Historicist" approaches, chiefly conceived by scholars of Renaissance literature, began to seep into the field of Blake studies and Romanticism studies more generally. The '90s saw the publication of Jon Mee's *Dangerous Enthusiasm* (1992), with E. P. Thompson's own study of Blake following closely on its heels (1993), followed by a volume entitled *Historicizing Blake* (1994), and, a few years later, *Blake, Politics, and History* (1998).<sup>15</sup> Such studies are probably best described as generally "historically oriented," as opposed to "historicist," since it was not their aim to present Blake's work as being absolutely determined by a history conceived as internally unified, as what Walter Benjamin famously called "homogenous time."<sup>16</sup> The '90s was a fertile time indeed for historically oriented Blake studies, which went some way in dismantling the earlier characterisations of Blake as being somehow outside of space and time. However, in 1998 Nicholas Williams identified a still-persistent disagreement between two schools of Blake studies: the "social" and "intellectual" camp, with which his own study was aligned, and the more "aesthetic" or internalist camp, "who would interpret his poetry as an internally coherent, largely mental and necessarily ahistorical triumph."<sup>17</sup>

Scholars have increasingly recognised the ways in which Blake writes *himself* into history and in fact thematises the notion, as Williams writes, "that thought and culture are

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<sup>13</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963).

<sup>14</sup> Nelson Hilton, *Literal Imagination: Blake's Vision of Words* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California and London: University of California Press, 1983); Robert N. Essick, *William Blake and the Language of Adam* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> Jon Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); E. P. Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Steve Clark and David Worrall, ed., *Historicizing Blake* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994); Jackie DiSalvo, G. A. Rosso, and Christopher Z. Hobson, ed., *Blake, Politics, and History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in his *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Fontana/Collins, 1982), 263.

<sup>17</sup> Nicholas Williams, *Ideology and Utopia in the Poetry of William Blake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

historically conditioned.”<sup>18</sup> The social and historical motivation has continued to secure its foothold in the twenty-first century. The publication of Saree Makdisi’s *Impossible History* (2003), which examined Blake’s relationship to and departures from what Makdisi saw as a “hegemonic” current of radicalism during the 1790s, was an especially formative moment in twenty-first-century Blake Studies. In terms of Blake’s historical networks, Sarah Haggarty’s *Blake’s Gifts* (2010) instructively mediates between close readings of Blake’s depictions of gift transactions in his work and the social function of Blake’s work within his networks of patrons and friends, analysed through the prism of theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, and Marcel Mauss.<sup>19</sup> The ongoing persistence of a sociohistorical impulse is attested for instance by the more recent volume edited by Haggarty, *William Blake in Context* (2019), which included Mee’s article on “Networks,” Makdisi’s article on “London,” and numerous articles on Blake’s relationship to “History, Society, and Culture.”<sup>20</sup> The recent Blake exhibition at Tate Britain and its accompanying catalogue was another major prophylactic against ahistorical readings of Blake, foregrounding the details of Blake’s life as a commercial engraver in London.<sup>21</sup>

The primary historical aspect of this thesis is, in one sense, as simple as an effort to establish who or what comprised Blake’s historical networks when it came to his encounters with and engagement in mapping practices. There have been a few gestures in this direction by previous historians and literary critics: in her forays into “Romantic” mappings, map historian Rachel Hewitt has examined two of Blake’s commercial engravings, namely the “Map of Allestone” made for Benjamin Heath Malkin’s *A Father’s Memoir of his Child* (1806) and the map often attributed to Blake included in George Cumberland’s *An Attempt to Describe Hafod* (1796).<sup>22</sup> Both engravings were also recently mentioned, briefly, in the introduction to *Romantic Cartographies* (2020).<sup>23</sup> In both instances these engravings were seen as instantiating a qualitative shift in a particular strand of eighteenth-century mapping practices, identified with a broad conception of “Romantic Cartography” in contradistinction

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Sarah Haggarty, *Blake’s Gifts: Poetry and the Politics of Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Sarah Haggarty, ed., *William Blake in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

<sup>21</sup> Amy Concannon and Martin Myrone, *William Blake* (Exhibition Catalogue) (London: Tate Publishing, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> Rachel Hewitt, *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey* (London: Granta Publications, 2010), 203ff; Rachel Hewitt, “Mapping and Romanticism,” *The Wordsworth Circle*, 42, no. 2 (2011): 163.

<sup>23</sup> Sally Bushell, Julia S. Carlson, and Damian Walford Davies, ed., *Romantic Cartographies: Mapping, Literature, Culture, 1789-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 1-6.



to a generalised sense of enlightenment-era geometrical rigidity. Although these scholars note the role of individual patrons, their primary concern does not ultimately lie with the much wider mesh of texts and contexts to which Blake's cartographic tropes, here and elsewhere, can be shown to relate.

Beyond these particulars, this thesis is broadly concerned with the question of what it might actually mean to think about Blake as existing within historical networks, as opposed to being an archetypal outsider figure (as his own rhetoric often seems to imply). This question comes to the fore especially in the first and final chapters of the thesis. In Chapter One, I attempt to situate Blake within the networks of his contemporaries; in Chapter Four, I explore the tension in contemporary Blake reception between Blake's reputation as a Romantic individualist and the collectivist politics that many of his followers identify in his work, and which they often seek to perpetuate through collaborative small-press publications and other modes of "non-mainstream" cultural production.

In service of this historical orientation, it has also been vital to valorise the political function of maps' indexicality, that is, their function of indexing things in the real world, whether that be encounters with individual actants in a network or some sense of a wider and totalising system—a function that was especially pursued by marxist theorists of the 1980s and '90s.<sup>24</sup> Blake attempts simultaneously to map the social and the spatial, often with a strong sense of there being some kind of unrepresentable totality that constantly occludes the production of a viable "mental map": it seems that for Blake, as for Frederic Jameson, "[t]he incapacity to map socially is as crippling to political experience as the analogous incapacity to map spatially is for urban experience."<sup>25</sup> Blake above all dramatises the struggle to map both "socially" and "spatially" when faced, in Jameson's terms, with some unrepresentable totality structuring social and economic relationships. Blake's poem "London" concisely diagnoses this problem. The "mind-forg'd manacles," from the famously chilling phrase, render the landscape impossible to map coherently (or, in the poem's terms, to "mark") for what it is because the map-maker's mind is itself ideologically absorbed into

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<sup>24</sup> See Bruno Bosteels, "A Misreading of Maps: The Politics of Cartography in Marxism and Poststructuralism," in *Signs of Change: Premodern – Modern – Postmodern*, ed. Stephen Barker (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 109-138.

<sup>25</sup> Frederic Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), 353.

the system of social oppression, a point that Williams has also stressed.<sup>26</sup> The notion of mapping as an ideologically bound phenomenon recapitulates Louis Althusser's definition of ideology itself as "a 'Representation' of the Imaginary Relationship of Individuals to their Real Conditions of Existence."<sup>27</sup> The distanced nature of this representation is, for Jameson and Althusser, ensured by the material alienation of individuals' real conditions of life in the first place. Yet for Blake, as, again, for Jameson, however impossible the task seems, the work of the artist ought to be to *try* to map these relations, as we see in *Jerusalem's* mappings of a world networked by a system of industrial slavery—a kind of counter-mapping which, I think, potentially rehabilitates mapping from the "maps-are-bad" critiques of the poststructuralists.

Blake's sense of the unrepresentability of totalising systems in a Jamesonian sense presupposes (even as it undermines) the very existence of such totalising systems, a notion that is in tension with Blake's preference for a fluid and evolving view of ontology in a proto-Deleuzian vein. As Kevin Hutchings has elaborated, there is in Blake's work a contradictory attitude towards the notion of "wholes," such that the work of "mental fight" becomes in one articulation a project of "differentiating true wholes [...] from their fraudulent counterparts."<sup>28</sup> Hutchings refers to Blake's conception of the "Divine Humanity" as a manifestation of wholeness that accommodates heterogeneous "minute particulars," over and above a kind of abstracting, homogenising totalisation. However, a defining feature of the wholeness of the "Divine Humanity" is, like Golgonooza, its essential unattainability to denizens of Ulro, the fallen world: as such, its wholeness is inherently *potential*, always already unrealised, and its representation must accordingly be always provisional. The result is perhaps something closer to, if ostensibly more mystical than, post-Deleuzian theorist Manuel DeLanda's notion of "assemblages against totalities," a conception of socio-ontological formations as irreducible to stable, seamless entities abstracted from their constituents.<sup>29</sup> I return to these issues in examining Blake's images of globes in Chapters Two and Three.

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<sup>26</sup> Williams, *Ideology and Utopia*, 19.

<sup>27</sup> Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," trans. by Ben Brewster, in Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971) [originally published in *La Pensée*, 1970], 162.

<sup>28</sup> Kevin Hutchings, *Imagining Nature: Blake's Environmental Poetics* (Montreal & Kingston, London, and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 35.

<sup>29</sup> Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), 8-25.

## Mapping Networks, Networks of Mapping

What is the relationship between maps and networks? In this study, I understand maps and networks as overlapping methods of representing and modelling relationships between people, places, texts, and other objects. Both “map” and “network” have had various and contested meanings and uses over many years. I do not intend to offer a normative definition of either term; what is important is that both terms have been crucially operative in discussions of spatial representation, ontology and epistemology, the distribution of sociopolitical power, and relationships between parts and wholes or between constituents in a grouping. I shall distinguish between different theoretical applications and meanings of each term throughout. Although Blake did not use the word “network” and used “map” only once (in his description of Thomas Heath Malkin’s *Map of Allestone*), it is extremely valuable to place his work in dialogue with these modern formulations and their theorists, and the results can both illuminate aspects of Blake’s work and put pressure on modern conceptual categories.

While he did not use the modern term “network,” Blake did use the word “net” on multiple occasions, usually to designate a constrictive system of oppression. Consider, for instance, Blake’s characterisation in *The Song of Los* of the institutions of “Churches: Hospitals: Castles: Palaces” as “nets & gins & traps to catch the joy of Eternity,” or the nightmarish vision of Urizen’s “Net of Religion” in *The Book of Urizen* (*Song of Los* 4: 1-2, E 67; *Book of Urizen* 25: 22, E 82). Any approach to Blake’s work that accommodates a network model must be careful to distinguish itself from the kinds of static systematicity—what DeLanda might call “seamless-web imagery”—that Blake could not countenance when it came to representing both the social and the spatial.<sup>30</sup>

In my approach to studying Blake’s networks, I draw to an extent upon the tenets of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) as theorised by Latour in recent decades. ANT has the benefit of enabling a non-hierarchical or flat-ontological approach to participants (“actants”) in a given network and in this sense resonates with aspects of the formal logic of Blake’s texts, a comparison that has been admirably evaluated by Saree Makdisi, Jon Saklofske, and Jade

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<sup>30</sup> DeLanda, *New Philosophy*, 21.

Hagan.<sup>31</sup> However, as Paul Jones has argued, a limitation of Latour's work—especially his early work—on ANT is his “formalist techniques,” which can become problematic if they “isolate their ‘objects’ from their social determinants,” and hence potentially elide structural power differentials in mapping the social.<sup>32</sup> By contrast, following in the mould of Raymond Williams' cultural materialism, Jones advocates the recovery of a kind of “immanent critique” within network analysis, a critical methodology that he views as potentially reconcilable with Latour's more recent autocritical gestures.<sup>33</sup> The upshot of these debates is that network analysis need not, perhaps, mean in an internalist sense that objects are detached from power and class relations; but nor does it have to mean that they are merely *reducible* to those relations according to a theory based on objective reflectivity. Blake's work lends itself to a conception of the relations between actants in a given network as uneven, shifting, often contradictory, and all the while operative in the production of particular material and social formations.

While Latour tends to adopt cartographic metaphors rather casually throughout his work, he has also explicitly engaged, albeit to a limited extent, in the study of maps and their actor-networks.<sup>34</sup> This aspect of his work will help me to lay the foundations for my study of Blake's cartographic networks, for which I lay out a methodology in Chapter One, but which also permeates the later chapters of this thesis. A fundamental concept developed during the still-early theorisation of ANT was the so-called “immutable and combinable mobile,” defined as a fixed, stable product transferred wholesale from the field to “centers of calculation.” Printed maps, according to Latour, aspire to perfect this process.<sup>35</sup> In making this claim, Latour positions the supposed “immutability” and “combinability” of maps not as an intrinsic quality of maps, but rather as an ideal of standardisation that went hand in hand with projects of

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<sup>31</sup> Makdisi, *Impossible History*; Jon Saklofske, “Remediating William Blake: Unbinding the Network Architecture of Blake's Songs,” *European Romantic Review* 22, no. 3 (2011); Jade Hagan, “Network Theory and Ecology in Blake's Jerusalem,” *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 53, no. 3 (2019-20).

<sup>32</sup> Paul Jones, “Raymond Williams & Bruno Latour: ‘Formalism’ in the Sociology of Culture and Technology,” *Sociologie de l'Art*, 15 (2010): 76.

<sup>33</sup> Bruno Latour, “Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern,” *Critical Inquiry*, 30 (2004).

<sup>34</sup> Rita Felski is critical of such “cartographic metaphors” in Latour's work, preferring his concept of the “mode of existence,” which “identifies differences without delineating borders”: see Rita Felski, “Latour and Literary Studies,” *PMLA*, 130, no. 3 (2015): 739.

<sup>35</sup> Bruno Latour, “Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together,” in *Knowledge and Society: Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present*, vol. 6, ed. by H. Kuklick (London: Jai Press, 1986), 1-40; Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 227.

territorial and commercial gain in the West: maps were a means by which explorers could “bring the lands back with them.”<sup>36</sup> Although the packaging of maps into a state of “immutability” may seem to imply that all maps have an entirely stable and self-contained ontology, Latour’s aim is rather to unpick this logic by tracing the specific, historically contingent actor-networks in which maps are operative. As Rob Kitchin, Chris Perkins, and Martin Dodge note, an ANT approach to map studies enables a shift in focus “from what the map represents to how it is produced and how it produces work in the world.”<sup>37</sup>

Although he makes only passing reference to the Latourian formulation of the “immutable mobile” and objects to its implications of fixity, Edney’s recent advocacy of a “processual” approach to studying maps has much in common with actor-network theory. This processual approach aims to

present mapping practices as part of a complex and far-reaching network or mesh of actors and actions, broadly construed, and permit a greater precision in determining which specific maps and related texts people had access to, how they would have read and used those works, and to what effect.<sup>38</sup>

Edney’s use of “mesh” here also calls to mind the work of Tim Ingold, whose use of the word “meshwork” to designate the way in which life is lived along interwoven lines of becoming is a promising analogue for the kind of ontology envisaged by Blakean mapping, a parallel that I explore in more detail in Chapter Three particularly.

## Diagrammatic Blake

In attempting to characterise Blakean mapping in processual, networked terms, I seek to distance myself from what I call a diagrammatic tradition in Blake scholarship. I have discussed this tradition elsewhere in an extended analysis of the critical reception of Blake’s poem “The Mental Traveller,” an analysis which appears in reduced form in Chapter Two, but the spectre of the diagrammatic tradition really haunts this whole thesis.<sup>39</sup> In critical readings

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<sup>36</sup> Latour, *Science in Action*, 220, original emphasis.

<sup>37</sup> Kitchin *et al.*, *Rethinking Maps*, 16.

<sup>38</sup> Edney, *Cartography*, 47-48.

<sup>39</sup> Caroline Anjali Ritchie, “Diagrammatic Blake: Tracing the Critical Reception of ‘The Mental Traveller,’” *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 54, no. 4 (2021).

of “The Mental Traveller” during the twentieth century, several scholars employed diagrams to “explain” the poem’s content, presenting these graphics as the final word in decoding what is indeed a bewildering text. I argue that the “Mental Traveller” diagrams, which sat within a wider and longstanding tendency towards diagrams in Blake’s scholarship in general, came at the cost of rationalising Blake’s “impossible landscapes” in a way that minimised the radical discontinuities found within the text. This tendency to diagram difficult aspects of Blake’s poetry and art I connect again with the idealists’ readiness to draw conclusions about unity and transcendence, notions which Peter Otto has found to be fundamentally un-Blakean in his fine study of *The Four Zoas*.<sup>40</sup>

The main purpose of Chapter Two is to pursue a reading of “The Mental Traveller” that attempts to live with its apparent contradictions, proposing this approach as a blueprint for reading and viewing Blake’s work more widely. Despite its name, “The Mental Traveller” in fact elaborates a series of intensely corporeal events, an emphasis on embodiment which is absolutely central to Blakean mapping, and which tends to be ignored by critical diagrams which assume that the poem is an allegory for something other than itself. The poem contains two divergent cartographies: the uneven, disjunctive routes taken by the figures that appear in it, and the vision of the earth being rolled into a “Ball” as, in Blake’s concise formulation, “the Eye altering alters all” and the earth is collapsed into a disembodied geometrical abstraction. The undercutting of this apparently totalising vision by way of the poem’s radically disjunctive narrative and syntax is typical of Blake’s rehearsal of an *agon* between representations of totalities and of constituents, in an almost anti-cartographic turn. Diagrammatic mappings of Blakean texts take shortcuts to rationalise these apparent contradictions, but in doing so they misconstrue the complex networks of forms and images that constitute Blake’s agonistic mapping, his mapping-in-progress.

### Tracing Blakean Mapping: Mental Travel, Golden String

In tracing Blake’s visionary mapping, I extend two tropes drawn from Blake’s oeuvre: “mental travel” and “golden string.” The first trope I draw from the poem “The Mental Traveller.”

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<sup>40</sup> Peter Otto, *Blake’s Critique of Transcendence: Love, Jealousy, and the Sublime in The Four Zoas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Although the diction sounds somewhat idealist (“mental”), the more concrete “travel” and the poem’s strongly corporeal imagery can both be seen as offsetting this aspect of the phrase. Instead, mental travel can be taken as an encapsulation of Blake’s sense that mental and physical aspects of travel must be understood as fundamentally entwined if they are to have any real-world application or meaning. The notion of mental travel also intersects with contemporary theories and practices of “psychogeography,” as I sketch below, which has particular importance in the context of the Blake-influenced creative projects that I explore in Chapter Four.

The trope of “golden string” draws upon the lyric prefacing Chapter Three of *Jerusalem*, where Blake writes

I give you the end of a golden string  
 Only wind it into a ball:  
 It will lead you in at Heavens gate,  
 Built in Jerusalems wall  
 (*Jerusalem* 77, E 231).

The imagery reaches out towards multiple referents: the Minotaur’s labyrinth of classical mythology, the weaving Graeco-Roman Fates or Norse Norns, and the guide-like directions offered in the authorial preface to Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, an allusive agility which itself attests to Blake’s tendency to open up multiple interpretative pathways. Characteristically, there is also a literal image of traditional craft which Blake imbues with grandiose spiritual overtones. In these almost programmatic lines, Blake weaves together the illuminated book, its creator, and its reader in a shared journey towards “Heavens gate,” located in the “wall” of Jerusalem, the Holy City that Blake interlaces with his depictions of London in the illuminated books. The route is co-constituted by each of these agents and by their encounter; the “golden string” found in the pages of Blake’s book is to be used *like a map*. However, as I argue in Chapter Three, Blake’s illuminated books are best understood not as stable, prescriptive texts, but rather as maps in progress, continually emerging in step with their creators, users, and the spaces that they seek fitfully to represent.

The tropes of mental travel and golden string also lend themselves to further comparison with Ingold’s notions of “wayfaring” and “being alive,” which share with Blakean mapping an emphasis on embodied movement and emergent lines of becoming in ways that

tune into the affordances of texts and environments. As Nicholas Williams has powerfully argued, what frees Blake's particular brand of utopianism from the charge of naïve escapism is his strongly historical and materialist "passion for [...] recollected particularity," for the social experiences accumulated across lifelines: "All that can happen to Man in his pilgrimage of seventy years," as Blake puts it (*Jerusalem* 16: 67, E 161).<sup>41</sup> This open-ended orientation towards shifting environments and audiences operates on the metatextual level of "pathways" of reading as a means of continuing the life of the text, which I later connect with the contemporary reception of Blakean mapping in Chapter Four.

The theme of pilgrimage, along golden-string lines, is also a major aspect of the afterlife of Blakean mapping. Its continuation is identifiable in the work of his immediate followers "the Ancients," discussed in Chapter One. Pilgrimage is also frequently evoked in later quasi-religious treatments of Blake-related sites in London as containing the potential for urban re-enchantment, discussed in Chapter Four, conceived in dialectical relation to "the disenchantment of the world," a concept developed in the early twentieth century by Max Weber (paraphrasing Friedrich Schiller). The concept of "re-enchantment" in an urban context has since been associated with the phenomenon of the "psycheographical turn," whose practitioners seek "to re-enchant and re-mythologize prosaic geographies," as Alastair Bonnett has argued.<sup>42</sup>

## Psychogeography

From its Situationist beginnings in 1960s Paris, to its British manifestation in the work of Iain Sinclair and beyond, "psychogeography" has always been conceived as an oppositional, and often specifically anti-capitalist, practice, a practice of counter-mapping that responds to precisely the kind of urban alienation that Blake had diagnosed in "London" almost two centuries earlier. In its dual attention to mind ("psycho-") and the description of the physical landscape ("geography"), the term has obvious similarities to Blake's concept of mental travel as I have characterised it.

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<sup>41</sup> Williams, *Ideology and Utopia*, 30.

<sup>42</sup> Alastair Bonnett, "The Dilemmas of Radical Nostalgia in British Psychogeography," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26 (2009): 46.



An excellent article by Jason Whittaker has already elaborated on the great value of bringing Blake's work within a psychogeographical framework.<sup>43</sup> Whittaker compares Blake's depiction of urban pedestrianism to the psychogeography of Iain Sinclair. Whittaker has been especially attuned to the value of viewing psychogeography as a mapping practice that resonates with Blake's tropes of urban walking. He finds in a passage from *Jerusalem* an attempt at "mapping out and remapping Albion" through Blake's description of a walk taken across London by the mythical figure known as Los, a labouring blacksmith whom we encountered at the beginning of this introduction in the act of building Golgonooza.<sup>44</sup> Whittaker's interpretation of the passage plotting out Los's walk is very fruitful in allowing walking and (re-)mapping to be co-constitutive activities, as is the hope of contemporary psychogeographical texts that seek in some sense to reclaim territories from the grip of (for example) commercialisation and privatisation (recall Blake's famous mention of "charter'd streets" from "London").

It is not insignificant that Iain Sinclair has referred to Blake as the "Godfather of Psychogeography," and indeed Blake's visions of London are never far from Sinclair's own psychogeographies.<sup>45</sup> Nor is Sinclair alone in carrying forward the psychogeographical potentialities of Blakean mapping: far from it. Numerous contemporary practitioners of psychogeography, such as the self-styled "poetopographer" or "urban shaman" Niall McDevitt, have similarly tuned into the radical potentialities of the kind of open-ended and oppositional mapping afforded by Blake's proto-psychogeography, a kind of distinctively urban form of mental travel. Their work offers alternative, and arguably more Blakean, open-ended routes compared with the dead-ends of diagrammatic scholarship. These ongoing afterlives of Blakean mapping are the subject of Chapter Four.

## Networks and Maps in the Humanities

In Blake's time and in his networks specifically, many European antiquarians had begun to take an interest in collecting and studying maps, leading to compilations such as Richard

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<sup>43</sup> Jason Whittaker, "'Walking thro' Eternity' Blake's Psychogeography and other Pedestrian Practices," in *The Reception of Blake in the Orient*, ed. Steve Clark and Masashi Suzuki (London: Continuum, 2006), 279-87.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Cited in Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Herts: Pocket Essentials, 2010), 32.

Gough's *British Topography* (1780). Such projects were primarily concerned with the establishment of a kind of total "spatial archive," to adopt Edney's phrase, on both a national and a global scale. In the eighteenth century, as many of Joseph Johnson's publications attest, there was an increasing western desire to fill in the blanks of the world map based on the findings of explorers, soldiers, and colonisers. According to Edney, this completist wish preoccupied European map-makers in the eighteenth century such that, in general, geographers were less interested in *how* to map the world or in associated intellectual problems than in filling these blanks.<sup>46</sup>

It was in the early nineteenth century that the word "cartography" was coined in France and that the field of study called the "history of cartography" began to take shape in Europe, initially based on similarly idealised notions of a total spatial archive. Very often, the story told by early "historians of cartography" was one of European superiority and linear progress, a fiction that lived on well into the 1980s and '90s, when many historians still clung to a notion of mapping history as a movement from primitive "art" to mature (western) "science."<sup>47</sup> Tucked within this narrative was the assumption that the purpose of *all* maps was to produce an accurate and mathematically sound representation of the earth's surface, a notion that is still something of a commonplace among many map enthusiasts.

In the 1980s these assumptions began to be seriously reassessed by humanities scholars—though there were certainly earlier observations regarding the mimetic capabilities of maps and the possibility that they might have other functions and meanings outside of what Edney refers to as a "realist epistemology," which holds that "true mimesis is in fact possible."<sup>48</sup> In this thesis, I suggest that Blake's visionary mapping offers a much earlier critique of cartography, which nonetheless overlaps significantly with the sociocultural critique made by theorists of the last few decades. In order to establish some of these parallels and the ways in which they can be mutually illuminating, it will therefore be helpful to briefly outline some of the broad trends in map history and map theory in the humanities since the '80s.

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<sup>46</sup> Edney, *Cartography*, 123-24.

<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., Norman J. W. Thrower, "When Mapping Became a Science," *UNESCO Courier*, 1991: 31-34; Ronald Rees, "Historical Links between Cartography and Art," *Geographical Review*, 70, no. 1 (1980): 60-78.

<sup>48</sup> Edney, *Cartography*, 18.

To be sure, the thinking that led to postmodern re-evaluations of mapping as serving something other than a mimetic ideal grew out of earlier intellectual movements relating to representation and the political dimensions of knowledge-production and -distribution. There were also notable earlier efforts to think more critically about how early maps could be brought within studies of the humanities, for instance in the work of Phillip Muehrcke and Juliana Muehrcke (1974), and Arthur Robinson and Barbara Petchenik (1976).<sup>49</sup>

It was the work of postmodernist, poststructuralist, and marxist thinkers of the so-called “spatial turn” that probably had the most radical impact upon the direction of map studies. The “spatial turn” that Foucault announced in 1986 was already well underway by the time he named it, notably evoking the figure of the network:

The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.<sup>50</sup>

Such a turn towards spatiality was evident in the developments around ANT as well as in the spatial metaphors and models of the likes of Deleuze and Guattari. These theoretical currents of the “spatial turn” have taken further turns within the field of literary studies. Most notably, for the purposes of this thesis, critics such as Christina Lupton have sought to bring back time into the spatial, privileging readerly process over static spatial relations in ways that resonate with my reading of the fluidity of Blakean anti-cartography.<sup>51</sup>

The “spatial turn” has been characterised by a fixation upon physical dimensions of social life which overlapped with postmodern theories about mapping. Twentieth-century thinkers such as Gaston Bachelard, Michel de Certeau, Guy Debord, Foucault, and Henri Lefebvre laid the groundwork for this shift, which culminated in what has been one of the most influential essays in map studies within the humanities: John Brian Harley’s 1989 essay

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<sup>49</sup> Phillip C. Muehrcke and Juliana O. Muehrcke, “Maps in Literature,” *Geographical Review*, 64, no. 3 (1974): 317-38; Arthur H. Robinson and Barbara Bartz Petchenik, *The Nature of Maps: Essays toward Understanding Maps and Mapping* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

<sup>50</sup> Michel Foucault, “Of other spaces,” *Diacritics*, 16, no. 1 (1986): 22-27.

<sup>51</sup> See Christina Lupton, Sean Silver, Adam Sneed, “Introduction: Latour and Eighteenth-Century Literary Studies,” *The Eighteenth Century*, 57, no. 2 (2016); see also Christina Lupton, *Reading and the Making of Time in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018).

entitled “Deconstructing the Map.”<sup>52</sup> Harley’s essay drew on central ideas developed by postmodern thinkers—Foucault’s discursiveness, and Derrida’s rhetoricity—in making the assertion that maps are non-neutral documents disclosing (though often, so the argument goes, actually seeking to disassemble) relations of power in the world.<sup>53</sup> There is certainly a similar deconstructivist turn in Blakean mapping, particularly in Blake’s visual connections between top-down viewpoints (what Donna Haraway calls the “god trick” of the cartographic gaze “from nowhere”).<sup>54</sup> This kind of gaze is suggested, for example, in the frontispiece to *Europe*, which shows a Urizenic figure bearing down upon a globe with pair of compasses. Here and elsewhere, Blake offers a striking portrayal of precisely the kind of objectifying will to power that Harley and others have identified as a symbolic function of cartographic representations.

Studies of cartography came thick and fast in the 1990s, such that Bruno Bosteels could name, in 1996, a “current cartographic turn.”<sup>55</sup> This he saw as a development away “[f]rom a textual analysis of ‘writing’ modeled upon the ontological analysis of ‘being’ [...] toward the cultural study of literary, artistic, and ideological forms of ‘mapping.’”<sup>56</sup> Indeed, numerous publications in this vein had punctuated the 1990s.<sup>57</sup> Historians during the ’90s were deeply interested in defining what a “map” was or could be. In 1998, John Andrews recorded 321 definitions of the word “map” from dictionaries from the 1640s-1990s, concluding that an appropriate definition of a map was a “representation in a plane of all or part of the earth’s surface.”<sup>58</sup> But there were, as Edney writes, also several cases in which scholars grappled with the idea that “maps can have meanings other than as statements of spatial fact,” a premise that very much underpins this thesis.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> J. B. Harley, “Deconstructing the Map,” *Cartographica*, 26, no. 2 (1989): 1-20.

<sup>53</sup> See also the posthumously edited volume of Harley’s influential essays: J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, rev. edn, ed. Paul Laxton (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002).

<sup>54</sup> Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies*, 14, no. 3 (1988): 581.

<sup>55</sup> Bosteels, “A Misreading of Maps,” 109.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> To list a view examples: Mark Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps*, With contributions by John Fels (New York: Guilford Press, 1992); Alan M. MacEachren, *How Maps Work: Representation, Visualization, and Design* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995); Jeremy Black, *Maps and Politics* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997).

<sup>58</sup> John Andrews, “Definitions of the Word ‘Map,’ 1649-1996,” MapHist Discussion Papers, February 3, 1998, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://web.archive.org/web/20090326024555/http://www.usm.maine.edu/~maps/essays/andrews.htm>.

<sup>59</sup> Edney, *Cartography*, 19.

Particularly notable for the purposes of this study was the publication, in 1998, of Franco Moretti's *Atlas of the European Novel*, one of the earliest in a still-rising wave of attempts to "map texts," to use mapping to study literature.<sup>60</sup> Moretti adopted a model of "literary cartography" employing quantitative methods to chart the spaces represented in nineteenth-century novels. His work has since come under a great deal of scrutiny: Hewitt, for example, notes that Blake's work demonstrates the limitations of such a method because "his poetic geography is profoundly un-mappable," at least, she suggests, according to Moretti's abstracting methodology.<sup>61</sup>

Two titles epitomise the direction taken by map studies in the twenty-first century: Kitchin *et al.*'s *Rethinking Maps* (2009) and John Fels and Denis Woods' *Rethinking the Power of Maps* (2010). "Rethinking" has indeed been the operative word, as both cartographers and scholars of cartography have sought to establish a way forward for both fields in the light of cartography's historical associations with imperialism, racism, and misogyny, especially as enshrined in what Denis Cosgrove (2001) called the western "Apollonian view."<sup>62</sup> More recent theorists have sought to shift the role of mapping away from a colonial practice inscribing and perpetuating power asymmetries, as exemplified by the approaches taken in *Decolonizing the Map* (2017).<sup>63</sup> I believe that Blake had some hope in the potential for mapping to subvert and transform systems of oppression: this hope, however, remains perpetually deferred in the space of his work, and instead it is the fitful struggle to achieve such transformation that he seeks endlessly to dramatise.

In these turns towards "rethinking maps," many of these theorists have emphasised that closer attention to detail can encourage mapping practices that are more responsive to connectivity, embodiment, and localism in a manner consonant with Blake's frequent emphasis on a ground-level perspective. According to this view, we need not throw mapping out with the bathwater of uncompromising objectivism and imperialism. As Amy Proben has recently proposed, Donna Haraway's privileging of "partial perspective," as constituting a potential intersection between the poles of relativism and objectivism, offered a particularly

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<sup>60</sup> Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1998).

<sup>61</sup> Hewitt, "Mapping and Romanticism," 163.

<sup>62</sup> John Fels and Denis Wood, *Rethinking the Power of Maps: New Frontiers in Cartographic Theory* (New York: Guilford Press, 2010); Denis Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

<sup>63</sup> James R. Akerman, ed., *Decolonizing the Map: Cartography from Colony to Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

influential move in this direction.<sup>64</sup> In her own work Propen shows how Google Earth's visualisation tools encourage embodied perspectives that open up the possibility of intervention in concrete problems in the world (her examples focus on the appropriation of Google Earth by environmentalist groups). Still more recently, Ingold celebrates local detail and the embodied experience of space, suggesting that culture and social life might be conceived in terms of "walking" or "wayfaring" rather than "surveying" at a distance, in terms that develop upon Deleuzian ontological ideas about "lines of flight."

These approaches also intersect with the ecological thought of theorists such as Timothy Morton, whose *Ecology without Nature* (2007) and *Dark Ecology* (2016) both make contact with Blake's work (the former in its analysis and the latter in its chapter epigraphs—all lines from Blake's "Auguries of Innocence").<sup>65</sup> Morton advances a model in which ecological awareness relies on the apprehension of multiple spatial scales simultaneously, a scalar imagination that is also vital to Blake's constant toggling between "minute particulars" and cosmic globes.

It is hoped that this thesis can contribute to these recent theories by further expanding the field of enquiry into the realm of artistic and literary texts, which can also offer fertile opportunities for rethinking mapping.

## Eighteenth-century Mapping: The Scholarly Landscape

In offering readings of a range of eighteenth-century texts as well as Blake's work, I am indebted to the many historians who have taken an interest in this period as a time, in Richard Westfall's words, of a widespread cultural "map-consciousness."<sup>66</sup> In Britain, this trend can be identified with the increasing institutionalisation of natural-philosophical and scientific disciplines, as in the establishment of the Geological Society of London (1807) and the Royal Astronomical Society (1820), and the coalescence of fields of study called "Geography" and

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<sup>64</sup> Amy D. Propen, "Cartographic representation and the construction of lived worlds: Understanding cartographic practice as embodied knowledge," in Kitchin *et al.*, *Rethinking Maps*, 113-30.

<sup>65</sup> Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 2016. See also George Laver's recent interview with Morton, published in the *Journal of the Blake Society*: George Laver, "Dark Ecology," *VALA: The Journal of the Blake Society*, 3 (2022): 100-103.

<sup>66</sup> Richard S. Westfall, "The Background to the Mathematization of Nature," in *Isaac Newton's Natural Philosophy*, ed. Jed Z. Buchwald and I. Bernard Cohen (London and Cambridge, Massachusetts: 2004), 327.

“Astronomy.”<sup>67</sup> Hewitt’s abovementioned work on the Ordnance Survey maps does much to convey the extraordinary professionalisation and institutionalisation of mapping in Britain during this period. As does Laurence Worms and Ashley Baynton-Williams’ indispensable dictionary of British map engravers, which in fact includes a short entry on Blake centring upon his schematic map of the Four Zoas in *Milton*, which they refer to as “a map of the intellectual universe.”<sup>68</sup> Matthew Edney and Mary Sponberg Pedley’s monumental *The History of Cartography, Volume 4: Cartography in the European Enlightenment* (2019) made great strides in expanding the field of enquiry to include sections on “Art and Design of Maps,” “Thematic Mapping,” and “Map as Metaphor.”<sup>69</sup>

As many of these scholars have emphasised, mapping in the eighteenth century was in many ways co-constitutive with projects of nationalism, war, and imperial, colonial, and commercial expansion. By the same token, Blake’s suspicion of cartographic abstraction cannot be disentangled from his revulsion at these violences. This aspect of visionary mapping certainly corresponds to Blake’s reputation as a prophet against empire and even, in the narrowest sense, against science and technology. But this is not the whole story. As even a cursory reading of the major prophecies will reveal, Blake was acutely aware of the rich symbolic potential afforded by spatial representation and was immersed in the visual culture of mapping in his day, from the maps of prehistoric monuments made by the antiquarian William Stukeley to eighteenth-century world-maps and globes. Broadly, his work participates in numerous aspects of cartographic culture of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such as a widespread interest in urban topography and urban walking, which have received a great deal of attention from the likes of Stephen Daniels and Alison O’Byrne.<sup>70</sup> Scholars such as Daniels, Denis Cosgrove, and Martin Myrone have also often worked on the intersections between mapping, topography, and landscape art, an interdisciplinary approach to eighteenth-century modes of spatial representation, which greatly informs this study of

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<sup>67</sup> See Edney, *Cartography*, 123.

<sup>68</sup> Laurence Worms and Ashley Baynton-Williams, *British Map Engravers: A Dictionary of Engravers, Lithographers and their Principal Employers to 1850* (London: Rare Book Society, 2011), 89.

<sup>69</sup> Edney and Pedley, *History of Cartography, Volume 4*.

<sup>70</sup> See, e.g., Stephen Daniels, “Mapping the metropolis in an age of reform: John Britton’s London topography 1820-1840,” *Journal of Historical Geography*, 56 (2017): 61-82; Alison O’Byrne, “London and Urban Culture in Eighteenth-Century Literature,” *Literature Compass*, 15 (2018): 1-11.

Blake's visual and verbal mappings.<sup>71</sup> The relationship of Blake's visual art to British landscape painting has also been specifically explored in an unpublished PhD thesis by Hayley Flynn.<sup>72</sup>

By situating Blake within networks of map-makers, map-engravers, and other geographically minded people, I hope to show how diffuse and evolving were the networks of geographical knowledge-production and -distribution, which was not necessarily directly beholden to large centres or institutions—nor was it by any means the sole preserve of a powerful ruling class. Like the present-day London Blakeans, Blake certainly suggests that individuals might take mapping into their own hands, striving to understand their real conditions of existence and challenging the maps produced by the powerful.

Numerous recent studies have sought to map, in various senses, the spaces of eighteenth-century art, literature, and its producers. Some scholars have taken a phenomenological approach to mapping texts, for instance Jeremy Tambling in a study of Blake, and Julian Wolfreys in an impressive study of literary representations of London; both scholars also view Blakean mapping as a metatextual process that takes place in the writing.<sup>73</sup> These critical approaches to mapping the spaces of literary texts are quite distinct from Moretti's long-range vision in the *Atlas*. They tend, in keeping with their interpretation of Blake's texts, to emphasise minute particulars rather than totalities. More recently, a group of literary historians from Lancaster University entitled (after Bakhtin's concept of the "chronotope") *Chronotopic Cartographies*, led by Sally Bushell, have proposed that digital mapping strategies can and ought to try to effectively toggle between these poles of "generalisation and detail," between "a distant gaze" and "close readings."<sup>74</sup> Many of the publications emerging from the ongoing project at Lancaster have attempted to interrogate similar tensions, often (though not exclusively) by means of digital methods. Although it has

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<sup>71</sup> See, e.g., Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Martin Myrone, "What did Henry Fuseli mean to say about 'topography?'," part of the British Library's *Transforming Topography* series, published online June 18, 2019, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/what-did-henry-fuseli-mean-to-say-about-topography>.

<sup>72</sup> Hayley Flynn, *Visionary Topography: Landscape in Blake*, 2 vols, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Nottingham, 2015).

<sup>73</sup> Jeremy Tambling, *Blake's Night Thoughts* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005); Julian Wolfreys, *Writing London*, vol. I: *The Trace of the Urban Text from Blake to Dickens* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

<sup>74</sup> Joanna E. Taylor, Christopher E. Donaldson, Ian N. Gregory, and James O Butler, "Mapping Digitally, Mapping Deep: Exploring Digital Literary Geographies," *Literary Geographies*, 4, no. 1 (2018): 10.



not been within the scope of this research, Blake's mapping and networks would no doubt also repay study using digital mapping methods.

Indeed, when it comes to mapping artistic and literary networks in eighteenth-century urban environments, digital projects such as Matthew Sangster's *Romantic London*, Hannah Williams' *Artists in Paris*, and the Stanford University project entitled *Authorial London* have made exemplary progress in mapping people, places, and texts.<sup>75</sup> In particular, the findings displayed in Sangster's *Romantic London* have strongly informed my sense of the multiplicity of eighteenth-century texts produced in London and about London, and the advantages of cartographic visualisation in, as Sangster writes on the homepage, "thinking about how writers, publishers and artists chose to represent London's general character and particularities."<sup>76</sup> What is slightly obscured by such projects, however, is a sense of the networks involved in the production, circulation, and consumption of such literary mappings—in other words, the lives of the material texts themselves fall somewhat out of view. This matter is somewhat more fleshed out in Sangster's and Myrone's recent studies of the territory of literary and artistic networks in eighteenth-century London, though their emphasis is primarily biographical and sociological.<sup>77</sup>

This thesis has arisen within the context of this increasing scholarly interest in mapping texts and networks. It is hoped that this study can adequately mediate between its mappings of people, places, and textual artefacts, and its more internalist readings of the peculiar kind of mapping found in Blake's texts. It is an attempt to hold both aspects of Blake's work simultaneously in view.

## Method, Methodology, and Structure

This thesis comprises four chapters and is organised around three main areas of enquiry: Blake's cartographic networks, Blakean cartography, and the afterlives of Blakean cartography. I employ a range of research methods: the first three chapters of the thesis are

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<sup>75</sup>*Romantic London*, accessed May 22, 2021, <http://www.romanticlondon.org/>; *Artists in Paris*, accessed May 22, 2021, <https://www.artistsinparis.org/>; *Authorial London*, accessed May 22, 2021, <https://authorial.stanford.edu/>.

<sup>76</sup> Homepage, *Romantic London*.

<sup>77</sup> Matthew Sangster, *Living as an Author in the Romantic Period* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); Martin Myrone, *Making the Modern Artist: Culture, Class and Art-Educational Opportunity in Romantic Britain* (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2020).

based upon extensive consultation of primary and secondary material, and in addition to similar archival and library-based research, the final chapter on reception also involved interviews, participation, and observation.

In locating relevant Blake material, I have found the Blake Archive to be an invaluable digital resource, alongside G. E. Bentley Jr's inimitable *Blake Records* and *Blake Books*.<sup>78</sup> When approaching the historical networks that are the subject of Chapter One, the online searchable English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) enabled me to locate many of the geographical publications bearing Joseph Johnson's imprint, which is one of the three main networks I explore in that first chapter. The ESTC strictly contains titles before 1800 and is not exhaustive, but this was nonetheless an extremely helpful starting point for the work on Joseph Johnson, whose publishing activities anyway began to wane between his imprisonment in 1799 and his death in 1809 (though the imprint did live on, under the management of his two assistants, as "J. Johnson & Co," active until 1815).

In terms of secondary source material, as will already be evident from the preceding sections of this introduction, I draw on and speak to a range of scholarly fields including, but not limited to, map history and theory, network theory, art history, literary history and criticism, anthropology, and cultural geography. The work of marxist and poststructuralist theorists—such as Frederic Jameson, Henri Lefebvre, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari—has been especially central in orienting my methodology and my readings of Blakean mapping, as has the recent work of anthropologists and ecophilosophers working in their wake, such as Ingold and Morton.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> G. E. Bentley Jr, *Blake Records*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004) (originally published 1969); Bentley, *Blake Books: Annotated Catalogues of William Blake's Writings in Illuminated Printing, in Conventional Typography and in Manuscript* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); I also regularly consulted the later supplements to these volumes: Bentley, *Blake Records Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Bentley, *Blake Books Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

<sup>79</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* [*La Révolution urbaine* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1970)], trans. by Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* [*La production de l'espace* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1974, 1984)], trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. B. Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004) [originally published as *Mille Plateaus*, vol. 2 of *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie* (Paris: Minuit, 1980)]; Tim Ingold, e.g., *Being Alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); Timothy Morton, e.g., *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

Since, as I have indicated, the research methods for Chapter Four on reception were rather different to those employed in my study of the historical material, I shall treat these in further detail in the structural outline below.

Chapter One, "Mapping and Blake's Networks," focuses primarily on four important networks in which Blake participated: James Basire's workshop, Joseph Johnson's publishing business and bookshop, the Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem, and the group known as "the Ancients." Taking these networks as my starting point, I situate Blake within local currents of mapping in the visual culture of eighteenth-century London, comparing and contrasting his work with that of contemporaries such as Richard Gough, John Aikin, Emanuel Swedenborg, the map-seller Carington Bowles, and Samuel Palmer, each of whom worked to shape the cartographic visual culture of London's print and art markets. I draw on the work of cultural geographers and map historians, including Stephen Daniels, Paul Elliott, and Alison O'Byrne, who have also taken an interest in figures from the networks that I discuss.<sup>80</sup> I also build on the work of book historians such as James Raven, whose mapping of a "bookscape" across London's commercial topography has prompted me to think in terms of an intersecting yet distinguishable "mapscape."<sup>81</sup>

In this chapter, I begin to indicate some of the ways in which Blake picks up on certain images and concepts encountered through these networks in the cartographic tropes of his poetry, visual art, and illuminated books throughout his career. His "creative dialogue" with this material is considerably more extensive than has previously been supposed.<sup>82</sup> Throughout the ensuing chapters, I continue to draw comparisons and contrasts between Blake's use of cartographic tropes and contemporaneous texts.

In the central two chapters of the thesis, I develop a critical reading of Blakean mapping. In Chapter Two ("Mental Travel"), I elaborate my reading of "The Mental Traveller" as a blueprint for reading and viewing Blake's (anti-)cartography "from the ground up" as opposed to diagrammatically. I focus on the poem's radical discontinuity and logic of disruption, arguing that this quality urges readers to focus on the particular moments in space

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<sup>80</sup> Stephen Daniels and Paul Elliott, "'Outline maps of knowledge': John Aikin's geographical imagination," in *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld Circle, 1740-1860*, ed. Felicity James and Ian Inkster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 94-125; Alison O'Byrne, "The Art of Walking in London: Representing Urban Pedestrianism in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Romanticism*, 2, no. 14 (2008): 94-107.

<sup>81</sup> James Raven, *Bookscape: Geographies of Printing and Publishing in London Before 1800* [the Panizzi Lectures 2010] (London: British Library, 2014).

<sup>82</sup> Bushell *et al.*, *Romantic Cartographies*, 6.

and time rather than on the poem “as a whole.” I turn in particular to the scenes in and around the “earthly Cot”: here, I argue, Blake unpicks the logic of “sentimental” art and literature (particularly as embodied in eighteenth-century cottage-door art). This manoeuvre can be connected with the reading process as theorised by James Chandler in relation to Blake’s “unsentimental” logic, whereby Blake destabilises and inverts relations of cause and effect.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, Blake rejects whole-earth idealism in this poem, in describing the process of abstraction by which “the flat earth becomes a ball.” I use this image as an opportunity to “zoom out” to examine Blake’s visual and verbal representations of globes in the illuminated books and visual art. I discuss the tension between his frequent characterisation of circles, spheres, balls, and disks as confining and totalising shapes and his use of such shapes when it comes to envisaging physical space in his visual art. Considered together, the fragments of Blake’s global images represent an effort—deeply fraught and often contradictory in nature—to challenge the representational tendencies and epistemological underpinnings of Enlightenment-era world-pictures. These images reflect Blake’s reluctance to commit to the reductionism of diagrammatic representation, even in the act of visually rendering the world he imagines in two-dimensional form.

In Chapter Three (“Blake’s London”), I turn to Blake’s frequent depictions of figures walking within cities, principally London-Babylon-Jerusalem as it materialises across his oeuvre. I bring my “ground-level” approach to “The Mental Traveller” (Chapter Two) to bear on the trope of urban walking that recurs throughout Blake’s oeuvre. This I place in tension with the recurrent images of globes throughout *Jerusalem*. I argue that Blake’s *Jerusalem* globes tend to appear hazy and incomplete in order to underscore the provisional and partial nature of representation itself. I suggest connections between Blake’s struggle with mapping totalities and Frederic Jameson’s notion of “cognitive mapping,” which I bring to bear on a reading of Blake’s mappings of industrial capitalist activities as evidence of a proto-marxist imagination. I also propose a conceptual alignment between Blakean wholes and DeLanda’s concept of “assemblages.”

In the remainder of Chapter Three, drawing on the work of Shirley Dent, Jason Whittaker, and Jeremy Tambling in particular, I propose a shift away from thinking primarily

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<sup>83</sup> James Chandler, *An Archaeology of Sympathy: The Sentimental Mode in Literature and Cinema* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), Chapter 8, esp. 275-81.

about Blake's "City" in the abstract as a single mappable entity, and towards a consideration of the activities of "city-walkers," which have curiously had more of an afterlife in the creative reception of Blake than in Blake scholarship. Placing Blake's city-writing in dialogue with recent discussions about the emergent ontologies of maps, walkers, and landscapes in urban contexts particularly, I propose that the trope of walking is fundamentally operative in Blake's mapping practice. Second, I undertake close readings of a range of visual and verbal instances of walking in Blake's work (from the early lyrics to the major prophecies and late visual art), drawing out two broad and frequently intersecting *ways of walking* ("straight" and "crooked," following Blake's terms in one of the "Proverbs of Hell"). Along these lines, walking—which has held a demonstrable if somewhat tentative place in Blake's early city-writing—comes in the major prophecies to be fully and more positively operational in the convolutions of Blakean mapping.

Since my research methods for Chapter Four ("London Blakeans") differed significantly from the methods outlined above, it will be worth explaining these here in some detail. From the early planning stages, Chapter Four was always intended to concern the reception of Blakean mapping. It was owing to my own geographical location and involvement in "Blakean" networks that the research focus rapidly evolved into a specific, localised study of small-press and artists' networks as a means of investigating how Blake's geographical imagination continues to reverberate in distinctive ways. As a London-dweller researching William Blake, it was difficult to miss the profusion of Blakean walks, Blakean exhibitions, Blakean publications that were springing up around me. Acting out of social impulse, Blake enthusiasm, and an intellectual curiosity that was not at this time formally research-oriented, from the early stages of my PhD in 2019, I began participating in walks, attending poetry readings and exhibitions, and collecting small-press publications relating to Blake.

Then the coronavirus pandemic struck, barring the in-person gatherings that were the heart and soul of the Blakean networks. I sought out new ways of following their activities: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook. Social media brought home to me the liveliness, multiplicity, simultaneity, and persistence of these networks, which had by contrast been all but invisible in the archives and libraries that I had mined as the basis for my prior literary-historical research.

Increasingly struck by the through-lines that were emerging in my study of Blake's networks and Blakean mapping and the activities of these contemporary groups, I decided to

bring my observations within a more formalised research framework. Given the gaps in the archive and the scholarship, and the very live nature of these Blakean goings-on, it seemed germane to go to the source by conducting oral-historical research. I drew up a semi-structured plan for interviews, with questions organised under four main headings: “participant details,” “engagement with Blake,” “Blakean networks,” and “Blake, (psycho)geography, and mapping.” The interview proposal was subject to ethical review by the Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee (AHEC) at The University of York at the beginning of 2021. Following ethical approval, I contacted as many London Blakeans as possible, inviting them to participate in interviews over Zoom or telephone in accordance with the coronavirus restrictions. There were a few refusals and non-responders, but the majority eagerly accepted the interview invitation. Participants put me in touch with further Blakeans within their networks, and the number of participants grew to around 20.<sup>84</sup> The interviews took the form of free-form conversations, often straying from the interview plan. This meandering format suited the open-endedness of the networks and the kind of open-ended continuation of Blake’s cartographic imagination in which I and many participants were interested. Further Blakeans have continued to come to my attention while working on this thesis, which in a sense upholds Blake’s resistance to the notion of a finite work of art and his encouragement of continuation; for practical purposes, I offer here a snapshot of these activities based on data collected mainly over the course of 2019-2021.

Increasingly, I positioned myself as a participant in as well as an observer of the London Blakeans’ practices, a positionality that dovetailed with my sense of Blake’s scepticism about the idea of the “objective” view from nowhere. I had been writing poetry for some time, often engaging with Blake and with London. Some of the Blakeans took an interest in my poetry, offering to publish my poems or to quote from them in their work, and making me aware of other potential publishers. Being actively involved in the networks in these ways was an important means of understanding the relationship between writers, publishers, and creative collaborators in these small-press contexts. The speedy uptake of my Blakean and London-themed poetry by these writers and publishers also indicated how active and open-

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<sup>84</sup> Many of the interviews have been published, in edited form, on *zoamorphosis.com*; see my author page on the website: “Caroline Anjali Ritchie,” *Zoamorphosis*, accessed November 3, 2022, <https://zoamorphosis.com/author/carolineritchie/>.

ended were these networks, further establishing the contemporary small press as a distinctive and lively formation within Blake's legacy.

Putting myself into the networks also shaped my research methodology, as the boundaries between texts and contexts began to seem increasingly fuzzy. When it came to writing this chapter, I combined aspects of book history and network theory alongside literary-critical and visual analysis of Blake-influenced texts, which could in turn leverage a reading of Blake's own life and work. I drew on the post-marxist approaches taken in recent efforts to theorise small-press formations in analysing the Blakeans' various modes and networks of production and distribution, as well as the language they used in their publications and in the interviews to define their relationship to the cultural and economic mainstream.<sup>85</sup> This also involved tuning into the anti-capitalist rhetoric of many of these publications, which often offer readings of Blakean mapping as a kind of proto-marxist figure and, along these lines, a subversive figure seeking impossibly to map a way out of an oppressive economic system. This aspect of Blake's legacy I place in tension with a line of marxist thought that would view, in Marx's terms, social revolution as meaning "creating something entirely new."<sup>86</sup> For Marx, "[t]he social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future."<sup>87</sup> In a present-day context, what do practitioners hope to gain from borrowing Blake's cartographic language (and images) in service of radical or oppositional rhetoric? What place is there for the old in contemporary radical publishing?

Blake's posthumous reputation was often strongly operative in participants' self-image as creative practitioners, a fact which suggested important research questions. First, how might viewing Blake through a contemporary small-press lens refract or clarify sociocultural, political, and economic questions about his reputation as an independent figure (or not), as an individualist figure (or not), or as a networked figure (or not)? These questions gave occasion for enquiry into the contemporary status of the "literary" and notions of its independence from or transcendence of the kinds of institutions that often do sustain its activities. Such tensions, and their eighteenth-century histories, have come under scholarly

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<sup>85</sup> See especially Georgina Colby, Kaja Marczweska, and Leigh Wilson, ed., *The Contemporary Small Press: Making Publishing Visible* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

<sup>86</sup> Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *Karl Marx: Selected Works*, 2 vols, ed. V. Adoratsky (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1942), vol. II, 315.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

attention in recent times, for instance in *Institutions of Literature* (2022), edited by Jon Mee and Matthew Sangster.<sup>88</sup>

Second, formally and thematically speaking, how do small-press texts engage with and in doing so illuminate Blake's cartographic imagination in distinctive ways? I suggest that creative practitioners have often been more attuned to the dynamic potentialities of Blakean mapping than have academics, and that their own mappings revitalise Blake's spirit of openness and regeneration that has so often been the casualty of Blake scholarship's diagrammatic logic. These practitioners, I argue, respond to and extend the multi-medial mapping that Blake himself practices, which is always a work in progress that actively invites or affords continuation—a future-tense orientation that may after all qualify as “poetry from the future.” In suggesting that Blake's works actively afford continuation, I draw on Mike Goode's argument in *Romantic Capabilities* regarding the formal affordances or “capabilities” of the illuminated books, suggesting that this principle is also applicable, in thematic terms, to the peculiar kind of mapping in Blake's work.<sup>89</sup> This model, which sees texts as living out “behaviours” that emerge at the intersections between new and old media, rather than as being contextually determined by *a priori* cultural forms, is arguably itself afforded by Blake's model of golden-string mapping and by Blake's suspicion of closed circuits of meaning-making. In order to demonstrate how Blake's cartographic forms and tropes have behaved in the work of London Blakeans, I then draw out three main themes for discussion: psychogeography, pilgrimage, and politics.

## Matters of Scale and Scope

In a thesis that questions, among other things, the premise of cartographic completism, there arise inherent issues of spatiotemporal scale and scope.

I have not set temporal limits on my study of Blake's career, partly in an effort to distance this study from the so-called “thesis of fracture” that posited a shift in Blake's late

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<sup>88</sup> Jon Mee and Matthew Sangster, ed., *Institutions of Literature: Organising Culture, 1700-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

<sup>89</sup> Mike Goode, *Romantic Capabilities: Blake, Scott, Austen, and the New Messages of Old Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).



works away from politics and towards some kind of religious transcendence.<sup>90</sup> A mapping impulse is present in Blake's work from early to late and Blake seeks throughout to index particular social and political relationships through cartographic tropes. Although such a study cannot be comprehensive, my intention is to demonstrate the pervasiveness of cartographic tropes and the development of this imagery over time in Blake's oeuvre, beginning with its nascent forms in his commercial engravings and the *Songs*, and progressing to its more utopian expression in the major prophecies. I use the term "utopia," following Williams, in line with Paul Ricoeur's notion that the "nowhere" of utopia is in one sense the only viable stance one can take in order to envisage change.<sup>91</sup> Rather than a signifier of religious retreat, the utopianism of Blake's major prophecies signals a mounting effort to map or model the kind of travel necessary to effect change in the world: to quote Williams again, "[t]he path to Eden will not be found by an evasion of ideology, by a mentalized ideal vision of easeful love (what Blake called *Beulah*), but instead by a harsh imagining and reimagining of the ideological world."<sup>92</sup> Though it receives its most developed articulation in the late illuminated books, the mapping of "harsh imagining and reimagining" is present in Blake's work from early on. That Blake repeatedly remediates his own earlier work in the context of his more mature mythography also becomes an important theme of this thesis, offering a metatextual analogue for the kind of processual physical travel Blake seeks to model.

In spatial terms, the territory covered by this thesis is fairly localised and centres on London. This is partly a result of Blake's own fairly limited travels, which only took him outside of London for an extended period when he and Catherine resided in William Hayley's cottage at Felpham, Sussex (1800-3). However, given the global scope of some of Blake's own mappings as especially explored in Chapters Two and Three, I attempt to reach out towards the global geographies and networks that Blake tries to map in his work, and to investigate his sources for this kind of information. I hope to suggest some of the ways in which Blake's cartographic vision does seek to push out onto a global scale, while bearing in mind Blake's awareness of the representational limitations of his own work, as well as the much-lamented failure of that work to reach anything like a wide audience during his own day.

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<sup>90</sup> For lengthy discussions of arguments for and against the "thesis of fracture," see the introductions to Clark and Worrall, *Historicizing Blake*, and DiSalvo et al., *Blake, Politics, and History*.

<sup>91</sup> Williams, *Ideology and Utopia*, 25-26.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

On the reception front, the biographical facts of Blake's life have also had a particularly strong impact on the legacy of Blake within London itself, given that access to Blake-related sites seems to be so vital to the networks that I discuss in Chapter Four. It is important to bear in mind that many of the "London Blakean" practitioners have come from or are partly based outside of London, hailing from Liverpool, New Zealand, Dublin, and the US, but more work remains to be done on the legacy of Blakean mapping internationally. There is in general a great deal more to be done when it comes to mapping Blake's global reception, which has, happily, already been the focus of a recent conference entitled "Global Blake," held at the University of Lincoln (January 11-13, 2022). Despite its limitations, it is hoped that this thesis can lay some of the groundwork for future ventures into the territory of Blake's visionary mapping.

## Chapter One. Mapping and Blake's Networks

In their dictionary *British Map Engravers* (2011), Laurence Worms and Ashley Baynton-Williams enumerate over 1,500 members of the map-trade in Britain up to the mid-nineteenth century. Even a casual scan through its pages reveals a conspicuous cluster of entries for map-engravers and -sellers within London, gathering momentum throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some entries are very lengthy (such as those for royal geographers John Senex (1678-1740) and William Faden (1749-1836)); others are briefer and record, for instance, the maps made by engravers who specialised in other areas of the engraving profession but happened to engrave a few maps throughout their careers. Among the latter is an entry for William Blake, to whose name is ascribed just a single map, the schematic map (termed, by many others, a diagram) of the Four Zoas in *Milton* (figure 3), which represents the mythical "Four Zoas" intersecting with the so-called "Mundane Egg," traversed by "Miltons Track," the path taken by Milton as he descends to earth in Blake's "prophetic" book. Worms and Baynton-Williams describe the image as "a map of the intellectual universe."<sup>1</sup>

The perhaps surprising inclusion of a figure like Blake in this dictionary of both specialist and non-specialist map-engravers in part highlights the sheer variety of cartographic images in the eighteenth-century London print world. Given the popularity of engraved maps in the period, it was extremely common for non-specialists to turn their graver to maps at some stage or another. It was also very common for draughtsmen and engravers to adopt some of the formal conventions of contemporaneous maps to symbolic effect in their more fanciful prints: "Britons," writes map historian Rachel Hewitt, "had become 'map-minded' over the eighteenth century"; Richard Westfall similarly generalises a sense of "map consciousness" in Britain during this time.<sup>2</sup> The making of geographical guide-books and maps was in this period an aspirational form of knowledge-production, aimed at an audience eager to increase their map-mindedness and, in so doing, to make gains in the realm of cultural capital. The traces of this map-mindedness are especially evident in the surviving body of print material from the period. Engravers drew regularly on the visual idiom of geographical maps

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<sup>1</sup> Worms and Baynton-Williams, *British Map Engravers*, 89.

<sup>2</sup> Hewitt, *Map of A Nation*, 203; Westfall, "Mathematization of Nature," 327.

in satirical, allegorical, and imaginative prints, and the variety of artistic and literary genres associated with place and geography multiplied such that, as Amanda Gilroy writes, a “disciplinary miscegenation [...] defined the mapping of geographical space” in the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> This generic variety, as well as the pervasion of mapping across multiple media, is certainly instantiated by Blake’s cosmological map of the Four Zoas, which seems at first glance a far cry from the productions of a Senex or a Faden.

But Blake’s entry in Worms and Baynton-Williams’ dictionary, though pointing to a constructive willingness to accommodate a wide variety of material under the category of mapping, also masks by its brevity Blake’s deep, lifelong, and richly varied engagement with cartography. This level of detail is certainly an inevitable casualty of a reference work of this kind, but Blake’s cartographic imagination is an aspect of his work that has overall received little attention in both map scholarship and Blake scholarship. It is this little-known, or at least little-understood, territory that I seek to survey. The articulations of Blake’s cartographic imagination are visible throughout in his “independent” illuminated books like *Milton* and *Jerusalem*: note the three diminutive yet fascinating maps appearing in Chapter Three of *Jerusalem*, which, to my knowledge, have never been studied *qua* maps by scholars (figures 4-6), and to which I shall return in Chapter Three of this thesis. But his cartographic output also extends to some of the work he undertook as a jobbing engraver, especially his work on plates for printed books. Moreover, the wealth of cartographic material that Blake encountered through his involvement in London’s print market—via associations with networks of people, places, and texts—can also be shown to have had a profound and lasting resonance across his literary and artistic output. A study of Blake’s position within eighteenth-century networks of mapping can therefore illuminate aspects both of Blake’s own career and of a variety of eighteenth-century mapping practices which have languished in the penumbra of historical accounts to date. In this chapter, I attempt in broadly chronological order to trace some of the associations in Blake’s networks when it comes to mapping, geography, and spatial representation broadly conceived, from his time as an apprentice to James Basire, to his work for the publisher Joseph Johnson and his relationship with the small circle known as

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<sup>3</sup> Amanda Gilroy ed., *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of Travel, 1775-1844* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 1.

“The Ancients,” as well as some more fleeting associations that arose throughout the course of his career.

## Networked Blake

Here it is worth pausing over the term “network” and its significance when brought to bear on the study of both Blake and mapping. In what follows, I draw to a limited extent upon Latourian actor-network theory (ANT) and Latour’s notion of a “sociology of associations,” which focuses on connections between actants without recourse to *a priori* critical apparatus. However, though recognising that politically motivated critique, for Latour as for Rita Felski, indeed has its “limits” when seen as the sole objective of a given study, such critique nonetheless motivates this thesis, for instance in my recognition of the uneven distribution of power and status across Blake’s social and professional networks.<sup>4</sup> This is not in itself incompatible with Latourian actor-network theory for, as Felski writes,

[a]ctor-network theory does not exclude the political—it is deeply interested in conflicts, asymmetries, struggles—but its antipathy to reductionism means that political discourse cannot serve as a metalanguage into which everything can be translated.<sup>5</sup>

Acknowledging the relative autonomy of actors, however, need not mean abandoning the structuring presence of power relations: in this, my approach is in line with Kevis Goodman’s understanding of eighteenth-century medical writing in terms not of “a single source, force, agent, or center of determination but instead a series of ever-shifting and recursive codeterminations.”<sup>6</sup> The same can certainly be said of William Blake’s cartographic imagination, which was active in (rather than simply and passively caused by) the environment of eighteenth-century cartographic networks.

What does it mean to regard Blake as a *networked* figure? From Blake’s own time up to our own, there has been a persistent tendency to characterise him as an isolationist, anti-social, or indeed a-social figure existing *outside* of commercial and institutional networks. This

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<sup>4</sup> Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Felski, “Latour and Literary Studies,” 740.

<sup>6</sup> Kevis Goodman, *Pathologies of Motion: Historical Thinking in Medicine, Aesthetics and Poetics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022), 6 (my emphasis).

mythology arose, I believe, in large part by virtue of the rhetorical characterisations of Blake by himself and his contemporaries or near-contemporaries, from proclamations in his own letters that he was “[o]ne who cares little for this World,” or that “I call myself now Independent,” to Samuel Palmer’s impression of Blake, in a letter to Blake’s nineteenth-century biographer Alexander Gilchrist in 1855, as “[m]oving apart, in a sphere above the attraction of worldly honours,” or indeed Gilchrist’s own sense of Blake’s “strange, novel individuality.”<sup>7</sup> Independent, otherworldly, individual: such early caricatures of Blake built up the impression of a determined nonparticipant, the quintessential Romantic individual and individualist, a caricature which has lived on in both scholarly and popular narratives to this day: “he just isn’t a joiner,” or so Iain Sinclair stated in an interview conducted as part of my research for the final chapter of this thesis.<sup>8</sup> In that chapter, I return particularly to the concept of “independence,” a word that was freighted in complex ways in the eighteenth century, with strong connotations of economic and political freedom. Many of the “London Blakeans” seem to be picking up on Blake’s sense of independence—as expressed in the letter cited above but also in Blake’s very practice of independent publishing—as a state of freedom from patronage and institutions of control.

Yet the overwhelming impression one has when reading, for instance, Blake’s correspondence and Gilchrist’s *Life* is one of a man energetically, if often reluctantly, involved in shifting networks of collaboration, conversation, and even dependence. It is, in a sense, Blake’s reluctance and frustration with his worldly dependencies that call for a closer study of his networks, not least because such a study can reveal the tensions and inequalities that indeed characterised his professional life—and the professional lives of other commercial engravers during this period.

This picture of a “networked Blake” is one that has begun to receive greater scholarly attention, for instance in many essays in the volume *William Blake in Context* (2019), especially Jon Mee’s chapter on “Networks.” Mee similarly comments on the paradox whereby Blake is seen as “a visionary, alienated from this world, who spoke to angels,” and yet “he spent most of his working life in the heavily networked domain of London’s art and publishing circles, caught in a prolonged period of transition between systems of patronage

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<sup>7</sup> Blake, letter to William Hayley (E 767); Bentley, *Blake Records*, 95; Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Macmillan and Co, 1880), 347, 361.

<sup>8</sup> Iain Sinclair, interview with the author, January 19, 2021.

and the commercial marketplace for books.”<sup>9</sup> The uneven transition from patronage to commercial marketplace, and Blake’s own uncertain position within and between these networks, also received much detailed attention from Sarah Haggarty in her earlier book *Blake’s Gifts* (2010), in which she argued that “Blake’s ‘cottage economy’ is not some ideal realm walled up against wilds of commerce”; rather, she suggested, Blake’s business model in fact intersected with patronage and market economies in various ways, albeit with undeniable reluctance on Blake’s part.<sup>10</sup>

Thanks to the fresh and foundational work of these scholars, a picture is beginning to emerge of Blake not so much as an absolute nonparticipant, but rather as a serial networker, anxiously seeking out new conversations and relationships to sustain him throughout his career. Blake seems to have viewed attachments as at once enriching and potentially entrapping, as suggested by his enigmatic “Proverb of Hell”: “The bird a nest, the spider a web, man friendship” (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 8: 31, E 36). “Friendship” is here positioned as analogous, by turns, to nurturing and dangerous forms of attachment. Indeed, while Blake’s religious antinomianism has often been connected with dissenting groups such as the Ranters and the Seekers, there is also a sense in which Blake can be said to typify the quintessential “seeker” in a broader, more modern sense—continually joining new groups, only to leave those groups when dissatisfied and seek out new allegiances.<sup>11</sup>

It is here that ANT affords a useful set of principles. Studying the specific associations within Blake’s networks can allow us to peer into some of the seemingly fleeting formations and relationships between Blake and local people, places, and texts in a way that at least temporarily suspends the assumption of an *a priori* “society” and, in turn, the question of whether or not Blake (or indeed anyone) could be “outside” of society. Taking as a point of departure Latour’s notion that studying social life is a matter of tracing associations between actants in a network, I therefore take it as a given that Blake was indeed very much entangled in networks of human and nonhuman actants (including people, places, and various types of media), and view my task as the tracing of these associations insofar as they might illuminate aspects of Blake’s cartographic imagination across his oeuvre. Blake can thereby be seen as

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<sup>9</sup> Jon Mee, “Networks,” in *William Blake in Context*, ed. Sarah Haggarty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 15.

<sup>10</sup> Haggarty, *Blake’s Gifts*, 19.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., A. L. Morton, *The Everlasting Gospel: A Study of the Sources of William Blake* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1958).

participating in and to some extent reacting against a shared, broadly conceived “Enlightenment” cartographic language—a dialectic that I pursue in greater detail in Chapters Two and Three. In turn, this approach can encourage an understanding of Blake’s illuminated books as well as the printed books for which he engraved plates as sites of co-production which “admit,” as Haggarty has written, “of more identities than Blake’s alone.”<sup>12</sup> In this sense, I position this impression of Blake as a challenge to Blake exceptionalism and to a widespread and stubborn mythology of Romantic individualism, a mythology which has perpetuated tropes of Romantic “genius” and has tended to minimise the importance of co-production and collaboration in the histories of art and literature more widely.

However, a truly Latourian study of Blake’s networks, as Mee has noted, might go so far as to consider Blake’s book-making workshop as a type for a lab of the kind examined by Latour in *Laboratory Life* (1979) and the illuminated books as themselves “meshworks of materials.”<sup>13</sup> Although I believe such a study would have many merits, what I undertake in this chapter is more in the vein of social network analysis, tracing Blake’s associations with people and institutions, as well as the texts and places in the production of which those actors can be viewed as playing co-constitutive roles. This is partly so as not to lose sight of the social and economic structures that shaped (and often restricted) Blake’s activities, particularly given the intricacies of class-formation during this period. While the language of shaping and restriction may start to sound overly deterministic, studying networks allows one to register multiple determinants without resolving these relations into matters of simple cause and effect: while socioeconomic conditions influence people and things, class itself is always being formed by people and the products being consumed. In this, I follow Goodman who, via Raymond Williams, argues that Marx’s original sense of determination (*bestimmen* in German) was “much closer to ‘definition,’ to the limiting conditions of possibility, in which the limits are multiple, flexible, and changing over time rather than permanent or certain.”<sup>14</sup> Throughout Blake’s career, we effectively see him—often awkwardly and rarely to his complete satisfaction—testing out these “limiting conditions of possibility.”

In this chapter, I focus on actants with which Blake and his work have demonstrable associations, leaving more speculative connections (of which many merit in-depth

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<sup>12</sup> Haggarty, *Blake’s Gifts*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Mee, “Networks,” 20.

<sup>14</sup> Goodman, *Pathologies of Motion*, 18.



consideration) to be suggested in later chapters where relevant.<sup>15</sup> Many of the actants mentioned in this chapter will also re-surface throughout the close-reading sections of this thesis, in order to counteract any sense of an internalist detachment from time and place. Moreover, the re-surfacing of these constituents in the form of imagery, verbal echo, and thematic resonance across Blake's oeuvre suggests that what Jon Saklofske has termed the "network architecture" of Blake's illuminated books can be understood as a non-linear layering of temporalities as well as spatial scales, as he continues to call back to associations held earlier in his life.<sup>16</sup> In this sense, Blake's oeuvre can be modelled according to Michel Serres' notion of tempo-spatial entanglement, which he visualises in terms of crumpling a flat piece of paper marked with points and lines in order to join apparently disparate points in surprising ways.<sup>17</sup> According to Jade Hagan's eco-critical reading, this "network architecture" is also particularly important on a thematic level in Blake's illuminated books, as a form with which Blake repeatedly and ambivalently toys in investigating "how we could be both individual and composite entities at the same time."<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, what are the benefits of viewing maps as actants and as constituents within actor-networks? Latour's work has had an important, albeit limited, impact upon map scholarship. In his article "Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together" (1986), a discussion later developed in *Science and Action* (1987), Latour conceives of "the map" as a prototypical example of an "immutable and combinable mobile," a product that holds its shape while being transferred from the field to "centers of calculation."<sup>19</sup> Although Latour did not particularly pursue this notion of "immutable and combinable mobiles," the exemplary status he accords to the map has prompted various discussions within map scholarship. Some map historians have been hostile to this formulation. In his recent book *Cartography: The*

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<sup>15</sup> I am aware that the logic behind this method of selection places inevitable constraints on the potentially wider reach of the term "network," understood, in the vein of object-oriented ontology for instance, in terms of textual ecosystems or shared visual and verbal languages. My hope is that, in prioritising demonstrably "proximate" examples, this part of the study can still capture a sense that Blake was (or his texts were) both participating in and critiquing aspects of the shared languages of cartographic visual culture that were in circulation during the period—an argument which runs through the remainder of this thesis. Just as much as Blake's texts have their own agential "capabilities" (as per the argument advanced by Mike Goode in *Romantic Capabilities*), so they themselves are picking up on the "capabilities" of other texts in their networks.

<sup>16</sup> Saklofske, "Remediating William Blake," 166.

<sup>17</sup> Michel Serres with Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*, trans. Roxanne Lapidus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 60; cited in Lupton *et al.*, "Introduction," 167.

<sup>18</sup> Hagan, "Network Theory and Ecology," ¶138.

<sup>19</sup> Latour, "Visualisation and Cognition"; Latour, *Science in Action*, 226ff.

*Ideal and Its History* (2019), Matthew Edney finds Latour's phrase "immutable mobile" problematically to imply that objects like maps are stable, fixed entities susceptible to no modifications by their users. However, Edney pursues an argument for the study of maps' specific networks of production, circulation, and consumption which nonetheless has much in common with ANT: Edney's rejection of an idealised, normative conception of "cartography" is, in a sense, analogous to Latour's rejection of an *a priori*, all-too-abstract conception of "society." Though he finds Latour's phrase infelicitous, Edney concedes that "by foregrounding the issue of the circulation of manuscripts, Latour did direct scholarly attention to the processes and patterns of the circulation of knowledge."<sup>20</sup> This concession was probably inevitable, partly because Edney seems not to have fully parsed Latour's original point in *Science in Action*. By contrast, Rob Kitchin, Chris Perkins, and Martin Dodge had earlier grasped a further nuance of Latour's point, making the crucial distinction that Latour does not claim that maps *are* immutable, but rather presents immutability as an *aspiration* of many map-makers, an aspiration to make maps increasingly "familiar and standardized" in order to be "portable across space and time"; by contrast, as these scholars point out, Latour advocates an approach that "unpick[s] the cultures, technologies and mechanics of how a particular form of mapping came to gain immutability and mobility to reveal its contingencies and relationalities."<sup>21</sup> Edney is right to question the assumption that maps are or ever have been successful in attaining "immutability," but ultimately his "processual" approach to studying maps is still strongly Latourian in its aim to "present mapping practices as part of a complex and far-reaching network or mesh of actors and actions."<sup>22</sup>

Since I focus primarily on engraved maps within eighteenth-century printed books and their possible associations with Blake in particular, my study of such actor-networks inevitably has a more limited range than the kind of *ab ovo* method advocated by both Latour and Edney. My aim is to trace especially the production, circulation, and consumption of a range of maps and geographical texts within the relatively close-range domain of the London book and art worlds with which Blake was associated, attempting nonetheless to catch some sense of the longer-range connections that were also instrumental in producing these texts. One

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<sup>20</sup> Edney, *Cartography*, 94.

<sup>21</sup> Kitchin *et al.*, "Thinking about maps," in *Rethinking Maps*, id. ed. (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2009), 16.

<sup>22</sup> Edney, *Cartography*, 47-48

aim of “mapping” Blake’s networks of mapping is, as I have suggested above, to critique a characterisation of Blake as an isolationist figure. Similarly, such work is also intended to counter one of the main “preconceptions” that Edney associates with normative idealisations of mapping: namely, what he refers to as the “individualist preconception” of maps, which holds that maps’ meanings and uses are solely determined by a single, sovereign author, rather than the products of numerous coactors, including map users.<sup>23</sup> This he contrasts with literary studies’ turn to reader reception, begging the question of why maps have often been seen as possessing an intrinsic quality that somehow distinguishes them from other texts when it comes to the making of meaning.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, tracing some of the associations between Blake and local places, map-engravers, map-publishers, maps, and other geographical texts can also provide a means of cutting through a purely sociocultural critique of mapping, which Edney finds itself to imply a normative conception that there is or ever has been such a thing as a universalisable practice of “cartography.” While I shall at times call attention to Blake’s critical engagement with aspects of contemporaneous mapping practices, often in ways that have commonalities with the critiques advanced by post-structuralist thinkers in recent decades, the aim of this chapter is above all to demonstrate that despite his critical caution, Blake was nonetheless an active participant in a lively set of practices associated with map-making in eighteenth-century London. His place in the picture is certainly not reducible to that of a disapproving prophet against mapping; though his forays into mapping are often rich and highly imaginative, he was often deeply immersed in the visual and literary cultures of his time, an immersion which arose in part through his work while apprenticed to James Basire, or when hired to produce plates for Joseph Johnson’s publications, for instance.

## Blake’s Maps

Before turning to those networks centring on some of the better-known groups with which Blake was associated, it will be important to note two texts which are probably Blake’s most recognised cartographic endeavours in his commercial work. These are both engravings based

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-73.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

on designs by other individuals and included in printed books: the engraved map after a design by George Cumberland, the engraving of which has often been attributed to Blake, included in Cumberland's *An Attempt to Describe Hafod* (1796) (figure 7) and the map of the imaginary realm called "Allestone," made after a design by Thomas William Malkin and included in Benjamin Heath Malkin's *A Father's Memoir of his Child* (1806), a series of reflections on the short life of Thomas, Malkin's recently deceased son (figure 8).<sup>25</sup> These collaboratively produced texts provide a vantage point from which to consider the vicissitudes of Blake's social networks, which brought him into contact with mapping practices throughout his career.

Both engravings have been discussed by Rachel Hewitt in her brief but valuable consideration of Blake's work and were also recently mentioned in the introduction to *Romantic Cartographies* (2020).<sup>26</sup> In both cases, the images were positioned as characteristically "Romantic" depictions of spaces, conceived as intrinsically at odds with a supposedly more rationalistic "Enlightenment" conception of cartography, which, in Hewitt's argument, is typified by the productions of the Ordnance Survey in Britain from its official inception in 1791. As Bushell, Carlson, and Davies write while discussing the Allestone map, Malkin's wariness of trusting one of his son's maps to "the hands of an engraver" for fear that "it would contract a stiffness, destructive of its identity" is consistent with their finding that "Romantic-period authors were alive to cartography's own flattening stiffness, the violence it does to the dimensionality of space and the experience of dwelling in it."<sup>27</sup> That Malkin did eventually trust Blake with the task prompts Bushell *et al.* to make what is one of very few statements by scholars as to Blake's apparent awareness of contemporaneous mapping practices. Examining Blake's praise, included in *A Father's Memoirs*, of the child's map design for its "character of the firm and determinate," signalling "a strong imagination, a clear idea, and a determinate vision of things in [the child's] own mind," these scholars remark that "Blake's assessment hints at an awareness of the ways in which even the increasingly

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<sup>25</sup> On the attribution of the Hafod map to Blake, see Geoffrey Keynes, "George Cumberland and William Blake," in *Blake Studies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 236-37, where the attribution is credited to Erdman.

<sup>26</sup> Hewitt, *Map of a Nation*, 203ff; Hewitt, "Mapping and Romanticism," 163; Sally Bushell *et al.*, *Romantic Cartographies*, 1-6. The map of Allestone is also briefly mentioned in Stephen Daniels and John Bonehill, "Education and Cartography," in *The History of Cartography*, Vol IV: *Cartography in the European Enlightenment*, Part 1, ed. Matthew Edney and Mary Sponberg Pedley (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 367-79: 377.

<sup>27</sup> Benjamin Heath Malkin, *A Father's Memoirs of his Child* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1806), 11, 31; Bushell *et al.*, *Romantic Cartographies*, 5.

institutionalized science of cartography [...] was a creative as well as a critical act.”<sup>28</sup> This suggestion is compelling indeed, especially when one considers that *A Father's Memoirs* was published in 1806, and thus Blake would have engraved the map of Allestone in the very years when he was working on *Jerusalem*, his own hugely imaginative effort to map the contours of the utopian realm he called “Golgonooza.” Similarly, Bushell *et al.* comment on the irregular nature of Cumberland’s map—the cartography of which is “amateur, non-trigonometrical, not-to-scale, and no less powerful for that”—which, they propose, can also be considered to have “a complex relation” with both the Allestone map and Blake’s visual-verbal illuminated books.<sup>29</sup>

As well as noting the likelihood that these maps may have shaped or at least appealed to Blake’s own imagination, Bushell *et al.* also pay particular attention to the fact that these images arose within a close-knit network of people, places, and texts. In quite a simple sense, then, this approach can begin to help us trace the associations that may have played a part in co-producing Blake’s cartographic imagination in the first place. Cumberland’s map depicts part of the grounds of his friend Thomas Johnes’ estate at Hafod, Wales. Malkin had decided to publish his *A Father's Memoirs* during conversations with Johnes while they followed the very walking routes at Hafod that had been mapped by Cumberland.<sup>30</sup> In both cases, the decision to hire Blake was based on pre-existing personal acquaintances with Cumberland and Malkin. It is not known exactly when Blake met either individual. He was certainly close friends with Cumberland by December 6, 1795, the date of Blake’s first surviving letter to Cumberland. Cumberland’s *Thoughts on Outline*, for which he and Blake each produced numerous plates in a linear neoclassical style, was published in 1796, the same year as *An Attempt to Describe Hafod*. Blake’s comments on the Allestone map’s admirably “firm and determinate” outlines some ten years later seem unmistakably to call back to this earlier project, sentiments which are again echoed in many passages idealising firm outlines in both *The Descriptive Catalogue* and the illuminated books. It is worth noting briefly here that Blake’s lifelong fixation on outline calls for distinction, however, from the kind of firm outlines generally privileged by contemporaneous maps: there is a tension between Blake’s insistence upon the importance of respecting the determinacy of “Minute Particulars” through firm

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<sup>28</sup> Malkin, *A Father's Memoirs*, 34; Bushell *et al.*, *Romantic Cartographies*, 6.

<sup>29</sup> Bushell *et al.*, *Romantic Cartographies*, 2, 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

outlines, and his thoroughgoing suspicion of totalising, diagrammatic lines seeking to restrict bodies and spaces—a tension to which I return in Chapters Two and Three.

Malkin's *A Father's Memoirs* is also an important text in the early history of Blake biography, since Malkin provides an account of the life and character of Blake in his preface to the volume, for which Blake had also designed the frontispiece (figure 9). This account merits mention here primarily for its contribution to the mythology surrounding Blake's "genius," which Malkin saw as being "tied down, as far as possible, to the mechanical department of his profession," remarking that Blake had been "stigmatised as an engraver, who might do tolerably well, if he was not mad."<sup>31</sup> The account, later cited on multiple occasions in Gilchrist's *Life*, stripped Blake's commercial engraving work of any great value, a view very much in line with contemporaneous attitudes towards engravers, who were seen as lowly "artisans" rather than artists in their own right and were accordingly denied full membership of the Royal Academy, a point to which I shall return. Malkin privileges a view of Blake as a poet of genius who ought not to be considered according to his principal livelihood of engraving—although it was Blake whom Malkin had hired to make the engravings for this very book.

The Hafod and Allestone maps, and the associations operative in their production, are undoubtedly important documents in relation to Blake's cartographic imagination. But they are certainly not *the only* such documents, which is how they have tended to be treated in those very few scholarly attempts to bring Blake and mapping into direct relationship. We might consider, for instance, the fact that Blake engraved plates that were not themselves maps but were included in geographical textbooks. For instance, among Blake's earliest copy engravings were a series of views showing Lyons, Osnaburg in Westphalia, and Presburg in Hungary, which were included in John Seally and Israel Lyons' *A Complete Geographical Dictionary* (c. 1784), and some plates after designs by John Webber depicting native peoples mentioned in the narrative of Captain James Cook's third voyage through the Pacific, for the

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<sup>31</sup> Malkin, *A Father's Memoirs*, xxiv.

1785-6 edition of Daniel Fenning and Joseph Collyer's *A New System of Geography*.<sup>32</sup> In what follows, I aim to demonstrate the sheer variety and volume of maps and their makers within certain of Blake's immediate networks throughout his career, beginning with a consideration of his formative years as an apprentice to the London engraver James Basire.

### People, Places, and Texts from Blake's Apprenticeship Years

As late as *Jerusalem*, a work that he was still revising at the end of his life, Blake charts the "distress & woe" spreading across London, with particular mention of some locations associated with his early life: "The Corner of Broad Street weeps; Poland Street languishes / To Great Queen Street & Lincolns Inn, all is distress & woe" (*Jerusalem* 84: 15-16, E 243). The autobiographical referents here are clear enough: in his youth, Blake lived on Broad and Poland Streets in Soho, and number 31 Great Queen Street, Lincolns Inn Fields, was the location of the home and workshop of James Basire, to whom the fourteen-year-old Blake was apprenticed for a period of seven years (1772-79). In this mapping of a very personal London topography, Blake—by the time of *Jerusalem's* composition somewhere in the vicinity of fifty years of age and living again in Soho at 17 South Molton Street—performs a very characteristic manoeuvre. Very much in the vein of Michel Serres' crumpled piece of paper, times and places that are seemingly remote from the here and now suddenly resurface to unsettle any sense of spatiotemporal closure, a kind of recursiveness that is neither wholly regressive nor cyclical, but sensitive to an exquisite openness that troubles whatever neat spatiotemporal categories one might conceive. The manoeuvre also, in a sense, colours my approach as I venture into the territory of sources and biography, hoping to open up a pathway for enquiry without ossifying Blake's artistic and poetic output into a colourless diagram of linear, causal relations.

To begin, nonetheless, with a rather simple point of a biographical nature: the *Jerusalem* quote also indicates that during much of his life, especially these early years,

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<sup>32</sup> The 1785-6 text was deemed "new" by its editor on the grounds that "[m]uch new matter is now introduced" regarding regions including the East Indies, the Persian empire, Asia Minor, the Cape of Good Hope, and Russia (Daniel Fenning and Joseph Collyer, *A New System of Geography* (London: J. Johnson, and G. and T. Wilkie, 1785-6), iv). It is worth noting, in support of my later observation as to the prevalence of geographical texts among Joseph Johnson's publications, that Johnson is also recorded as a bookseller for a 1770 edition of Collyer and Fenning's *A New System of Geography* (London: Printed for Payne and sold by Johnson, 1770)—though this predated any recorded dealings between Johnson and Blake.

Blake's activities were closely confined to a fairly small area of London. Amy Concannon and Martin Myrone note that Blake is likely to have moved in with Basire during the apprenticeship period, but the master's house in Great Queen Street was less than twenty minutes' walk from his family home in Broad Street, and that he would no doubt have gone home very often during his apprenticeship years.<sup>33</sup> Their account registers just how small was the geographical area that Blake would have habitually traversed during this time. In what follows, I want to ask how Blake's time as an apprentice to Basire may have interestingly stimulated aspects of his geographical imagination, thinking in terms of both the relatively small geographical area within which he lived and worked, and the much larger geographical scales treated in the cartographic-antiquarian texts that he likely encountered while working for Basire. Between these poles, I begin to think through the paradoxically extremely local and expansively global nature—what Saree Makdisi terms the “open worldly perspective”—of Blake's geographical and cartographic imagination in his later work.<sup>34</sup>

Blake's apprenticeship to James Basire is probably best known for instilling in the young Blake a longstanding interest in antiquarianism and a love for the art of engraving. Here I do not claim to have pinpointed a particular career-defining cartographic moment for Blake during these years. But there are a few points that bear mentioning in relation to the development of Blake's cartographic and geographic imagination, and which will begin to contour some of the ideas explored later in this thesis. Looking at this period of Blake's early career, I shall attempt to sketch the networks of people, places, and texts (including artworks believed to have been produced by Blake himself) that would have afforded early artistic and intellectual engagements with geography and cartography, in ways that might usefully be seen as ramifying across his oeuvre.

Although they engraved a great number of maps, plans, and views, the Basires were not first and foremost specialist map-engravers. Historian Richard Goddard stoutly rejects an earlier characterisation of Isaac Basire (1704-1768), first in the family line of engravers, as primarily a map-engraver, preferring the descriptor “generalist etcher.”<sup>35</sup> Isaac's son James Basire (1730-1802), to whom Blake was apprenticed in the 1770s, may have seemed bound

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<sup>33</sup> Concannon and Myrone, *William Blake*, 25-27.

<sup>34</sup> Saree Makdisi, “Blake's metropolitan radicalism,” in *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780-1840*, ed. James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 113.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Goddard, *“Drawing on Copper”: The Basire family of copper-plate engravers and their works* (Maastricht: Maastricht University Press, 2016), 27-28, 58.



for cartographic specialism when he was apprenticed to his father's friend, the map-engraver R. W. Seale in 1745. However, in 1748, midway through the traditional seven-year apprenticeship, James is then recorded as being apprenticed to a painter by the name of Richard Dalton, with whom he worked in London and, for a period, in Rome. Goddard supposes that the change of master "must be explained not only by Dalton's urgent need of an engraving assistant, but also by James's own artistic aptitude and his desire to do more with his career than engrave maps and other technical drawings."<sup>36</sup> The latter hypothesis does seem consistent with an apparent eighteenth-century hierarchical distinction between the work of map-engraving and other artistic genres—in an 1804 lecture delivered at the Royal Academy, Henry Fuseli famously disparaged landscape paintings that appeared as though "little more than topography," mere "mapwork."<sup>37</sup> Fuseli was speaking of painting, not engraving, but his comment also keys into a perception of "mapwork" as being a low or popular genre of little concern to any serious artist, and lacking in the kind of moral, affective, or imaginative properties that Fuseli appears to privilege in this lecture.<sup>38</sup> This point is worth considering in comparison with Blake's own apparently profound, though not uncritical, curiosity for mapping as an activity furnishing great intellectual, affective, and imaginative potentiality. On the other hand, as will be explored throughout this thesis, Blake's rather idiosyncratic visionary mapping does seem itself to imply a certain scorn for the seemingly unimaginative plainness and abstraction of so many contemporaneous maps.

As Worms and Baynton-Williams note in their dictionary of British map-engravers mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, James Basire was "principally known" not for maps but "for views and portraits, and especially antiquarian and historical subjects."<sup>39</sup> Over the course of his career, however, much like his father Isaac, James did engrave numerous maps. This occupation was perhaps inevitable for many London engravers at the time: British visual culture responded to a surge of map-mania, recognisable in the welter of cartographic, topographical, and geographical publications produced during the second half of the eighteenth century. Among James Basire's "mapwork," Worms and Baynton-Williams note an engraving of a map of Mount Vesuvius that appeared in the *Philosophical Transactions* of

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>37</sup> Later published in Henry Fuseli, *Lectures on Painting, delivered at the Royal Academy* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1820), 179.

<sup>38</sup> See Myrone, "What did Henry Fuseli mean."

<sup>39</sup> Worms and Baynton-Williams, *British Map Engravers*, 55.

the Royal Society and in Sir William Hamilton's *Observations on Mount Vesuvius* (1772), numerous other maps for the *Philosophical Transactions* between 1771-1797, various plans for *Archaeologia*, the journal of the Society of Antiquaries in London, between 1773-1796; and several more maps, plans, and views, both standalone prints and contributions to books and periodicals.<sup>40</sup> Worms and Baynton-Williams also record that Basire subscribed to Emanuel Bowen and Thomas Bowen's *Atlas Anglicanus* (1767-8; subsequently reissued in 1777 by Thomas Kitchin). The prominence of cartographic prints among Basire's output, including during the years of Blake's apprenticeship, would have ensured that the young Blake attained at least a general awareness of the enormous commercial success that maps were enjoying, and no doubt also some sense of the symbolic, formal, and material characteristics of eighteenth-century maps.

Relatedly, it is worth considering the possible significance and reverberations of Blake's contact with Basire's wider professional networks. Among these, of chief interest for the purposes of this study is the Society of Antiquaries in London and, in particular, the antiquary Sir Richard Gough, who acted as the Society's Director from 1771-1797 and was responsible for the revival of the periodicals *Archaeologia* and *Vetusta Monumenta*. Basire had been appointed engraver to the Society in 1759, but as Goddard notes, it was only following Gough's appointment as Director that Basire was "able to benefit from a near monopoly of engraving a regular flow of plates for these two publications."<sup>41</sup> As Blake's nineteenth-century biographer Alexander Gilchrist had put it, Basire would become "favourably known in his generation, as the engraver of the illustrations to the slow-revolving *Archaeologia* and *Vetusta Monumenta* of the Society of Antiquaries, [...] and to the works of Gough and other antiquarian big-wigs of the old, full-bottomed sort."<sup>42</sup> Indeed from 1773, Gough employed Basire to produce hundreds of engravings for both *Archaeologia* and *Vetusta Monumenta*, many of which (as noted by Worms and Baynton-Williams) were maps and plans. Basire also contributed engravings to Gough's *British Topography* (published in 1780, the year just following the conclusion of Blake's apprenticeship), including a section of the famous *Mappa mundi* housed at Hereford Cathedral (plate V).<sup>43</sup> The volume also included

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Goddard, *Drawing on Copper*, 137.

<sup>42</sup> Gilchrist, *Life*, 14.

<sup>43</sup> The Hereford map is described by Gough in *British Topography* (London: Printed for R. Payne and son, and J. Nichols, 1780), 71-76.

an unsigned engraving (plate VI), probably also the work of Basire, of what is now known as the “Gough Map,” a late-medieval map of Britain, which Gough acquired in 1774 and later bequeathed to the Bodleian Library in 1809; as well as plates reproducing Matthew Paris’s map of England (plate IV) and his strip-map pilgrimage itinerary from England to the Holy Land (plate VII).

Gough’s strong personal interest in maps and Basire’s direct involvement in several such Gough-supervised projects are characteristic of a strongly cartographic tendency within the British antiquarian field during this period. That tendency was also typified by William Stukeley’s earlier mappings of British archaeological sites, including the monuments at Stonehenge and Avebury. Certain of Stukeley’s studies, which are also much-cited in Gough’s *British Topography*, are known to have come to Blake’s attention at some point in his career, and the antiquarian flavour of his apprenticeship years suggests a possible moment for an early encounter with Stukeley’s work—though Blake’s most direct engagements with Stukeley seem to be from much later in his career. As many scholars have noted, Blake’s knowledge of Stukeley, and especially his engagement with Stukeley’s cartography, are in evidence, for example, in the final plate of *Jerusalem* (figure 10), in which the partially visible serpentine structure behind the standing figures “quotes” the form of Stukeley’s view of the serpentine “Druidic” temple at Avebury (figure 11), combining this shape with trilithons based on those at Stonehenge.<sup>44</sup> In this design, Blake mingles the forms of these two ancient structures with elements from his own sense of a mythologised cosmic order of events animating Britain and the world—the two forward-facing figures, presumably Los and Enitharmon, stand poised in the acts of hammering and spinning the forms of generation—including celestial bodies, namely a globe or sun (left) and a crescent moon (right). The depiction of the globe, the surface of which has markings that may indicate land-masses, relates to a network of globes in Blake’s work, which I discuss in more detail in Chapters Two and Three. Globes in Blake’s work are associated, alternately, with negatively freighted sense of diagrammatic abstraction and with a more positive kind of regenerative world-making, the latter of which seems to be evoked in this design. Meanwhile, Los’s tongs also double as a kind of redeemed version of Urizen’s compasses, which I discuss in relation to Carington

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<sup>44</sup> Ruthven Todd was the first to note a connection between Blake’s design and Stukeley’s scenographic reconstruction of the temple at Avebury: Ruthven Todd, *Tracks in the Snow: Studies in English Science and Art* (London: Grey Wallis Press, 1946), 48-9 and pl. 14.

Bowles later in this chapter in connection with the kind of restrictive abstraction that was anathema to Blake.

Overall, the final design of *Jerusalem* epitomises Blake's curiously (anti-)cartographic imagination, jettisoning the empiricist aesthetic of Stukeley's visualisations while simultaneously appropriating their forms within a decidedly non-empiricist register. The inherent tension between Blake's prophetic visions and his use of cartographic tropes are crucial to the *agon* of this final vision: while *Jerusalem* concerns the redemption of humankind and its restoration to prophetic vision, Blake everywhere stops short of *representing* this future-tense fantasy, which, precisely because it is located in a theoretical future, cannot be thought of as representable in the present. In contrast, then, to Stukeley and other antiquarians, who were interested in discovering the past as a foundation for the present, in Blake's figurations the past continues to be threaded through the forms of an ever-emergent future. Jason Whittaker is surely right in supposing that on the whole the "use of empirical materialism to understand the monuments, especially as antiquarians employed 'science' to fix and give certainty to their ideas, irritated Blake," and a certain critical attitude does seem consistent with Blake's winking assimilation and creative transfiguration of Stukeley's view in the *Jerusalem* design.<sup>45</sup> Eighteenth-century cartography was inherently wedded to a spirit of empirical materialism, and as I hope to have suggested, Blake can be usefully understood as both participating in and reacting to the enthusiasm for cartography among antiquarian publications in particular.

Certainly, the contact with Basire, Gough, and the works of other antiquaries during his apprenticeship must have initially apprised Blake of the enormous efforts being made to chart British history and geography as comprehensively as possible in cartographic form. Indeed, in *British Topography*, Gough is intent on establishing a comprehensive systematisation of British antiquities as a matter of national pride: "Our country is as capable as France of furnishing such a system of its antiquities."<sup>46</sup> For Gough, as indicated by the profusion of maps within the volume, cartography was central to the construction of such a "system." He therefore held a much higher opinion of maps than Fuseli later would in his lecture on painting, writing that

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<sup>45</sup> Jason Whittaker, *William Blake and the Myths of Britain* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1999), 10.

<sup>46</sup> Gough, *British Topography*, xli.

Views and maps are such interesting representations, and we are so sensible what we have lost by the want of them in earlier ages, that while the curious are induced to preserve them, future artists will be encouraged to execute them.<sup>47</sup>

For the British antiquary, it seems, maps furnished the study of British archaeological sites with special interest, a special vista onto history; according to Gough's logic, by "preserv[ing]" maps, one could preserve the past, and by creating maps, one could preserve the present. This sense of maps as fixing time and space into a neat crystallisation seems on the one hand to foreclose the kind of playful modifying spirit privileged by what I term Blake's "maps in progress." On the other hand, however, there is in Gough's statement also a sense of the endless potential for creating *new* maps, and this is not entirely incompatible with Blake's utopian cartographies, which do seem to toy proleptically with an as-yet un-mapped and indeed un-mappable future. No doubt for Gough and many other contemporary antiquaries, however, the anticipation of future mappings was more in the spirit of a forward trajectory of scientific "progress," rather than one of political utopianism or Christian prophecy. Especially in Blake's mature mythographic mappings of Britain, a quality of open-endedness or virtuality continually upsets any flicker of fixity as in the kind of *fait-accomplis* logic to which many contemporary map-makers seem to have aspired.

Blake himself is believed to have been involved in the preparation of engravings for two projects arising from Basire's connection with Gough and the Society of Antiquaries: Sir Joseph Aylofffe's description of three monuments at Westminster Abbey, published in volume II of *Vetusta Monumenta* in 1780; and Sir Richard Gough's own *Sepulchral Monuments in Great Britain* (not published until 1786). Blake's supposed contributions were not maps *per se*, but they do pertain to the site of Westminster Abbey, which would become an absolutely crucial landmark in Blake's later cartographies of London, as I shall explore in greater depth in Chapter Three.

None of the engravings bear Blake's signature; those that are signed bear only that of Basire. Consequently, there has been much doubt regarding the certainty with which the surviving drawings, let alone the engravings, can indeed be attributed to Blake's hand. The

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, xlvi.

topic has subsequently been much discussed by Blake scholars seeking to settle on a definitive attribution.<sup>48</sup> Richard Goddard, inspecting the matter from the Basire camp, is unsurprisingly sceptical about Blake's involvement in the projects.<sup>49</sup> Taking Goddard as the greatest sceptic of the attribution of so many of these works to Blake's hand, we would do well to bear in mind his cautionary note that Blake scholars have probably been overeager in this regard: we are warned that it is "implausible to interpret them in the context of a contemporary engraving workshop as the sole work of a precocious genius whose later work would be haunted by the ghost of Westminster Abbey."<sup>50</sup> This is indeed an important reminder of the fact that workshops were sites of co-production and those works ascribed to a particular master or individual were very often the products of collaborative efforts, in both direct and indirect senses.

Yet even without certainty that the engravings themselves were by Blake, the notion of his being "haunted" by Westminster Abbey throughout his later career holds weight. The monument became something of a shorthand for what Blake saw as the superiority of Gothic art over the classicism embodied, for him, in St. Paul's Cathedral. The undisputed notion that during his apprenticeship Blake actually worked on-site at a monument that did take on marked significance later in his oeuvre should not be dismissed as inconsequential; nor should the fact that the work was in preparation for two major antiquarian publications treating sites of special significance within British topography. The intersection between these two threads surely points to the Westminster work as at least an elementary instance of the ways in which Blake's experiences in and of London continued to thread through his work until late in his career. It is tempting to draw attention to the design to *Jerusalem* plate 84 (figure 12), the plate from which I quoted at the beginning of this discussion. In the design, a child leads an old man in the direction of a Gothic structure that resembles Westminster Abbey. In the light of the autobiographical referents of the lines I have quoted, could it be that Blake partly intends a depiction of his younger self leading his now much older self back to one of the

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<sup>48</sup> In favour of attribution to Blake, see, most recently, Michael Phillips, *William Blake. Apprentice & Master* (Exhibition Catalogue) (Oxford: Ashmolean Library, 2014), 42-44. The topic has also been strenuously appraised in favour of attribution to Blake by, e.g., Mark Crosby, "William Blake in Westminster Abbey, 1774-1777," *The Bodleian Library Record*, 22.2, 2009, 162-80; Robert N. Essick, *William Blake Printmaker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 31; Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), 2-14.

<sup>49</sup> Goddard, *Drawing on Copper*, 152.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

places where he began his artistic journey, a place now infused with all the accrued symbolic force of his subsequent imaginings? I do not think it would be an uncharacteristic gesture on Blake's part. That Blake had years earlier produced a very similar design to "London," then lacking the suggestion of St. Paul's and Westminster in the background, introduces a further layer into the curious resurfacing of somehow reworked or reimagined images over several years. Blake's perpetual remediations of familiar words and images are also, in a sense, symbolic re-visitations of events located spatiotemporally and materially in the forms of his art and of his life.

To turn now to a vaster geographical scale, another of Basire's engraving projects in which Blake is believed to have had a hand, and which seems in particular to filter into his later mappings of world mythology and history, was a series of plates for Jacob Bryant's three-volume *A New System, or, An Analysis of Ancient Mythology* (1774-6). This was a work of speculative mythology that argued, often by way of spurious etymological reckonings, that all world mythologies had their origin in Hebrew Scripture and were ultimately traceable back to the deluge of Noah. Again, there is much uncertainty surrounding Blake's involvement in the book's illustrations: the plates are signed only "Basire," and scholars' efforts to ascribe certain plates to Blake with absolutely certainty have ultimately been inconclusive. Whereas in 1979 Roger Easson and Robert Essick included some of the Bryant plates in their catalogue of Blake's commercial book illustrations, Essick's 1991 revised catalogue demotes them, along with the Ayloffe and Gough engravings, to an appendix for works lacking a "solid basis for attribution."<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, as Sibylle Erle notes, it is "easy to support" the suggestion that Blake came to know Bryant's *Mythology* at some point, since he mentions it some years later in the *Descriptive Catalogue* in the discussion of his now-lost painting *The Ancient Britons*.<sup>52</sup> The note, written to accompany Blake's 1809 exhibition, reads:

The antiquities of every Nation under Heaven, is no less sacred than that of the Jews. They are the same thing as Jacob Bryant and all antiquaries have proved. How other antiquities came to be neglected and disbelieved, while those of the Jews are collected and arranged, is an enquiry, worthy of both the Antiquarian and the Divine. All had originally one language, and one religion,

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<sup>51</sup> See Robert N. Essick, *William Blake's Commercial Book Illustrations: A Catalogue and Study of the Plates Engraved by Blake after Designs by Other Artists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 117.

<sup>52</sup> Sibylle Erle, "What New Is There to Learn from Old Familiars? Burning Bright: William Blake and the Art of the Book: John Rylands Library" (Exhibition Review), *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 48 (3), 2014-15, ¶17.

this was the religion of Jesus, the everlasting Gospel. Antiquity preaches the Gospel of Jesus (*Descriptive Catalogue*, E 543).

“All had originally one language, and one religion”: such assertions recapitulate similar propositions that Blake had made in two of his earliest illuminated books, *All Religions Are One* (1788) and *There is No Natural Religion* (1788), in which he locates the ultimate “source” of religion in the so-called “Poetic Genius,” following a similarly syncretic, universalising logic to Bryant. As Whittaker has shown, it is in the Lambeth books of the 1790s that Blake began to engage most rigorously with the likes of Bryant: the accounts of British and world history that Blake there adumbrates can be fruitfully considered in connection with the kind of universal mythographic mapping undertaken by Bryant and other antiquaries such as Edward Davies and William Stukeley.

That Blake’s own version of mythological history is concomitant with a global geographical vision seems also to indicate a close engagement with the geographical specificities of texts like Bryant’s, which dealt with a far vaster spatial scale than the British-topographical texts I have mentioned above. Whittaker points to Blake’s cartographic vision of world geography, its barest bones being based around four continents associated with the four points of a compass: “Africa to the south, the birthplace of fallen man; Asia to the east, the consolidator of tyranny; Europe to the north, the arena of war; and America to the west, a new birthplace.”<sup>53</sup> James Barry, an artist whom Blake seems to have admired, also mapped this westward thrust in *The Phoenix or the Resurrection of Freedom* (1776), in which liberty has flown westward from Britain to America.<sup>54</sup> Focusing on Blake’s connection to antiquarianism, Whittaker compares the geographical trajectory of Blake’s Lambeth books to the westward thrust of Aylett Sammes’ and Stukeley’s eighteenth-century accounts of the supposed Phoenician origins of the Britons, in efforts to map Biblical history onto particular people and places and thereby to establish for Britons an illustrious ancestry. Such euhemerist genealogies followed especially in the footsteps of Isaac Newton’s *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended* (1728), and Bryant can be seen as one of a number of subsequent antiquaries attempting “to reconcile the Bible with science” according to a narrative “which

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<sup>53</sup> Whittaker, *Myths of Britain*, 36.

<sup>54</sup> Blake alludes to his admiration for Barry on numerous occasions throughout his marginalia and manuscript writings: see, e.g., Blake’s description of “Virtuous & Independent Barry” in his “Public Address” (E576).



had received poetic authority in Books XI-XII of *Paradise Lost*.”<sup>55</sup> Bryant in particular seems to have been especially concerned with establishing the roots of pagan idolatry as practiced in Britain and Europe. Blake may have been acquainted with Bryant’s hypothesis regarding the origins of sun worship—a practice depicted on the frontispiece to *The Song of Los* (figure 13). According to Bryant, the idolatrous practice arose from the error of the so-called “Amonians,” the people descended from the Egyptian Ham, son of Noah. Bryant claims that the Amonians ultimately passed on idolatry to pagan civilisations in Britain and Europe. As Jon Mee notes, however, “where Bryant suggested that sun worship was a corruption of primitive monotheism Blake adjusts the relationship to suggest the continuing identity of the two religions.”<sup>56</sup>

Still, in some broad sense, Blake’s cartography of world history rehearses in essence a similar geographical trajectory involving the westward transmission of peoples, myths, and religious practices. Though, again, it rejects a distinction between different religions and their respective falls into error, *Africa* is strongly concerned with mapping the various geographically situated iterations of the fall, articulated in a series of nefarious bestowals or transmissions: Urizen gave “laws” that brought about the shuddering and fading of Adam and Noah in Eden and Ararat; Rintrah gave “Abstract Philosophy” to “Brama in the East”; Palamabron gave “abstract Law” to Hermes Trismegistus and the Greek philosophers; Antamon gave a “loose Bible” to Mohammed; Sotha gave a “Code of War” to Odin; Los and Enitharmon gave oppressive “Laws & Religions” to the sons of Har; and finally Urizen bestowed a universal “Philosophy of the Five Senses” upon the world via “the hands of Newton and Locke” in England (*The Song of Los* 3: 8-30, E 67; 4: 14-17, E 68). Nor do such malign acts of gift-giving place the onus of error solely on apparently external, ontologically differentiated actors, nor on prior, geographically remote civilisations. As Haggarty insists, “[f]or Blake, giving is not inexorable; it is not something done to us, but something which our latent poetic genius allows us actively to receive or to reject.”<sup>57</sup> Human religious error lies, most essentially for Blake, in the recurrent collective failure of humankind to recognise their innate “Poetic Genius” and, accordingly, to reject the wicked offerings of false religious apprehensions and systems.

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<sup>55</sup> Whittaker, *Myths of Britain*, 34.

<sup>56</sup> Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm*, 132.

<sup>57</sup> Haggarty, *Blake’s Gifts*, 190.

Moreover, as Whittaker, Makdisi, and others have emphasised, Blake's version of world history is far from spatiotemporally straightforward in a unitary or linear sense.<sup>58</sup> For one thing, Blake composed the "continental" prophecies in an order that indicates little devotion to linear chronology in the manner for instance of Bryant's *Mythology*. Blake printed the prophecies in the following order: *America* (1793), *Europe* (1794), and *The Song of Los* (1795), the *Song* being divided into sections entitled "Africa" and "Asia." In one particularly blatant disruption of linear chronology, "Africa" (the first section of *The Song of Los*) ends with the same line with which *America* had begun, and thus "looks both backwards and forwards to *America*," which had been composed first but towards which Blake's narrative repeatedly seems to look forward.<sup>59</sup> These points of correspondence and contrast suggest that at least by the 1790s Blake had a close familiarity with the *Mythology* and perhaps with similar antiquarian works of speculative mythology, and that he was interested in challenging the descriptions of world history and geography that he encountered in such contemporary texts.

I would like to conclude my discussion of Blake's apprenticeship years with a brief discussion of what is believed to have been the first separate plate engraved by Blake (figure 14). The first state of the engraving now bears a later inscription, written by Blake in pen and ink, connecting it to his apprenticeship: "Engraved when I was a beginner at Basires / from a drawing by Salviati after Michelangelo." The Salviati drawing has never been traced, and though the figure is based on an unidentified figure wearing a Phrygian cap in Michelangelo's *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter* in the Vatican, the landscape appears to be Blake's own invention. The design may also recall a print entitled *A British Druid*, engraved by Gerard van der Gucht after a design by Stukeley and included in Stukeley's book *Stonehenge* (1740) (figure 15), another text that Blake might have known through his involvement with antiquarian networks. Blake's engraving can be dated to 1773 based on the inscription Blake added to a second state many, many years later in 1820-25 (figure 16)—a further instance of the kind of long-range remediation one so often stumbles upon in his work, linking spatio-temporally distant points together, again recalling Michel Serres' model of spatio-temporal entanglement.

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<sup>58</sup> Makdisi, *Impossible History*, 36-37.

<sup>59</sup> Whittaker, *Myths of Britain*, 36.

While the figure in the first state had been unidentified apart from the later pen note to the 1820-25 state Blake added a title: *Joseph of Arimathea Among the Rocks of Albion*. The addition is very compelling for many reasons. The reference is to the British legend according to which Joseph of Arimathea had come to Glastonbury, bringing Christianity to England. According to this legend, Joseph also built a church at Glastonbury, and so took on the status of one of the early Gothic cathedral-builders in England: in the lower margin of the second state, Blake has added a note: “This is One of the Gothic Artists who Built the Cathedrals in what we call the Dark Ages/Wandering about in sheep skins & goat skins of whom the World was not worthy/such were the Christians/in All Ages” (E 671). The nineteenth-century revision to what was a previously untitled picture of an unidentified man is indicative of Blake’s continued engagement with British geography and legend, in his late work especially explored through the theme of pilgrimage, as suggested for example in the famous lyric “And did those feet in ancient time” from *Milton*. Indeed, Kathryn Barush has seen the second state of the engraving as typical of Blake’s treatment of pilgrimage as a place-based practice, rather than solely a metaphorical encapsulation of the Christian life-as-journey, especially in his late work, a notion that I shall revisit in my discussion of “The Ancients” later in this chapter.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, if the initial design did indeed relate to Stukeley’s *A British Druid* (figure 15), the later title might be seen as a Christianised re-imagining of the scene, consonant with Blake’s well-known suspicions of Druidic religion.

We cannot know whether the legend of Joseph of Arimathea’s journey to Britain was on Blake’s mind when he initially designed the picture all those years before.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, the re-visioning of Blake’s earlier print in connection with the myth of Joseph of Arimathea certainly affirms that Blake retained until his very late career a strong interest in British history and geography, carrying forward in some sense the antiquarian spirit of the people, places, and texts he had encountered during his apprenticeship in Great Queen Street.

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<sup>60</sup> Barush, *Art and the Sacred Journey in Britain, 1790-1850* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), see esp. the Introduction.

<sup>61</sup> It may be worth noting that in the 1790s Blake depicted Joseph of Arimathea as a similarly muscular, bearded figure on a rocky shore, in the print now called *Joseph of Arimathea Preaching to the Inhabitants of Britain* (from *A Large Book of Designs*, Copy A)—though this type is not unusual among Blake’s depictions of Biblical (and other) figures: Job, for example, is similarly figured in Blake’s illustrations to the Book of Job.

## Blake, Johnson, and Geography

As noted above, the image on plate 84 of *Jerusalem* (figure 12) also maps St. Paul's cathedral, which was important to Blake not only as an embodiment of Gothicism, but also for its proximity to the shop and residence of the publisher Joseph Johnson. Blake and Johnson had a comparatively longstanding association, chiefly during the 1780s and '90s, and the importance of Joseph Johnson's publishing business has long been a mainstay of historicist approaches to Blake's work. The engravings that Blake made for Johnson's publications form a key context for scholars' speculations about Blake's engagement with contemporaneous print practices through the prism of the books and authors that he could have encountered via Johnson's publishing hub. Meanwhile, Johnson is thought to have sold and displayed copies of Blake's pamphlet *The Gates of Paradise* and his illuminated books at his shop, and Blake was at least once an attendee of a gathering at Johnson's home: these remain oft-cited reminders that Blake's presence in his society and culture was rather less obscure or out-of-touch than his prophetic visions may broadly imply.<sup>62</sup> Much that has been written about the connection between Blake and Johnson has tended, with good reason, to centre on the political and religious implications of Blake's association with Johnson's circle—with figures like Mary Wollstonecraft, Joseph Priestley, and Thomas Paine frequently named as evidence of Blake's radical connections. What is still lacking is a thoroughgoing survey of Johnson's publishing activity (a comprehensive bibliography of his publications is yet to materialise) and a closer consideration of the possible reverberations of these publications within Blake's concurrent and later work.<sup>63</sup> In what follows, I shall examine geography as an important

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<sup>62</sup> On the display of Blake's works at Johnson's shop and for a useful summary of the evidence and scholarship surrounding Blake's position within Johnson's coterie, see Joseph Byrne, "Blake, Joseph Johnson, and *The Gates of Paradise*," *The Wordsworth Circle*, 44, no. 2/3 (2013): 131-36. Blake is recorded as having attended a gathering at Johnson's house in William Godwin's diary, entry on April 4, 1797. See Victoria Myers, David O'Shaughnessy, and Mark Philp ed., *The Diary of William Godwin* (Oxford: Oxford Digital Library, 2010). An unpublished PhD thesis by Jeffrey Mertz, which seeks, often somewhat speculatively, to connect Blake with the discursive characteristics of various of Johnson's publications, is probably the closest thing to a comprehensive study of Blake's position within Johnson's network: see Jeffrey Barclay Mertz, *A Visionary Among the Radicals: William Blake and the Circle of Joseph Johnson, 1790-95*, PhD Thesis (University of Oxford, 2010).

<sup>63</sup> G. E. Bentley Jr similarly lamented the lack of such a bibliography in his review article "THE CIRCLE WITHOUT A CENTER: Gerald P. Tyson. *Joseph Johnson: A Liberal Publisher*" (review), *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 14, no. 3 (1980/81): 147. Daisy Hay's recent survey proceeds, essentially, according to a chronology of the already well-known titles published by Johnson: see Daisy Hay, *Dinner with Joseph Johnson: Books & Friendship in a Revolutionary Age* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2022).

theme that emerges from a survey of Johnson's titles, focusing in particular on those works for which Blake himself produced prints, or with which he appears to have been familiar.

According to Gilchrist, it was Henry Fuseli who made the initial introduction between Johnson and Blake.<sup>64</sup> By all accounts, Swiss-born artist and writer Fuseli appears to have skirted London's networks of publishing and engraving throughout his career; his name will often pop up throughout the remainder of this chapter. But he was also a painter and a member of the Royal Academy, where Blake had registered as a student on October 8, 1779, following his apprenticeship to Basire. However, despite being a student there, and despite exhibiting works in Academy exhibitions on several occasions, Blake would have been barred from membership of the RA due to his primary occupation as an engraver, which, as noted earlier in this chapter, was not regarded as a serious or reputable profession. As Detlef Dörrbecker notes, the "isolation of the art of engraving from the so-called arts of 'invention'" at the RA was "cemented with the first paragraph of the 'Instrument of Foundation' where the term 'artist' was defined by an interpolation saying that it was to be understood as applying exclusively to the professions of the painter, sculptor or architect."<sup>65</sup> Engravers could be admitted to the Academy only with "Associate" status, not as full members, which remained the case up until 1928. In Blake's time, only six Associate Engravers were to be granted admission to the Academy each year, compared with forty full members and twenty other Associate Royal Academicians from each of the three "main" professions, for whom eventual progression to full membership would have been a possibility, unlike for engravers. Fuseli's career, like that of another of Blake's associates, John Flaxman (who became a full member of the RA in 1800 and Professor of Sculpture there in 1810), typifies the uneven distribution of relative power, freedoms, and status available to artists during this period, with the likes of Blake limited to what he himself would refer to in an 1803 letter to Thomas Butts as abject "dependence" on engraving and a concomitant reliance upon "the meer [*sic*] drudgery of business" (E 724). These circumstances register what Latourian analysis risks obscuring, namely the asymmetrical relationships that may result in networks being far more restrictive for some actors than for others. This reality becomes acutely apparent over the course of Blake's career as he comes increasingly to resent his financial "dependence" on

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<sup>64</sup> Gilchrist, *Life*, 89.

<sup>65</sup> Detlef Dörrbecker, "Innovative Reproduction: Painters and Engravers at the Royal Academy of Arts," in Clark and Worrall, *Historicizing Blake*, 129.

engraving commissions, which were always his main source of income, a trend set in motion by his apprenticeship to Basire and sustained throughout his association with Johnson.

As I have noted in the Introduction to this thesis, I have identified much of the geographical material published by Johnson using the online searchable English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC). It should be reiterated here that the ESTC strictly runs up to 1800 and is not exhaustive, but this has hopefully not led to the exclusion of too many key titles, given that Johnson's publishing activities declined significantly between his imprisonment in 1799 and his death in 1809 (though the imprint did live on, under the management of Rowland Hunter and John Miles, as "J. Johnson & Co," active until 1815). Blake's dealings with Johnson had anyway begun to decline by August 26, 1799, when he complains in a letter to Cumberland that "Even Johnson & Fuseli have discarded my Graver" (E 704). Blake did continue to undertake some work for Johnson after this date, for instance the plates for Hayley's *The Life, and Posthumous Writings, of William Cowper* (1803), but their dealings certainly dwindled significantly.

As the Basires were not specialist map-engravers, so Joseph Johnson was not a specialist map-publisher. His shop (located at 8 Paternoster Row from 1765-1770, and at 72 St. Paul's Churchyard from 1770-1809) was, however, situated in the very near vicinity of two notable map- and globe-sellers: just a few doors down from Johnson's shop at 69 St. Paul's Churchyard was Carington Bowles' Map and Print shop (as it was called from 1764-93; it was later called Bowles & Carver, from 1794-1832), and at 59 St. Paul's Churchyard were the globe-sellers and instrument-makers Peter and John Dollond (1766-1804; the business was later called Peter & George Higgins Dollond, from 1807-19) (see figure 17). Carington Bowles' shop boasted a fine window display facing onto St. Paul's Churchyard, as is documented in two prints published by Bowles at the time (figures 18 and 19). Given that Blake would have had to visit Johnson's shop on a regular basis in order to conduct business, it is highly likely that he would have at the very least passed by this window display with some frequency, perhaps catching a glimpse of some of the shop's engraved maps and other geographical prints which may have been on display. The display of views in their shop window is documented in an 1835 account by a passer-by (who still refers to the shop as "Carington and Bowles," though by this point the shop would have changed its official name to "Bowles and Carver"):

[H]aving strolled into St. Paul's Churchyard, he stopped at the shop-window of Carington and Bowles, and looked at the pictures, among which was one of the cathedral. He had not been long there before a short, grave looking, elderly gentleman, dressed in dark brown clothes, came up and began to examine the prints, and, occasionally casting a glance at him, very soon entered into conversation with him; and, praising the view of St. Paul's which was exhibited at the window, told him many anecdotes of Sir Christopher Wren, the architect[.]<sup>66</sup>

Given that both the display of this print in the window of the shop and the conversations it may have inspired were both ephemeral events, the anecdote provides a valuable indication at least that such occurrences were a conceivable part of urban life in the period. One could also extrapolate from this rare account of such an encounter that, especially displayed in such a prominent fashion, printed maps and views had the potential to influence how Londoners thought about spaces and places. Similarly, in discussing these images, Joseph Monteyne has highlighted the active function of such window-displays in the production of urban life during this period, arguing that the print-shop window can be understood as “a device that mediates the subject's relation to, and perception of, the surrounding milieu.”<sup>67</sup>

As well as being a prolific publisher of maps and the like, Bowles also published a wealth of other material. This included satirical and allegorical prints, as well as children's games—including the earliest dated English educational game, John Jeffrey's *A Journey through Europe, or the Play of Geography*, first published by Carington Bowles in 1759. Bowles was also one of a number of publishers of a type of satirical print entitled *Keep within Compass*, an allegorical print advocating restraint: the prints were usually printed as pairs, showing a man and woman respectively enclosed within the arc of a pair of compasses, the inscription “Fear God” appearing on the upper band of the instrument (figures 20 and 21). Such prints call to mind Blake's famous frontispiece to *Europe a Prophecy* (first printed 1794) (figure 22) and the monotype print *Newton* (first printed 1795) (figure 23), where compasses appear as the tools of an overbearing patriarch, as though a manifestation of the dark side of the injunction to “Fear God” in the popular print. We might compare these images with the final plate of *Jerusalem* (figure 10), discussed earlier in this chapter, wherein the male figure's

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<sup>66</sup> J. C. Prichard, “Of Ecstatic Visions or Trances,” in *The Cyclopaedia of Practical Medicine*, Volume 4 (London: Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, and Baldwin and Cradock, 1835), 38.

<sup>67</sup> Joseph Monteyne, *From Still Life to the Screen: Print Culture, Display, and the Materiality of the Image in Eighteenth-Century London* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 160.

tongs, resembling compasses, do not seem to be an instrument of circumscription, but rather a symbol of open-ended craft, as the figure takes a moment of rest from the work in progress.

Although not himself a specialist map-publisher like Bowles, Johnson would publish dozens of geographical publications during the years of his acquaintance with Blake. These titles are too many to list here, but we might note for instance the appearance of Johnson's name alongside noted map-sellers such as Carington Bowles as a fellow publisher of an edition of John Ogilby's immensely popular topographical guidebook *The traveller's pocket-book* (1788 edition). This instance also indicates the frequency with which sheer popularity could mean that books such as these, which might be expected to be largely the preserve of dedicated map-sellers, could appear in both specialist and non-specialist shops, cutting across what James Raven terms the London "bookscape."<sup>68</sup>

Johnson was clearly alert to the commercial appeal of maps and guidebooks of this and many other kinds. A letter penned by Johnson on October 18, 1802, also reveals his strong sense of the popularity of geographical publications in the book market. Johnson writes to the author of a three-volume book on chemistry of his doubt as to the marketability of the work.<sup>69</sup>

Had you offered me a well written popular history, an interesting voyage, or amusing travels, or such a novel as Richardson's, I should have been at no loss in making an offer, but works of science, beyond school books, seldom produce indemnity to the partys concerned.<sup>70</sup>

In placing "an interesting voyage, or amusing travels" alongside the hugely popular sentimental novels of Samuel Richardson, Johnson reveals his keen sense of the market for these publications, which were indeed proliferating during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The mention of scientific "school books" in Johnson's letter cited above is also an important reminder of the centrality of educational publications to Johnson's business; indeed, many of the educational works published by Johnson were geographical in focus, such as Bonnycastle's books, which I discuss below.

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<sup>68</sup> See Raven, *Bookscape*.

<sup>69</sup> In this matter, Johnson seems to have been quite prescient. The book, William B. Johnson's *History of the Progress and Present State of Animal Chemistry*, was published the following year, but does not appear to have been subsequently re-issued: see Joseph Johnson, *The Joseph Johnson Letterbook*, ed. John Bugg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 89.

<sup>70</sup> Johnson, *Letterbook*, 89.



Another entry in Johnson's letterbook suggests his sense that printed maps were a particularly profitable addition to books. Johnson wrote to Thomas Maurice on January 8, 1796, responding it seems to Maurice's request to reproduce the maps from the third edition of John Aikin's *England delineated or, a geographical description of every county in England and Wales* (originally published 1788; illustrated third edition published 1795).

Dear Sir

It was Dr. Aikin's own idea to illustrate his book with outline maps and he procured drawings for the engraver, he retains in his own possession the copyright of his book, and it appears to me that it would be an act of indelicacy to apply for the use of the plates for any other book, nor can I think it would be right in any person to copy them [...]. That your book may injure the Sale of his in any considerable degree I think is not likely, but that it may injure it in some degree, if these Maps are introduced, is not to be doubted.<sup>71</sup>

As John Bugg notes, Maurice "may have wished to use Aikin's illustrations for his poetic treatment of Grove Hill," first published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1795 and later published in a third, illustrated edition in 1799. As well as highlighting Johnson's concern for copyright, the letter to Maurice implies that the publisher considered the maps a commercially favourable feature of Aikin's book, and that their reproduction elsewhere might harm the book's profitability. Johnson's particular concern for the success of Aikin's book also attests to their close friendship and partnership, also reflected in their co-founding, with Richard Phillips, of *The Monthly Magazine* in 1796.

A physician by trade, Aikin also maintained a strong interest in topography and geography. As Stephen Daniels and Paul Elliott have highlighted, Aikin's great enthusiasm for topography was highly imaginative, animated by Aikin's familiarity with texts like James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730) and, later, William Cowper's *The Task* (published by Johnson in 1785).<sup>72</sup> Aikin appears to have been very interested in the experience, both first- and second-hand, of physical landscapes, an attitude reflected in his decision to include "outline maps" in the third edition of *England delineated*. The first edition of the work contained no maps at all because good-quality maps would have been too expensive to include.<sup>73</sup> The "improved" 1795 edition had larger pages and included Aikin's "outline maps," showing each

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<sup>71</sup> Johnson, *Letterbook*, 19.

<sup>72</sup> Daniels and Elliott, 'Outline maps of knowledge,'" 96, 101.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

county described in the text, along with maps of the whole country detailing major towns as well as topographical features such as hills, forestry, and waterways (see, for example, figure 24). Also noteworthy for our purposes, given its connection with Johnson, is Aikin and Anna Letitia Barbauld's later *Evenings at Home*, published by Johnson in 1792-96. This book included passages adopting both a global ("A Globe Lecture," on climatic zones) and a topographical perspective ("Eyes, and No Eyes; or, The Art of Seeing," told through a scenic description of two friends walking across a Norfolk landscape).<sup>74</sup>

In 1795, the same year as *England delineated*, Aikin's *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles Round Manchester* was also published in London by John Stockdale. The volume included numerous outline maps and views, including frontispiece and title-page engravings after designs by Thomas Stothard. Aptly, given his medical background, Aikin employs corporeal imagery in the *Description* when he characterises Manchester as "the heart of this vast system, the circulating branches of which spread all around it."<sup>75</sup> The image chimes with the appearance of his outline maps in both the *Description* and *England delineated*, in which cities resemble hearts and the roads radiating from them resemble veins and arteries. Such corporeal imagery resonates with Blake's conception, for instance, of England as coextensive with the body of Albion in his major prophecies: in *Milton*, it is "thro Albions heart" that Milton falls on the journey plotted in the map mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (figure 3) (*Milton* 20 [22]: 41, E 114). However, Blake's corporeal imagery is somewhat ambivalent. Imagery of arterial networks is often negatively figured, as a manifestation of restrictive systems, from the veiny globes of Urizen's preposterous creations in *The [First] Book of Urizen* (composed 1794), to the description of "the Great Selfhood / Satan" in *Jerusalem* as

Having a white Dot calld a Center from which branches out  
A Circle in continual gyrations. this became a Heart  
From which sprang numerous branches varying their motions  
[...] such is the way of the Devouring Power  
(*Jerusalem* 29 [33]: 19-24, E 175).

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-9.

<sup>75</sup> John Aikin, *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles Round Manchester* (London: John Stockdale, 1795), 3.

According to George Gilpin, Blake seems in such passages to be taking issue with an objectifying approach to “a dead world of nature much like that of [John] Hunter’s Leicester Square Museum.”<sup>76</sup> This deadening effect is also a corollary of Urizen’s totalising perspective; as Hagan suggests, Blake seems to have felt that networks might “risk reinscribing ‘Priesthood’ by another name.”<sup>77</sup> This Hagan herself views as a possible corollary of imagining the network “either, as in Latour’s ANT, as an abstract and effectively universal concept, or, as in Galloway and Thacker’s networks, as a ‘faceless’ whole greater than the sum of its parts.”<sup>78</sup> When it comes to totalising systems and their representation as flat networks, Blake may specifically have in mind networks of commerce, which are certainly called to mind by Aikin’s description of Manchester as “the heart of this vast system.” Though we cannot be certain that Blake would have known Aikin’s maps specifically, Blake’s application of arterial imagery to his cosmological spaces also points to the intersections between his spatial imagination and the corporeal figurations of contemporaneous map-makers. We might also compare the physician Christopher Packe’s chart *A New Philosophico Chorographical Chart of East-Kent*, published in 1743, in which he noted that the human body’s “Systems of Arteries, Veins, or Nerves” mimicked the rivers, roads, and valleys of the physical landscape.

To enumerate all of Johnson’s publications known to have contained maps or that might be considered in some sense geographical is outside the scope of this study. I intend rather to focus on those texts with which Blake had a demonstrable or probable association, chiefly those for which himself produced engravings and with the contents of which he may have had some degree of familiarity. For this purpose, I shall now focus on two key members of Johnson’s networks: the mathematician John Bonnycastle (1751-1821) and the map-engraver and bookseller Thomas Conder (1747-1831), whose associations with Johnson and Blake have not received adequate attention in scholarship, and whom I believe to be of particular importance in the development of Blake’s cartographic imagination.

These two figures were themselves associated, since Conder produced several plates for a textbook written by Bonnycastle and published by Johnson, entitled *An Introduction to Astronomy* (1786), which also featured a frontispiece engraving by Fuseli, Blake’s

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<sup>76</sup> George H. Gilpin, “William Blake and the World’s Body of Science,” *Studies in Romanticism*, 43, no. 1 (2004): 50.

<sup>77</sup> Hagan, “Network Theory,” ¶133.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

longstanding friend (figure 25). Johnson had also earlier published Bonnycastle's *An Introduction to Mensuration and Practical Geometry* (1782), for which Blake himself had engraved a title-page vignette after a design by Thomas Stothard (figure 26). This title-page vignette has long been recognised as a possible source for Blake's later engraving *Newton* (figure 23), as well as possibly for the frontispiece to *Europe* (figure 22). Bonnycastle was a frequent attendee at Johnson's house, where he and Blake may have crossed paths; they may also have been introduced in some other context by their mutual friend Fuseli.<sup>79</sup> Christopher Hobson and Detlef Dörrbecker have also suggested the likelihood that Blake was familiar with Bonnycastle's *Astronomy*.<sup>80</sup> However, no specific meeting between Blake and Bonnycastle is recorded.

Of note when it comes to Blakean iconography is Thomas Conder's engraving, in *Astronomy*, of the "fixed" stars, set within an enclosed Ouroboros (figure 27). Hobson makes this connection and compares Conder's engraving with the frontispiece to *Night Thoughts 3* (figure 28), where, characteristically, Blake has eschewed diagrammatic representation and instead depicted, in fleshy vividness, the tortured body of Narcissa.

Another feature of Bonnycastle's *Astronomy* which may have interested Blake was the prevalence of poetic glosses punctuating the text. In his introduction to the work, Bonnycastle writes

Poetical descriptions, though they may not be strictly conformable to the rigid principles of the science they are meant to elucidate, generally leave a stronger impression on the mind, and are far more captivating than simple unadorned language.<sup>81</sup>

Although Bonnycastle subordinates poetry to the explication of the "rigid principles" of astronomy that he believes to govern "the great machine of the universe," his sensitivity to poetry's ability to "alone [...] delineate those elevated ideas" illustrates that there is common ground between Blake's poetic-visionary mappings and contemporaneous textbooks which might at first glance appear dry and pedestrian by comparison.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> On Bonnycastle's friendship with Fuseli and their place in Johnson's network, see Johnson, *Letterbook*, 56 and 66.

<sup>80</sup> Christopher Z. Hobson, "The Myth of Blake's 'Orc Cycle,'" in DiSalvo *et al.*, *Blake, Politics, and History*, 14-15; Detlef Dörrbecker, "'The Song of Los': The Munich Copy and a New Attempt to Understand Blake's Images," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 52, no. 1 (1989): 58, 63, 69-70 (n. 69).

<sup>81</sup> John Bonnycastle, *An Introduction to Astronomy* (London, Joseph Johnson, 1786), vi.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, v, vi.

Thomas Conder, son of the non-conformist minister John Conder (1714-1781) and formerly an apprentice of the cartographer Thomas Bowen Kitchin, appears to have been the map-engraver most commonly employed by Johnson to produce maps and diagrams for his publications. Despite this, Conder has been paid almost no attention in scholarship on Johnson's circle, including, most recently, Daisy Hay's *Dinner with Joseph Johnson* (2022). However, Johnson's direct correspondence with Conder regarding financial matters appears in his Letterbook.<sup>83</sup> Both Conder and Johnson are listed as publishers and sellers of William Fox Jr's *Sketches and Observations, Made on a Tour through Various Parts of Europe* (1799), suggesting at least an alignment in business interests as well as apparently overlapping networks. Conder produced numerous maps for Johnson's publications. He made, for instance, several plates for the sixteenth edition of Nicolas Lenglet Dufresnoy's *Geography for Children* (1791), including a sample map entitled "Geographical terms & figures exemplified."

Conder also made the maps for the translated edition of Volney's *Ruins* published by Johnson in 1792, a work that was, among other things, a kind of imaginative tour. Jon Mee has identified *The Ruins* as a possible influence on Blake, despite Volney's deism, a doctrine with which Blake vociferously took issue.<sup>84</sup> Much of the *Ruins* is told through the prism of a dreamlike vision, in which an apparition that the narrator calls "the Genius" reveals to him "the wisdom of the tombs, and the science of ages."<sup>85</sup> In Chapter IV, the Genius urges the narrator to "disengage yourself from that corporeal frame with which you are encumbered" and grants him a vision of the terrestrial globe:

I felt myself like a light vapour conveyed in the uppermost region. There, from above the atmosphere, looking down towards the earth I had quitted, I beheld a scene entirely new. Under my feet, floating in empty space, a globe similar to that of the moon, but smaller and less luminous, presented to me one of its faces.<sup>86</sup>

A footnote refers readers to Plate I (figure 29), a map engraved by Conder, showing the terrestrial globe. Indeed, as it soon transpires, the globe that the Genius has conjured is in fact "the earth that is inhabited by human beings."<sup>87</sup> What follows is a description of the

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<sup>83</sup> Johnson, *Letterbook*, 108, 135-6.

<sup>84</sup> Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm*, 139.

<sup>85</sup> Constantin-François Volney, *The ruins: or a survey of the revolutions of empires* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), 25.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

geographical configuration of the countries and continents on the terrestrial globe's surface, as though urging readers to follow along visually, tracing their eyes from place to place as the speaker mentions them. One might imagine a viewer doing the same with the large folding map at the front of Johnson's edition of François de Salignac de la Mothe Fenelon's *The Adventures of Telemachus, the son of Achilles* (1778). Volney thus engineers a triangulation of text, image, and readerly-spectatorly experience: the Genius, in the role of a kind of cosmic geography teacher, seeks to mediate between the seemingly godlike perspective of the map and human vision, which "would in vain attempt to distinguish objects at so great a distance."<sup>88</sup> Given the antiquarian focus and geographical scope of the *Ruins*, the only hemisphere shown is that of the so-called "old world." A zodiacal chart is also appended to the book, further elevating the cosmic, omniscient perspective that Volney foregrounds and critiques in his chapters on religious systems (figure 30). Such figurations stand in strong contrast to Blake's conception of travel as a process that ought to be understood as at once embodied and "mental," an aspect of Blakean mapping that I explore in Chapter Two.

Conder's work came still closer into Blake's orbit in the form of an engraving for Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden*, published by Johnson in 1791. As is well known, Blake engraved a number of plates for this work, including the design, after Fuseli, called *The Fertilization of Egypt*. In the same volume appeared Conder's diagrammatic *Section of the Earth* (figure 31), approximating Darwin's account of the geological composition of the earth's surface.<sup>89</sup> The description underneath the design reads: "A sketch of a supposed Section of the Earth in respect to the disposition of the Strata over each other without regard to their proportions or number." This professed disregard for "proportions or number" is striking in the context of a widespread obsession with mathematical accuracy in print works from this period: the caveat here is curiously attuned to the provisionality of the design, whereas contemporaneous maps and charts are so often accompanied by adjectives such as "accurate," "complete," or "correct," epitomising what Clifford Siskin views as the concurrent "scaling up both of system's encyclopedic ambitions and of the market for and technologies

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>89</sup> Although it is possible that Blake and Conder may have been aware of one another as co-creators, there is no guarantee that the two would have met, even while working on the plates for the same volume; when the pages of the book were printed and the plates prepared by each party, they would have been separately submitted to Johnson, who would in turn have arranged for their binding.

of print” during the eighteenth century.<sup>90</sup> The subtitled caveat, the wavering lines of the image, and the volcanic breakages in the earth’s surface all call to mind the visual characteristics of Blake’s own anti-systematic imaginative projections of “this world” in *Jerusalem* (figures 4-6), which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Three.

Blake’s and Conder’s work again appeared side by side in John Gabriel Stedman’s *Narrative, of a five years’ expedition; against the revolted negroes of Surinam* (1796), for which Conder produced the maps and Blake, famously, also produced numerous engravings. Conder’s *Map of Surinam* features a cartouche vignette showing a slave-owner and enslaved labourer.<sup>91</sup> The vignette relates to the violent depictions of enslaved figures’ bodies in Blake’s engravings for the volume. The engravings have attracted a great deal of critical attention, with some critics arguing that they were designed to condemn the treatment of enslaved people by showing the sheer violence of that treatment.<sup>92</sup> This characterisation is far from straightforward: although Stedman’s *Narrative* was adopted by abolitionist campaigners (as were certain of Blake’s plates included in the *Narrative*), in the text itself Stedman certainly did not advocate for the abolition of slavery *per se* and was chiefly interested in reform, condemning the violent treatment of enslaved people but not the institution itself. From Erdman’s work onwards, Blake’s plates for this volume have often been considered in relation to his anti-slavery attitudes as expressed throughout his illuminated books.<sup>93</sup> It is likely that Blake would have had some awareness of the maps also included in Stedman’s *Narrative*,

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<sup>90</sup> Clifford Siskin, *System: The Shaping of Modern Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2016), 51.

<sup>91</sup> I have chosen not to reproduce this map in my illustrations because of the degrading depiction of the enslaved Black figure in the cartouche. Reproducing such images can harmfully perpetuate the racist visual stereotypes on which they rely. In this, I follow Nicholas Mirzoeff, who argues that “[p]lacing racist imagery in circulation yet again in order to criticize it [...] perpetuates harm.” See Nicholas Mirzoeff, *White Sight: Visual Politics and Practices of Whiteness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2023), viii-ix.

<sup>92</sup> See, e.g., Anne Rubenstein and Camilla Townsend, “Revolted Negroes and the Devilish Principle: William Blake and Conflicting Visions of Boni’s Wars in Surinam, 1772-1796,” in DiSalvo *et al.*, *Blake, Politics, and History*, 273-98.

<sup>93</sup> David Erdman, “Blake’s Vision of Slavery,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 15, No. ¾ (1952): 242-52. Erdman tends to view Blake’s “vision of slavery” as sympathetic to abolitionism, for instance in relation to the imagery of “The Little Black Boy,” a poem that has been much debated from this point of view since Erdman’s time. In his 1924 study, Samuel Foster Damon suggested that the poem evinces a negative view of African people: see S. F. Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), 233. This stance has been more recently repeated and developed upon, e.g., by Ngugi Wa Thiong’o in *Literature and Society: Writers in Politics: Essays* (London: Heinemann, 1981), 19. For an opposing view, see, e.g., Alan Richardson, “Colonialism, Race, and Lyric Irony in Blake’s ‘The Little Black Boy,’” *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature*, 26 (1990): 233-48; the assumption of racism is also questioned, briefly, by Makdisi in *Impossible History*, 164-7, 252.

which may, among other things, have brought him to an awareness of the ways in which mapping was often a means of representing colonised spaces while minimising the violence actually inflicted upon people as a foundation of colonialism and empire. Perhaps it was thought that Blake's plates would register some sense of the violence that was rendered so marginal in the accompanying maps. Even so, Blake's depictions of enslaved African people chiefly as victims of abuse arguably repeat eighteenth-century visual stereotypes of subjugated Black people.

At the same time, the corporeality of Blake's designs arguably affords a comparatively humanising scale through which to map global systems of subjugation. One of Blake's plates for Stedman's *Narrative*, entitled *Europe Supported by Africa and America* (figure 32), is a kind of allegorical map in the tradition of the "Four Continents," whereby the continents are depicted in the form of female figures. Blake depicts the figures of Africa and America as women of colour wearing golden arm bands, their forms encircled by a chain or rope held by the central, white-skinned figure of Europe, symbolising the subjugation of both continents and their peoples to European powers. The association here between encirclement and global imperialism resurfaces on numerous occasions in Blake's mythographic work, as I discuss in more detail in Chapters Two and Three. *Europe Supported by Africa and America* provides a kind of corporeal counterpart to Stedman's maps, as well as anticipating some of Blake's later figurations in the illuminated books—for instance, the depiction of Jerusalem in the form of a woman (e.g., figure 33), or Albion in the form of a man (e.g., figure 34).

Outside of his work with Joseph Johnson and Johnson's immediate network, Conder also produced numerous other maps and views, many (but not all) of which are listed in the entry on Conder in Worms' and Baynton-Williams' dictionary.<sup>94</sup> Two notable engravings, which may have been of interest to Blake (and this is a more speculative suggestion), were his maps depicting the Christian life-as-journey, which was a popular theme for allegorical maps in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Conder engraved a plan entitled *The Journey of Life*, made after a design by George Wright for Wright's *Walking Amusements for Cheerful Christians* (1775) (figure 35). The map shows two divergent pathways, one "Narrow" leading to the upper regions, marked "Glory or Heaven," the other "Broad" and leading to "The Bottomless Pit of Destruction or Hell," literalising the directive to follow the "Narrow

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<sup>94</sup> Worms and Baynton Williams, *British Map Engravers*, 160-61.



Way” in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7.13-14). Wright’s assertion later in the book that “[t]he map of the road you should pursue is the *Bible*,” moreover, calls for particular comparisons with Blake’s wariness of prescriptiveness of this kind, and his own more open-ended notion of winding “golden string” in *Jerusalem*, which I examine in Chapter Three.<sup>95</sup> In a recently published article, I have discussed some other examples of maps included in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editions of Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, a text for which Blake himself made a series of designs in the early nineteenth century.<sup>96</sup> One of the main examples I discuss is Conder’s own engraving, entitled *A plan of the road from the city of destruction to the celestial city adapted to the Pilgrim’s Progress* (figure 36), which is the earliest example that I could locate of a map of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, included in a 1778 edition of the text published by H. Trapp and A. Hogg. Conder’s plan appropriates the strip-map form, employed in the first British road atlas, Ogilby’s *Britannia* (1675), and widely popularised throughout the eighteenth century. These two engravings have much in common with the so-called “hieroglyphic” prints such as the *Tree of Life*, derived from a print designed by one I. Doleman and originally published in 1760 by Thomas Kitchin, the father of Thomas Bowen Kitchin, to whom Conder was apprenticed in 1766. A version of the same print was later published by Bowles and Carver (figure 37). Like Wright’s *Journey of Life*, the *Tree of Life* print maps the “broad way,” leading to a fiery region labelled “Bottomless Pit,” while some figures are shown on a narrower path, heading for the gateway to enter the New Jerusalem in the upper half of the print. Susan Matthews has compellingly likened the composition of this scene to that of the frontispiece to Blake’s *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (figure 38).<sup>97</sup> I return to the tropes of narrow and broad pathways in Chapter Three, examining Blake’s own revisioning of these categories. The trope of life as a spiritual journey is a notable shared theme in the work of both Conder and Blake. Conder’s own journey of life came to an end in 1831 and, Worms and Baynton-Williams record, he was buried in the nonconformist burial ground at Bunhill Fields, where Blake had also found his resting-place just four years earlier.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> George Wright, *Walking Amusements for Cheerful Christians* (London: Printed for J. Buckland, W. Otridge, Kitchin and Co, G. Keith, and S. Chandler, 1775), 40.

<sup>96</sup> Caroline Anjali Ritchie, “Mapping Bunyan, Mapping Blake: William Blake’s Anti-Cartographic Imagination,” *Literary Geographies*, 9 (2023): 69-100.

<sup>97</sup> Susan Matthews, *Blake, Sexuality and Bourgeois Politeness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 125.

<sup>98</sup> Worms and Baynton Williams, *British Map Engravers*, 161.

Having begun to venture into more spiritual realms, it is here that I shall turn to briefly consider some points of connection between Blakean mapping and the work of another “visionary” map-maker with whose work and legacy Blake was demonstrably familiar: the Swedish theologian Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772).

### Swedenborg and the New Jerusalem

The so-called “Tree of Life,” which we have encountered as the central subject of the popular eighteenth-century print by this name, was one of the main features of the “New Jerusalem,” the heavenly city brought down to earth, as prophesied in both the Hebrew Book of Ezekiel and the Christian Book of Revelation. The concept of the New Jerusalem offers a particularly illuminating vista into Blakean mapping, since although it was figured in various guises, it was generally understood in terms of a kind of convergence between heaven and earth, just as Blake’s visionary cartography frequently toggles between physical and spiritual realms. In this section, I discuss the nature of Blake’s awareness of a particular theorist of the New Jerusalem, Emanuel Swedenborg. As far as the historical evidence attests, Blake seems to have become familiar with Swedenborg’s work in the 1780s, well after Swedenborg’s death in 1772. Here I briefly sketch Blake’s contact with Swedenborg’s written work and the Swedenborgian New Jerusalem Church established in the 1780s, some years after the theologian’s lifetime, and make some comparisons between the New Jerusalem as mapped by Swedenborg and Blake’s version of the New Jerusalem in the form of the utopian city called “Golgonooza” in his illuminated books. I then draw some comparisons and contrasts between both thinkers’ spatial imaginations, with a view to suggesting some ways in which Blake’s knowledge of Swedenborg’s writings may have shaped some of his own ideas about spatial representation.

The rise in depictions of the New Jerusalem in eighteenth-century British visual culture is well documented, especially as it related to religious dissent and popular interpretations of contemporaneous events such as the French Revolution.<sup>99</sup> It was common for self-identifying “prophets” to visualise the topography of the New Jerusalem in the form of printed plans or maps. Two examples should be noted here: Richard Brothers’ diagrammatic plan of Jerusalem

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<sup>99</sup> See, e.g., Frances Carey ed., *The Apocalypse and the Shape of Things to Come* (London: British Museum 1999).

from his *A Revealed Knowledge of the Prophecies & Times* (1794) (figure 39), and Garnet Terry's engraving entitled *An Hieroglyphical Print of the Church of God in her Five-Fold State* (1791) (figure 40), made after a design by William Huntington and a painting by Edward Frances Burney. Although there is no certainty that Blake would have known these particular images, art historians have often drawn comparisons between Brothers' and Terry's rather literal (especially in Brothers' case) depictions of the New Jerusalem's geometries and Blake's concept of Golgonooza as a living city of art in his prophetic books.<sup>100</sup> As I explore in Chapter Three, Blake imagines Golgonooza in many ways along the lines of the New Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation, but he resists actually visualising the city in fixed form: for him, the New Jerusalem is attainable only by incremental, collective effort. It cannot be mapped as though already set in stone. But despite these particularities of Blake's work, placing Blake's prophetic books alongside these popular prints demonstrates that his work did have much in common with other print media from his day.

It was also in the final quarter of the eighteenth century that a network of Londoners interested in the work of Emanuel Swedenborg coalesced into a group that became known as the New Jerusalem Church. This network, it should be noted, overlapped significantly with other millenarian groups: for instance, many members of the New Jerusalem Church, including the writer William Sharp, are known to have shifted their allegiances between the Church and the prophecies of Richard Brothers.<sup>101</sup> Following Swedenborg's death in 1772, scholars Thomas Cookworthy, John Cowles, and Thomas Hartley had begun to translate several of his works from their original Latin into English, bringing Swedenborg's work to a wider audience in Britain. In 1783 the printer Robert Hindmarsh (1759-1835) began convening meetings of Swedenborg enthusiasts, initially under the name of the Theosophical Society, later renamed and reconstituted as the New Jerusalem Church which met in a chapel in Great East Cheap, London, from 1787. The New Jerusalem Church held, with Swedenborg, that the New Jerusalem had already arrived (Swedenborg had specified that the year of its arrival would be 1757—coincidentally, as many have noted, this was also Blake's year of birth).<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 244, 245.

<sup>101</sup> Tim Fulford, *Romanticism and Millenarianism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 4.

<sup>102</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *A Treatise Concerning the Last Judgment* (London: Robert Hindmarsh, 1788), vi and *passim*.

It is perhaps unsurprising that Swedenborg's work, and the institution of the New Jerusalem Church, attracted the interest of William Blake. Swedenborg wrote widely and eclectically on scientific and religious topics, among them several works concerning Biblical prophecy. Many of his writings—such as *A Treatise Concerning Heaven and Hell*, *Earths in the Universe*, and *Cosmologica*—undertook cosmological mappings, which call for comparison with Blakean cosmology. Blake frequently disagreed with aspects of Swedenborg's work, as expressed in the satirical tone towards Swedenborg in *The Marriage* and in several marginal annotations to Swedenborg's works. Yet his engagement with Swedenborg was nonetheless deep and relatively sustained. Before sketching a few points of correspondence and contrast between Swedenborg's and Blake's concepts of the New Jerusalem and their wider cosmologies, I shall here quickly outline the nature of Blake's awareness of Swedenborg and involvement in the Swedenborgian network in London. As Morton Paley notes, the surviving documentary evidence demonstrating Blake's interest in Swedenborg and Swedenborgianism can be briefly summarised. It takes the form of annotations to three of Swedenborg's books (*A Treatise Concerning Heaven and Hell*, *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, and *Divine Providence*), Blake's references to two other works (*Earths in our Universe* and *Universal Theology [True Christian Religion]*), the record of a single attendance by both William and Catherine Blake at a conference of the Swedenborgian New Jerusalem Church in 1789, a satire of the Swedenborgians and their Messenger in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-93), and finally, two more mentions of Swedenborg in Blake's published writings—in *A Descriptive Catalogue* (1809) and in *Milton* (1804-10).<sup>103</sup> Although the list of evidence may appear scant, as Paley writes, "when we consider these facts in relation to the amount of information about Blake available, they bulk relatively large," and their dispersal over a number of years suggest that Blake's interest in Swedenborg was sustained, to at least some degree, throughout his life.<sup>104</sup>

The central difference between Blake's concept of Golgonooza and Swedenborg's New Jerusalem is their supposed geographical location. While Blake and Swedenborg both conceive of the New Jerusalem in terms of actual places on earth, for Blake, Golgonooza takes

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<sup>103</sup> Morton D. Paley, "A New Heaven is Begun': William Blake and Swedenborgianism," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 13, no. 2 (1979): 64. For William's and Catherine's attendance at the 1789 conference, see Bentley, *Blake Records*, 50-51.

<sup>104</sup> Paley, "A New Heaven," 64.

root from his home city of London, whereas Swedenborg had proposed a location for the “Lord’s New Church” in central Africa. Swedenborg had even drawn a map indicating where he believed the promised land to be located, which was later published in a 1790 issue of the *New Jerusalem Magazine*, founded and published by the London-dwelling Swedenborgian Charles Bernhard Wadström (figure 41). Wadström was an influential abolitionist whose work *An Essay on Colonization* (1795) was sold by, among others, Joseph Johnson. Wadström’s *Essay* expounds the plans he was working with another Swedish delegate, Augustus Nordenskjöld, to establish a so-called “free community” on the west coast of Africa. Although he is perhaps overstating the likelihood, there is certainly sense in Paley’s statement that “Blake can hardly have been unaware of (or uninterested in) this well publicized project.”<sup>105</sup> Deirdre Coleman has related Wadström’s *Essay* and its proposal for this “free community” in Africa to Swedenborg’s rather vaguer mapping of the promised land somewhere in the interior of Africa, for instance pointing out the function of both as “radical Utopian sites” projected onto the African continent.<sup>106</sup> Swedenborg’s displacement of the promised land onto a remote region contrasts with Blake’s insistence that Golgonooza is to be understood as the utopian potentiality latent within his own city. Resisting escapism, Blake’s projection of Golgonooza onto the streets of London imbues his vision with greater immediacy and, by extension, places the onus for its achievement on the collective labour of the city’s inhabitants rather than viewing it as a given. As well as this geographical distinction, there is also a temporal distinction between the two thinkers’ concepts of the utopian city: whereas for Swedenborg the New Jerusalem has already descended as of 1757, for Blake, as I have noted, Golgonooza is understood as a perpetual work in progress; its tense is always future. Probably more than a little irony is at play in Blake’s opening statement in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that “a new heaven is begun, and it is now thirty-three years since its advent” (E 34).

Without further documentary evidence, we cannot know for certain the full extent to which Blake was involved in London’s Swedenborgian networks. But though this involvement may have been relatively fleeting there is, I think, sufficient evidence to authorise at least some degree of speculation about the role Swedenborg’s work may have had in shaping Blake’s cartographic imagination, given, for instance, their shared interest in the concept of

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>106</sup> Deirdre Coleman, “Bulama and Sierra Leone: Utopian Islands and Visionary Interiors,” in *Islands in History and Representation*, ed. Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith (London: Routledge, 2003), 64.

the New Jerusalem and in the imbrication of physical and spiritual domains of experience. I shall therefore lay down a few simple similarities and distinctions here between Swedenborg's and Blake's spatial imaginations.

I begin with two points of general similarity. First, both Swedenborg and Blake share a notion that space and time are not fixed, measurable phenomena: both thinkers outline a theory of "states" as determined by interior, spiritual qualities, which in turn determine people's perceptions of space and time.<sup>107</sup> There is, however, a slight distinction to be made between these theories of states. For Swedenborg such states tend to be characterised as states merely of "spirit" or of "mind," and as available exclusively to angels in Heaven, as outlined in his "Of Time in Heaven" and "Of Space in Heaven" in *A Treatise Concerning Heaven and Hell and of the Wonderful Things Within* (published by Hindmarsh in 1784), of which Blake owned and annotated a copy.<sup>108</sup> For Blake, by contrast, states are just as much physical as they are mental and even those higher spiritual states are available to beings in their corporeal, earthly existence: hence in *Milton* Blake describes the "Four States of Humanity" as residing, respectively, "in the Head," "in the Heart," "in the Loins & Seminal Vessels," and "[i]n the Stomach & Intestines," and claims that "he whose Gates are open in those Regions of his Body / Can from those Gates view all these wondrous Imaginations" (*Milton* 34 [38]: 14-18, E 134). As Paley observes, Blake seems at times uncomfortable with Swedenborg's sharp discrimination between the spiritual and natural worlds; in an annotation to *Heaven and Hell*, against Swedenborg's claim that the human mind cannot "shake off" appearances "without keeping the Understanding some Time in Spiritual Light," Blake writes "this Man can do while in the body" (E 604).<sup>109</sup>

Yet Swedenborg certainly perceived the human form at least as a valuable means of figuring spaces within his cosmology, and this brings us to a second similarity between his and Blake's conception of physical spaces. Both employ an analogy between cosmic macrocosm and corporeal microcosm: Swedenborg's notion "[t]hat heaven, both in it's [*sic*] whole and parts, resembles the human form," as laid out in *Heaven and Hell*, may be one source for

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<sup>107</sup> See Hazard Adams, *Blake's Margins: An Interpretive Study of the Annotations* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2009), 33.

<sup>108</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *A Treatise Concerning Heaven and Hell and of the Wonderful Things Within* (London: Robert Hindmarsh, 1784), 94-97; 108-112.

<sup>109</sup> See Paley, "A New Heaven," 67.

Blake's concept of Albion the Eternal Man, first appearing in *The Four Zoas*.<sup>110</sup> The corporeal figuration becomes essential to Blake's rejection of a disembodied, abstract, and purely mental approach to spatial representation. These intersections point to some compelling common ground between *Heaven and Hell* and Blake's later cosmologies in the major prophecies especially, suggesting some possible traces of an ongoing engagement with spatial aspects of Swedenborg's imagination.

Turning to their differences, I identify two key distinctions between the spatial imaginations of Swedenborg and Blake, which may in themselves have had a shaping influence on Blake's developing ideas about space and place—after all, “opposition is true friendship,” as Blake proclaimed (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 20, E 42). First, probably the most salient distinction lies between Swedenborg's claim to have embarked, in his visions, on mental journeys to regions of Heaven and Hell, recounted in his “Memorable Relations,” and Blake's tendency to locate his visions within physical, earthly places, as exemplified by his statement in *Jerusalem* that “I write in South Molton Street, what I both see and hear / In regions of Humanity, in Londons opening streets” (*Jerusalem* 34 [38]: 42-43, E 180). In his phrase “see and hear,” it may be that Blake is echoing part of the full title of Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell: A Treatise Concerning Heaven and Hell, and of the Wonderful Things therein, as Heard and Seen, by the Honourable and Learned Emanuel Swedenborg*. This first distinction is a function, in part, of a fundamental difference in the two thinker's ideas about the relationship between the material and the spiritual: for Swedenborg, the two were firmly distinct but their interconnections could be seen through the understanding of a fixed system of “correspondences”; Blake, by contrast, believed that the material and spiritual were indistinct, stating at the outset of *The Marriage* that “Man has no Body distinct from his Soul” (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 4, E 34). Moreover, as Robert Rix has shown, Blake appears to satirise certain of Swedenborg's systematised “correspondences” in the “Proverbs of Hell,” such as those identifying particular animals as symbolising particular “good” or “bad” spiritual traits in humans.<sup>111</sup> Second, the disorienting and unstable landscapes traversed by the speaker in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, which are the basis for Saree Makdisi's apt phrase “impossible landscapes,” contrast markedly with the orderly, systematic approach

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<sup>110</sup> Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, 44.

<sup>111</sup> Robert W. Rix, “‘In Infernal Love and Faith’: William Blake's ‘The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,’” *Literature and Theology*, 20, no. 2 (2007): 117.

taken by Swedenborg in his verbal descriptions of the topographies of Heaven and Hell in the “Memorable Relations” appearing in many of his books.<sup>112</sup> This approach to mapping may be one of the many ways in which Blake seeks to challenge what he criticises, in *The Marriage*, as the “confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning” as recapitulated in Swedenborg’s books (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 21, E 42).

Blake’s apparently agonistic engagement with Swedenborg’s work and his legacy as enshrined in the New Jerusalem Church in a sense seems characteristic of his suspicious attitudes towards many of the networks with which he had contact throughout his life—from his involvement at the Royal Academy, to his dealings with Joseph Johnson, to his patronage by the likes of William Hayley. But this pattern need not be viewed only or even primarily as an indication of Blake’s standoffish aversion to existing within “society.” It may be more helpful to consider that Blake constantly sought out new networks, variously as sources of intellectual stimulation, “spiritual” sustenance, and financial support. This was so right up to his last years. It is to these years that I now turn, and to the loose group of artists calling themselves “The Ancients,” who are the earliest manifestations of what in my final chapter I term the “London Blakeans,” and whose involvement with Blake will allow for an initial discussion of the legacy of Blake and Blakean mapping.

### Blake as Guide: The Ancients

Most of the material examined so far in this chapter has concerned associations arising from Blake’s life in London before 1800. However, this is not intended to restate the thesis of rupture, whereby Blake has often been characterised as retreating into a phase of spiritual introspection in the latter part of his career. For one thing, as I have sketched in numerous examples, in his later works Blake often called back to material of which he was probably made aware via his networks in the book and print trades. One example that I have offered was the later revision to his earliest known separate print, whereby he identified the subject of the print as Joseph of Arimathea on his pilgrimage “Among the Rocks of Albion” (figure 15). I noted that this print related to Blake’s increasing interest in the theme of pilgrimage in his later work, as evidenced for instance by the series of designs Blake made for *The Pilgrim’s*

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<sup>112</sup> Makdisi, *Impossible History*, 240.



*Progress* in 1824-7, possibly commissioned by John Linnell (though little is actually known about the details of the commission). Blake's growing interest in pilgrimage in his late career is in turn entangled with his association with a loose network of artists who called themselves "The Ancients," a group who played a significant role in shaping Blake's legacy and whose interactions with Blake in the early nineteenth century indicate his continued participation in networks of associations even in the years when he is often regarded as being most impoverished and isolated.

The Ancients were a group of younger artists who took an interest in Blake's work in the last years of his life, chiefly from 1824-7. The group's core members were Samuel Palmer, George Richmond, and Edward Calvert; other occasional participants included Frederick Tatham, Oliver Finch, Henry Walter, and Welby Sherman. Many of these artists were close to John Linnell, who was also a close contact of Blake's throughout these latter years of his life, though Linnell himself was not technically a member of the Ancients. The group's two primary meeting places both relate in some sense to the theme of pilgrimage: first, an old cottage they called "Rat Abbey" in the Kent village of Shoreham, accessible by the Old Kent Road and the old Pilgrim's Road to Canterbury; second, Blake's own house at Fountain Court off the Strand, which they dubbed the "House of the Interpreter." This sobriquet was derived from an episode in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, in which the "Interpreter" takes the protagonist Christian through a series of rooms containing allegorical images, interpreting for him their meanings according to particular moral principles. Thus characterised, Blake and his work took on for this group of artists the role of a kind of spiritual and artistic "guide" as they sought to carry on the spirit of his work according to their own particular interests. The Ancients can be seen as an early iteration of the "London Blakeans," of whom I examine more recent emanations in Chapter Four, variously in their geographical concentration at London and nearby at Shoreham, in their adoption of Blake as a guide-like figure or archetypal pilgrim, and in their continuation of Blake's thematic interest in pilgrimage especially. Pilgrimage, then, is one of the key thematic affordances or "capabilities" (to adopt Mike Goode's term, which he uses for formal properties of Blake's media) that I identify in Blake's work.<sup>113</sup> I argue that the presence of embodied, open-ended journeys-in-progress in Blake's work has itself opened up the potential for later audiences to pick up the thread of routes traced in Blake's life and work

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<sup>113</sup> See Goode, *Romantic Capabilities*.

in their own visual and verbal art. In this sense, from the Ancients onwards, the London Blakeans have long been working in line with Felski's recent injunction, drawing on Latour's work, for critics to "honor and detail the singular features of a text as well as the specific routes along which it travels"—a formulation that itself seems particularly compatible with Blake's own concept of "golden string," which will guide much of the discussion of Chapter Three in this thesis.<sup>114</sup>

It is also important to note Blake's own role in figuring himself as a kind of pilgrim, which can retrospectively be read as part of a process of self-mythologising. This tendency seems to arise primarily in the years before Blake became more closely associated with the Ancients. In particular, as Gerda Norvig has noted, Blake's correspondence from the three years he spent living in William Hayley's cottage at Felpham (1800-3) contains several echoes from Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*.<sup>115</sup> During this period, Blake frequently figured himself in correspondence in terms of Christian's plight in Bunyan's narrative, especially the episodes in the Valley of Humiliation and the Valley of the Shadow of Death; as Norvig writes, "[e]vidence of the personal significance Blake attached to these valley episodes from the *Progress* emerges during the most problematic period of his relationship with his patron, William Hayley."<sup>116</sup> An illustrative example occurs in Blake's letter to Thomas Butts, dated April 25, 1803, in which Blake famously declares his disillusionment with the relationship with Hayley; here, Blake (mis)quotes Christian's cry in the Valley of the Shadow of Death: "*I will go on in the Strength of the Lord through Hell will I sing forth his Praises*" (Bunyan has "*I will walk in the strength of the Lord God*") (E 719, original emphasis).<sup>117</sup> Norvig has already identified a number of other examples of such imagery within the cluster of letters penned by Blake during this time. What is important to note here is that Blake's self-presentation as a Bunyanesque pilgrim during these years indicates a close engagement with *The Pilgrim's Progress* long before he undertook to make designs to the text. Similarly, although scholars differ widely in their dating of the work, Blake's white-line metal cut *The Man Sweeping the Interpreter's Parlour* (figure 42) is usually dated to either the mid-1790s or circa 1822, both predating Blake's own characterisation as "the Interpreter" by the Ancients from 1824.

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<sup>114</sup> Felski, "Latour and Literary Studies," 740.

<sup>115</sup> Gerda S. Norvig, *Dark Figures in the Desired Country: Blake's Illustrations to The Pilgrim's Progress* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), 86-96.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>117</sup> Norvig, *Dark Figures*, 87.

Moreover, the Bunyanesque imagery employed in Blake's correspondence from the Felpham years also indicates the beginnings of a characterisation of Blake as guide or archetypal pilgrim, which would be picked up by many later Blakean artists, including but not limited to the Ancients.

Mostly High Anglican Tories, the Ancients have often been sharply distinguished from Blake in the light of their apparent conventionality, positioned in contrast to Blake's radicalism. In taking an interest in Blake's work, the Ancients tended indeed to be interested in vague "spiritual" topics and general stylistic features of his work, which could more easily be accommodated within their standards of respectability, rather than in the more politically charged aspects of Blake's work and life; as a result, the Ancients have (I think rightly) been accused of oversimplifying or, worse still, of deradicalising or defanging Blake. For example, Raymond Lister has argued that Blake's intellectualism was "beyond the Ancients' reach."<sup>118</sup> Meanwhile, critiquing Samuel Palmer's deradicalisation of Blake in particular, Tim Barringer argues that Palmer's emulations of Blake's *Virgil* woodcuts erased the "radical dissonance" and "political critique" that Barringer identifies at the heart of Blake's designs.<sup>119</sup> Yet Blake was not so passively brought under the wing of the Ancients' political quietism, as Barringer seems to suggest: after all, in his last years Blake seems actively and repeatedly to have courted close relationships with members of this group. Moreover, the visionary rhetoric of Blake's work might be said potentially to afford this kind of conservative, elitist response in appealing to an enlightened public. In this sense, again to extend Goode's argument, the Ancients were very much picking up on certain "capabilities" within Blake's work, though at the same time they were also neglecting (or, perhaps, intentionally suppressing) others.

Despite their differences, as Barush has emphasised, Blake's close association with members of this group was also rather porous: "Palmer, Calvert, Richmond, and Blake [...] forged not only a friendship but also a symbiotic relationship, sharing philosophies and sketches alike."<sup>120</sup> In particular, Palmer and Calvert shared with Blake a fervent interest in sacred journeys, as emerges through networks of tropes across their oeuvres, which reveal the continued influence of Blakean pilgrimage in his followers' later work: Palmer's *The Valley*

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<sup>118</sup> Raymond Lister, *Samuel Palmer: His Life and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 65.

<sup>119</sup> Tim Barringer, "'I am a native rooted here': Benjamin Britain, Samuel Palmer and the Neo-Romantic Pastoral," *Art History*, 34, no. 1 (2011): 154.

<sup>120</sup> Barush, *Art and the Sacred Journey*, 148.

*Thick with Corn* (1825) (figure 43) closely relates to Blake's *John Bunyan Dreams a Dream* (1824-7) (figure 44), while Palmer's much later painting *Christian Descending into the Valley of Humiliation: Vide "Pilgrim's Progress"* (c. 1848) (figure 45) recalls a host of images in Blake's late visual art of figures arduously trudging along, many of which I examine in my article on Blake's engagement with Bunyan.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, Calvert's pastoral imaginary was replete with wandering figures recalling, for instance, Blake's *Fond Desire Strange Lands to Know* (figure 46), which Calvert had adapted in his own drawing *A Young Shepherd on a Journey* (figure 47). The mesh of related artworks has already been thoroughly examined in Barush's study, in which she comments that "[f]or the Ancients, although the particulars of their approach and philosophy differed, the act of making art was a way to transcend the temporal to connect with the past."<sup>122</sup> What Barush arguably overlooks is the contrast between the Ancients' emphasis on restoring a pastoral, pristine past, and the strongly urban and future-tense character of Blake's tropes of pilgrimage, as laid out for example in *Jerusalem*, although these visions did coexist with moments of pastoral yearning, which is one available reading of the "And did those feet" lyric prefacing *Milton*.

The Ancients paid homage to Blake not only in artistic gestures, but also in the form of physical journeys. As well as their visits to Blake's house during his lifetime, according to Gilchrist, the core members of the Ancients were present at Blake's funeral at Bunhill Fields, which has long been the site for latter-day pilgrimages up to this day, as we shall see in Chapter Four. Here the funeral attendees would have witnessed Blake take up his place near the tomb of John Bunyan himself; as Gilchrist writes:

At noon the following Friday, August 17<sup>th</sup>, the chosen knot of friends,—Richmond, Calvert, Tatham, and others,—attended the body of the beloved man to the grave,—saw it laid in Bunhill Fields burying-ground, Finsbury: Tatham, though ill, travelling ninety miles to do so. Bunhill Fields is known to us all as the burial place of Bunyan and De Foe, among other illustrious Nonconformists.<sup>123</sup>

Even Gilchrist's description of the event here characterises it as a kind of pilgrimage in emphasising the effortful journey made by Tatham to attend the funeral, alongside the

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<sup>121</sup> Ritchie, "Mapping Bunyan, Mapping Blake."

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>123</sup> Gilchrist, *Life*, 407.

reference to Bunyan's tomb. Similarly, Calvert's son recalls how, much later in his life, his father had "pathetically exclaimed: 'I want to take a little pilgrimage to Fountain Court, that I may once more gaze upon that divine window where the blessed man did his work.'"<sup>124</sup> Such characterisations began to sketch an impression of Blake as a guide-like figure inspiring a spirited following in the form of physical journeys as well as artistic continuations.

Blake's status as spiritual guide was also part and parcel of his elevation to otherworldly, angelic heights, a rhetorical tendency that I noted at the beginning of this chapter. Thus Gilchrist writes that, despite his own belatedness,

I can still trace something of the mystic Poet's influence, surviving the lapse of more than thirty years, in all who ever knew and loved Blake; as of men who once in their lives had, as it were, entertained an angel *not* unawares.<sup>125</sup>

The figuration of Blake as an "an angel" can tend to give the impression that Blake somehow transcended time and place. Further, as the above quotation from Gilchrist relays, such figurations are traceable to the mythologies constructed in testimonies by those, such as Palmer, who knew Blake directly and were intent on securing his apotheosis once and for all. Thus in a letter written on August 23, 1855, to Gilchrist, who was then preparing materials for his Blake biography, Palmer wrote that "[t]o walk with him in the country was to perceive the soul of beauty through the forms of matter."<sup>126</sup> The notion of Blake as a spiritual mediator or angel descended in human form has certainly retained some currency in Blake's contemporary reception within London: many London Blakeans in recent years undertake pilgrimages of their own to Blakean sites in search of direct, unmediated "conversation" with Blake's spirit. In this sense, despite its connotations of detachment, the ideal of Blake as an angel has, ironically, continued to uphold Blake's firm position within networks of artists, poets, and publishers to this day. Blakeans are continually forming new attachments to Blake, his work, and the places associated with his life, in ways that have tended to honour the open-ended routes that he himself favoured throughout his work. It is to tracing some such routes that I turn in my next chapter on Blake's (anti-)cartographic poem, "The Mental Traveller."

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<sup>124</sup> Cited in Barush, *Art and the Sacred Journey*, 177.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* (original emphasis).

<sup>126</sup> Gilchrist, *Life*, 344.

## Chapter Two. Mental Travel

And to Allay his freezing Age  
 The Poor Man takes her in his arms  
 The Cottage fades before his sight  
 The Garden & its lovely Charms

The Guests are scatterd thro' the land  
 For the Eye altering alters all  
 The Senses roll themselves in fear  
 And the flat Earth becomes a Ball  
 ("The Mental Traveller," 57-64, E 485).<sup>1</sup>

In these central stanzas from Blake's manuscript poem "The Mental Traveller," the warm idyll of the cottage "fades" out of sight as the "altering" eye collapses the world of the senses into nothing but a "Ball." The lines rehearse a typical Blakean indictment of the kind of metaphysics that would view the world solely in terms of dead geometry, abstracted or aggregated from the minute particulars of the peopled universe, as I have begun to sketch in the Introduction and Chapter One. The "sight" in the poem here is focalised by a "Poor Man" who has previously enjoyed the pleasures of cottage life and now, in a cruel reversal of fortunes, finds himself an itinerant outcast. But the lines are also applicable to a readerly impulse that can be traced throughout the critical reception of this poem: all too often, critics have allowed the particular significance of the cottage setting (and indeed the poem's other places) to fade before their sight, focusing their energies on rationalising the difficulties of the poem *as a whole* into the abstract form of a diagram. The irony seems greater still when one observes that the majority of such diagrams take the geometrical shape of a circle, disregarding Blake's overt suspicion of circular and spherical forms alike both in this very poem and elsewhere throughout his oeuvre.

In what follows, I briefly introduce some twentieth-century diagrammatic and often circular critical responses to "The Mental Traveller," re-evaluating these in the light both of Blake's suspicion of diagrams and of postmodern discussions of the problems involved in distilling embodied experiences into geometrical form, viewed as though "from nowhere." Putting pressure on Blake's ideas about totalising vision, I then take an opportunity to "zoom

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<sup>1</sup> All subsequent references to the poem are in the form of bracketed, in-text line-numbers.

out” and examine the recurrent trope of globes in Blake’s body of visual art. Returning to “The Mental Traveller,” and resisting the urge to assimilate the poem to a wider Blakean “system,” I offer a close reading of the poem that foregrounds its syntactic, perspectival, and spatio-temporal discontiguity, and its consequent resistance to neat two-dimensional synopsis. I then bring the cottage setting back before our sight as a key locus for Blake’s engagement with what James Chandler terms the sentimental “mode” and as an important reminder of the centrality of physical places in Blake’s poetry and visual art more widely.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, I hope to propose a reading of “The Mental Traveller” that can act as a blueprint for reading Blake’s work in more spatial terms than has tended to be attempted.

### The Diagrammatic Tradition

As many scholars have pointed out, “The Mental Traveller” is an extremely perplexing poem. Yet, in facing this perplexity, many of the same scholars have sought to reduce the poem to a codifiable system, presenting its meaning in the form of a diagram. So common is the tendency to diagram this particular poem that it is possible to speak of a diagrammatic tradition peculiar to scholarship on “The Mental Traveller.” This diagrammatic tradition began with William Butler Yeats and has enjoyed a lifespan of over fifty years, no insignificant period in the history of Blake Studies. Diagrams were proffered by Yeats (1925) (figure 48), Hazard Adams (1963) (figure 49), Martin K. Nurmi (1964) (figures 50 and 51), Donald Ault (1974) (figures 52 and 53), James B. Twitchell (1975) (figure 54) and Izak Bouwer and Paul McNally (1978-9) (figures 55 and 56).<sup>3</sup> Crucially, Northrop Frye’s (1947) theory of the “Orc cycle”

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<sup>2</sup> Chandler, *Archaeology of Sympathy*.

<sup>3</sup> The diagrammatic and indeed cartographic impulse has had a firm foothold in Blake criticism at large: see, e.g., Samuel Foster Damon’s much-reproduced map of Golgonooza in his *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*, rev. edn (Hanover and London: Brown University Press/University Press of New England, 1988), 163; Susan Fox, *Poetic Form in Blake’s MILTON* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 209; Donald Ault, who is one of the “Mental Traveller” diagrammers, also employs diagrams elsewhere in *Visionary Physics: Blake’s Response to Newton* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 37; see also his monumental *Narrative Unbound: Re-Visioning William Blake’s The Four Zoas* (New York: Station Hill Press, 1987). Gerda Norvig included numerous diagrams in her *Dark Figures in the Desired Country: Blake’s Illustrations to The Pilgrim’s Progress* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), 144, 147, 166, etc. Saree Makdisi produced a diagram linking the “Spiritual Fourfold London” with global geography in his *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 168. Hatsuko Niimi includes two graphics which she calls “diagrams” (and which might also be considered “tables” or “charts”) in “The Book of Ahania: A Metatext,” *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 34 (2), 2000, 46-54: 52. Still more recently, Russell Prather made use of numerous diagrams (as well as several tables) in his article “William Blake and the Problem of Progression,” *Studies in Romanticism*, 46, no. 4 (2007): 507-40: 514, 517, 520, and 530.

leaned heavily on “The Mental Traveller,” which it sought to reduce to a cyclical model as a schema for a Blakean system.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, in Blake scholarship more widely, diagrams have continued to be produced well after the 1970s.<sup>5</sup>

I have pursued a sustained critique of the “Mental Traveller” diagrams elsewhere, but it will be worth briefly outlining the premises of this critique as a precursor to my own reading of the poem in this chapter.<sup>6</sup> In my critique, I focused on three ironies within the “Mental Traveller” diagrammatic tradition. The first lies in the fact that so many scholars have spoken of the poem as pre-eminently puzzling and multi-dimensional and yet, in the moment of criticism, have sought to solve the puzzle using two-dimensional abstract signs. My primary objection to this kind of approach is to the brevity and superficiality of these critics’ justification of their use of diagrams; by contrast, I advocate serious interrogation of the problems that go hand in hand with diagrammatic criticism when it comes to interpreting Blake’s work. The second irony is that in using diagrams—as many of them, though briefly, actually did point out themselves—these critics were acting in a rather un-Blakean spirit, given Blake’s well-known suspicion of diagrammatic forms (though Blake himself often toys with a diagrammatic impulse). The third irony is that the majority of “Mental Traveller” diagrams take the form of a circle, which, as I have noted above, jars with Blake’s suspicion of circular and spherical forms both in this very poem and elsewhere throughout his body of work. Although I acknowledge the appeal of diagrams in rationalising textual chaos (and so, I think, did Blake himself), overall, it is my contention that diagrammatic interpretations come at the cost of flattening out the radically and fundamentally disruptive logic of “The Mental Traveller.”

In my own reading of the poem, presented in this chapter, I advocate a return to its particularities, to the words on the page, and the spatial relations that they disclose. Reading Blake’s work, I argue, can thereby be productively reconceptualised as a process of tracing, step by step, the routes that Blake maps out through his visionary landscape. And this

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<sup>4</sup> William Butler Yeats, *A Critical Edition of Yeats’s A Vision (1925)*, ed. George Mills Harper and Walter Kelly Hood (London: MacMillan, 1978), 180; Hazard Adams, *William Blake: A Reading of the Shorter Poems* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), 82, 98; Martin K. Nurmi, “Joy, Love, and Innocence in Blake’s ‘The Mental Traveller,’” *Studies in Romanticism*, 3, no. 2 (1964): 117; Ault, *Visionary Physics*, 187, 191; James B. Twitchell, “‘The Mental Traveller’, Infinity and the ‘Arlington Court Picture,’” *Criticism*, 17, no. 1 (1975): 4; Izak Bouwer and Paul McNally, “‘The Mental Traveller’: Man’s Eternal Journey,” *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 12, no. 3 (1978-9): 185, 189.

<sup>5</sup> Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 128-30, 205-15, 227-35.

<sup>6</sup> Ritchie, “Diagrammatic Blake.”



processual Blakean mapping can be seen to offer an integrative conception of corporeal, mental, and spiritual experience as accumulated across lifelines. Accordingly, in this section I turn to the wider epistemological and ontological problems underpinning the diagrams, placing Blake's lifelong suspicion of diagrammatic forms in dialogue with recent discussions of diagrammatic and cartographic theory which have sought to contest the view from nowhere, and to re-assert the vitality of embodied and local forms of knowledge. Through this initial critique, I shall prepare the ground for a re-reading of "The Mental Traveller" that recovers its landscapes and the bodies that move through them.

### Diagrams, the "altering Eye," and Total Vision

As I have suggested, our critics' recourse to diagrams is especially ironic since so many of them adopt the form of a smooth enclosed circle—a form towards which Blake's attitudes were at best ambivalent. Recall the lines (already quoted at the outset of the present chapter), in which the "altering" eye collapses the world of the senses into nothing but a "Ball":

The Guests are scatterd thro' the land  
For the Eye altering alters all  
The Senses roll themselves in fear  
And the flat Earth becomes a Ball (ll. 57-64).

Blake reprises this passage in his famous philippic against miniaturisations of the Earth-as-globe in *Milton*. In the *Milton* passage we are told that one's "Universe" is best conceptualised as being constituted by the realm of experience apprehensible from the "flat Earth" surrounding one's moveable "dwelling-place," as opposed to the deadening and immobile "delusion" of a "Globe rolling thro' Voidness" conjured by mathematical instruments (*Milton* 29 [31]: 16, E 127). Like Blake's Globe, critics' circular diagrams shrink the bodies and landscapes of "The Mental Traveller" into a ratio suspended in the void of a white page. As I have suggested, although the final line of the poem ("And all is done as I have said") seems indeed to gesture towards cyclical repetition, the poem is replete with disruptions and obstructions that belie this semblance of seamless circularity, setting itself up as a veritable trap for the diagrammer. In its convolutions, breakages, and multiple trajectories the poem's

structure seems closer to what Blake might have called a “crooked” road than to the smooth lines of our scholars’ diagrams.<sup>7</sup>

Yet any honest student of Blake will no doubt identify to some extent with the diagrammatic impulse. Despite our best efforts, it can be difficult to get away from the desire to “complete” the text through our critical practice: Blake, too, knew this desire well. It is dramatised time and again in the figure of Urizen, whose efforts to measure and circumscribe the world around him are, after all, not entirely ill intentioned. Indeed, scholars’ frequent recourse to diagrams seems not dissimilar to the temporary comfort found by Urizen in the hurried demarcation of the Mundane Shell, rationalising from above the daunting “Voidness” of “indefinite space” in that other formidable manuscript work, *The Four Zoas* (24 [II 18-32]: 1, 3, E 314). Urizen’s is an earnest and perhaps not entirely unfamiliar effort to make sense of the chaos around him. However, as with Urizen’s petrific forms, in seeking to impose static order upon the seeming narrative chaos of “The Mental Traveller,” critical diagrams are limited by their separation of mind from matter and their tendency to smooth over the untameable changes and contradictions inherent in Blake’s relational universe. Moreover, they approach the poem from the very disembodied, top-down perspective that Urizen craves in *The Four Zoas*, exclaiming “Where shall we take our stand to view the infinite & unbounded / Or where are human feet for Lo our eyes are in the heavens” (*The Four Zoas* 122 [IX 205-45]: 24-25, E 391). Urizen’s cry calls to mind the diagrammatic will to power evoked in Blake’s iconic frontispiece to *Europe: A Prophecy* (figure 22), and its reprisal in the above-mentioned colour print *Newton* (figure 23), which, as has been argued time and again, cumulatively characterise the dualistic top-down worldview as oppressive, delusional, reductionist.

In contrast, throughout Blake’s work, the position of “human feet” is repeatedly cast as absolutely vital to all forms of experience, from sensory to visionary. It is especially central to “The Mental Traveller,” in which the travels described are vividly, sometimes violently, corporeal. As Peter Otto has painstakingly demonstrated, again stressing corporeality, *The Four Zoas* (the production of which spanned the period in which “The Mental Traveller” was probably written) can be read as a call for readers to attend to a series of specific scenarios within a disorientating spatio-temporal setting in order to reach an understanding of their

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<sup>7</sup> See the “Proverbs of Hell”: “Improvement makes strait roads, but the crooked roads without Improvement, are roads of Genius” (Blake, *The Marriage* 10: 66-67, E 38).

own fallen ontological condition. The poem proceeds according to a series of tensions between dynamically conflictual components, frustrating readerly attempts to supply a meaning into which those components might be resolved. Seeking an external “system” to make sense of the poem can only provide temporary and imperfect resolution.

This is also why it does not quite suffice to co-opt the phrase “mental travel” as shorthand for any journey that is not perceived as “actual” or embodied—as many critics are inclined to do—since the “mental” or “spiritual” aspect of travel is only a partial reflection of the poem’s content.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to Erika Behrisch, in her fruitful study of *Milton* as a re-working of the eighteenth-century travel narrative, I ascribe particular weight to the spatial within Blake’s work as in fact analogous to an extra-textual “actual,” rather than solely a cipher or container for imaginative experience, rejecting with Blake such a clear bifurcation between body and soul.<sup>9</sup>

From this point of view, it may appear as though Blake’s thinking is somewhat primitivist or essentialist, presupposing the existence of a knowable underlying “reality” that can be uncovered through privileging his own visionary metaphysics. But this would be a mischaracterisation. Blake is not proposing that we seek to know what Kevin Hutchings terms “an extra-discursive nature”; rather, he is advancing “a radical critique of an authoritative objectivity,” such as is manifested—as Hutchings posits—in “dogmatic understandings of nature as regulatory standard or norm,” and relatedly, I would venture, in the representation of the “natural world” in the form of a two-dimensional map or diagram.<sup>10</sup> Rather than trying to do away with discursivity altogether, Blake advocates intervention into the workings of the “altering eye,” through an active re-visioning of the spatial in terms of minute forms as we encounter them in the world. For Blake, the world is constituted by encounters between nonhuman “objects,” ourselves, and our position within the world, from which we behold and

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<sup>8</sup> See for example Norvig, *Dark Figures*, esp. 71, 72, 102. See also Barush, *Art and the Sacred Journey*, 100. An event held at London’s Pentameters Theatre in 2012 on the date of Blake’s birthday was entitled “Mental Travellers,” the advertisement claiming that “‘The Mental Traveller’ is the name of a William Blake poem that seems to be an early 19<sup>th</sup> century way of saying ‘psychogeographer,’” and promising that the event would “take you on a fabulous journey away from the harshness of Austerity England, the farce of Hackgate and Plebgate, and the business-as-usual of what William Blake called ‘The Oppressors of Albion.’” In her 2019-20 Clarendon Lectures at The University of Oxford (to be published in a forthcoming book on Blake and Italian iconography, entitled *The Mental Traveller*), Denise Gigante similarly co-opted the phrase “mental travel” as an emblem of predominantly disembodied, allegorical journeying.

<sup>9</sup> Erika Behrisch, “‘The Great Map of Mankind’: Corporeal Cartography and the Route to Discovery in William Blake’s *Milton*,” *English Studies in Canada*, 27, no. 4 (2001): 435-58.

<sup>10</sup> Hutchings, *Imagining Nature*, 155.

are beheld. Indeed, Blake is willing to endow nonhuman forms with agency, but his emphasis on human subjectivity nonetheless reveals a reliance on an anthropocentric point of view that he never fully abandons.

Blake's recognition of the discursivity and constructedness of spatial representation arguably shares much with the insights of John Brian Harley's famous demolition of cartographic objectivism in "Deconstructing the Map" (1989). The legacy of Harley's essay has been immense, reverberating throughout recent discussions of cartography theory in ways that indicate "a persistent discontent with cartography."<sup>11</sup> It is noteworthy that, as I have noted, the diagrammatic bent in scholarship on "The Mental Traveller" seems to have dwindled after the end of the 1970s, perhaps reflecting the subsequent spread of this hermeneutics of suspicion aimed expressly at destabilising the apparent authority of diagrammatic forms. Whereas the "Mental Traveller" diagrams seem to rely rather confidently on the authority ascribed to the diagram in post-Enlightenment thought, it is no longer deemed satisfactory to view diagrammatic representations as stable or incontestable. Rather, attention has increasingly been drawn to "ontological" or "onto-genetic" approaches to reconceptualising maps and mapping practices, viewing maps as complex and relational sets of practices that are always contested and always emerging at the intersection between "inscription, individual and world."<sup>12</sup> In Chapter Three, I return to some of the ways in which Blake's work and such recent "processual" or "post-representational" theories of mapping can be mutually illuminating.

In a similar vein, as I have noted in the introduction to this thesis, in new turns towards "rethinking maps," theorists have emphasised the importance of toggling between a ground-level perspective and a concept of totality. Anthropologist Tim Ingold celebrates local detail and the embodied experience of space, conceiving of culture and the social in terms of an "exploratory" model of "walking" or "wayfaring," rather than distanced "surveying":

[W]hereas the Kantian traveller reasons over a map in his mind, the walker draws a tale from impressions in the ground. [...] his knowledge is not classificatory but storied, not totalising and synoptic but open-ended and exploratory.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew H. Edney, "Cartography and Its Discontents," *Cartographica*, 50, no. 1 (2015): 10.

<sup>12</sup> Kitchin *et al.*, "Thinking about maps," 21; see also Crampton, *Political Mapping of Cyberspace*.

<sup>13</sup> Tim Ingold, *The Life of Lines* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), 48.

So too might Ingold's concept of "meshworks" (in subtle distinction from "networks" as theorised by Latour) instructively inflect a reading of Blake's work, encouraging an emphasis on the lines of movement between various bodies as opposed to viewing them as fixed and immobile objects.<sup>14</sup> Ingold's models, to which I shall devote greater attention in Chapter Three, can help us to rethink Blake's work and our process of reading it as coming into being through wayfaring, which need not be linear in a teleological sense; rather, it can be seen as processual, as emergent, and as frequently interruptive. Ingold uses the analogy of a saw cutting through wood for the way culture relates to things: the saw must continually adapt to the changing grain of the wood, respecting the material's inherent inconsistencies. This he likens explicitly to a journey: "Like going for a walk, sawing a plank has the character of a journey that proceeds from place to place, through a movement that – though rhythmic and repetitive – is never strictly monotonous."<sup>15</sup> Such terms are useful to think with when reading "The Mental Traveller": in form (twenty-six even quatrains in iambic tetrameters, rhyming ABCB and, like Blake's other lyrics, lacking grammatical pauses) the poem mimics the "rhythmic and repetitive" act of walking, yet in content it is full of inconsistencies and disruptions. These are too intrinsic to the poem to be rationalised into smooth diagrammatic lines. Both Ingold and Blake are interested in the metaphor of routes (whether figured as wayfaring, walking, or travelling), and both contest the diagrammer's or surveyor's vision as the contrary against which to progress their arguments.

Ingold's emphasis on being as movement also raises the issue of temporality, which is another key issue faced by diagrammers of "The Mental Traveller." As I have mentioned, scholars' diagrams seek to represent in spatial form the bodies that they see as moving in the poem's time, and this can result in an overly simplistic projection of linearity and temporal unity. Both issues are at the forefront of recent theories of representation, as can be seen in the increasing emergence of spatial models (in the manner of Gilles Deleuze and Michel Serres) that picture time "not as a clean layering of moments one upon another, but as a muddling of temporalities."<sup>16</sup> Here it is worth recalling Serres' model, which I introduced in Chapter One. Serres instructively visualises such tempo-spatial "muddling" in terms of a flat piece of paper marked with plotted points and overlapping lines that can be crumpled to bring

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<sup>14</sup> Ingold, *Being alive*, 162.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>16</sup> Lupton *et al.*, "Introduction," 167.

together spatially disparate points in surprising ways.<sup>17</sup> By contrast, the clean lines of the diagram disguise the way in which temporalities interrupt and are interrupted by spatial happenings, especially in a text like “The Mental Traveller,” which so blatantly warps the expected flow of narrative time and paradoxically works against the linear logic of its own written form.

Although many of the “Mental Traveller” diagrammers would no doubt concur that Blake was opposed to both linear systems and totalising vision, their very use of diagrams suggest recourse to just those methods of thinking as an aid to the process of reading (and interpreting) Blake at his most difficult. This unfortunate irony is the cost of diagrammatic visualisations of Blake. The “ground-level” travel that I take Blake to be encouraging as a model for reading practice is lost in their abstractions, which try to separate things as they occur in time from the actual landscape of the poem. The “Mental Traveller” diagrams provide a cautionary tale for the interpretive perils of attempting an all-too-distanced mapping of Blake’s work. Such distanced mapping of texts—epitomised, for example, by Moretti’s *Atlas of the European Novel*—has also come under scrutiny in wider discussions of literary mapping. Although unwilling to let go entirely of total vision, Joanna Taylor *et al.* have similarly identified the primary representational imperative of mapping texts as an adequate attentiveness to detail: “the sorts of ‘generalization[s]’ that macroanalysis advances should lead the attentive reader – of either text or landscape – into the ‘infinite variety of detail’ that composes them.”<sup>18</sup> The text of “The Mental Traveller” thematises this very problem of scaling: Blake’s satirical image of the Earth as a “Ball” (and each of our critical diagrams) is undercut by the seeming “infinite variety” of the wanderings enacted by the various figures within the poem’s landscape; the past-tense and distant perspective of the traveller in the opening stanza is undercut by the unfolding of embodied events in the present-tense as the poem progresses.

I make no claim to having found a solution to creating a more representative reader-generated map of the poem, if indeed such a solution exists for a text that seems designed to be a trap for the diagrammer. My claim here is that Blake had early recognised the core

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<sup>17</sup> Serres with Latour, *Conversations*, 60; cited in Lupton *et al.*, “Introduction,” 167.

<sup>18</sup> See Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel*; Joanna E. Taylor, Christopher E. Donaldson, Ian N. Gregory and James O. Butler, “Mapping Digitally, Mapping Deep: Exploring Digital Literary Geographies,” *Literary Geographies*, 4, no. 1 (2018): 11. Taylor is quoting W. G. Hoskins here, but the phrase “infinite variety” (which is also a Shakespearean phrase) also occurs in Blake’s early illuminated book *All Religions are One* (E 1).

tension in spatial representation between generality and detail that is now coming under renewed scrutiny, and that he everywhere suggests that there is greater value in detail, and in embodiment. As recent theorists have recognised, mapping technologies are ever-evolving, but whatever the machine or the medium altering one's eye, as Timothy Clark writes, contemplating the case of the 1968 Apollo "whole earth" photographs,

The earth is not "one" in the sense of an entity we can see, understand or read as a whole. No matter from how far away or "high up" it is perceived or imagined, or in what different contexts of cosmology or physics, it is always something we remain "inside" and cannot genuinely perceive from elsewhere.<sup>19</sup>

Clark's terms here recall us to Blake's vision, in "The Mental Traveller," of the earth-as-ball, which I have characterised as a critique of a totalising imaginary. In the following section, I take this stanza from the poem as a cue to "zoom out" not in order to understand the poem as a whole, but rather to suggest its position within a network of globes that pervades Blake's body of work, especially in his visual art. By turns enraptured and frustrated, Blake's visual and verbal images of globes are shot through with contradictions that cumulatively dramatise a crisis of faith in the capabilities of representation, resonating with many of the contradictions at work in "The Mental Traveller." This discussion will also provide an opportunity to carve out a space for Blake within the "Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination," a narrative influentially traced by Denis Cosgrove.<sup>20</sup>

## Blake's Globes

In *Apollo's Eye*, Cosgrove traces an astonishing narrative of western global imaginings—a narrative that is in many ways as grand as the global visions it seeks to identify and to deconstruct. Writing of the so-called "Enlightened Globe" of eighteenth-century Europe, Cosgrove states that by this point in history "[t]he globe has become an instrument of secular learning, the focus of an objective, disinterested gaze."<sup>21</sup> Cosgrove highlights the concurrence of this "disinterested gaze" with the global imperial and commercial *interests* of European

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<sup>19</sup> Timothy Clark, "What on World Is the Earth?: The Anthropocene and Fictions of the World," *Oxford Literary Review*, 35, no. 1 (2013): 15.

<sup>20</sup> Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye*.

<sup>21</sup> Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye*, 177.

nations, an association which was frequently evoked in literary and visual global images and which could hardly have escaped the notice of William Blake.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, in one sense, Blake's critiques of totalising global vision seem to lament precisely these objectivist and imperialist ambitions. Yet, at the same time, the example of Blake itself indicates the co-existence of other modes of global vision across literary and visual culture. Moreover, there is in Blake's work an irrepressible fascination for globes which sees him engaging with many of the same questions as his contemporaries: how to represent three-dimensionality on a two-dimensional pictorial plane, how to deal with the impossibility of truly seeing the whole from within it, and indeed what the philosophical and political implications might be of taking a global view. I return to some of these issues in Chapter Three, but in what follows I begin to situate Blake within a network of contemporaneous global images, pursuing a synchronic study of visual culture in order to turn over some of the stones inevitably left untouched by more diachronic approaches such as Cosgrove's.

Blake's global imagination is, like his geographical imagination, as much anti-cartographic as it is cartographic. So far I have chiefly dwelt on Blake's suspicion of circles and spheres as claustrophobic and fallacious forms in stanza 16 of "The Mental Traveller" and in two instances from *Milton*; namely, the perplexing design showing "Miltons Track" and the lines denouncing the fantasy of a "Globe rolling thro Voidness." Yet, as the "Miltons Track" design suggests, despite Blake's repeated verbal criticisms of encircling and englobing forms, he does in practice represent circles and globes with striking frequency in his visual art. The very frequency of these images suggests a curious fixation, ostensibly in tension with Blake's preference for a "flat earth" co-constituted by "minute particulars." Blake does not abolish global vision; far from it—yet his images of circles and globes tend more to underscore the provisional and imperfect nature of representation itself than to create an impression of harmonious wholeness or transcendent perfection. Blake everywhere foregrounds problems of dimensionality and epistemology associated with global representation. This, combined with Blake's tendency to synchronise multiple spatio-temporal scales on the one pictorial plane, characterises his global imagination as deeply vexed—though, as I attempt to show, this is not beyond comparison to the visual culture of the period. Since there are far too many

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<sup>22</sup> See also Geoff Quilley, "The sphere of contemplation: the imagery of global navigation in eighteenth-century England," in *Romantic Geographies: Proceedings of the Glasgow Conference, September 1994*, ed. Colin Smethurst (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 1996), 55-64.



examples to discuss here, I briefly consider just four of Blake's designs, in broadly chronological order, making comparisons and contrasts with contemporaneous material drawn principally from within the networks examined in Chapter One. For structural purposes I leave the important global images from *Jerusalem* aside for discussion in Chapter Three.

At first glance, Blake's full-page design known as *Vegetating in Fibres of Blood* (from *The [First] Book of Urizen*, 1794) (figure 57) seems worlds apart from the "secular" and "disinterested gaze" that Cosgrove identifies in "Enlightenment" global images.<sup>23</sup> It is one of a number of orbs or globes appearing in Blake's prophetic books, ambiguously resembling planets, suns, moons, and other light-sources, as well as globules of blood, eyes, and other bodily organs. In such images, as I shall suggest, Blake may have intended to engage in dialogue with precisely this kind of "disinterested gaze" by calling to mind a network of global images that was pervading print and material culture at this time. The vision of creation shown in this design is strongly mythologised; it is also embodied, and viscerally so. The design depicts the parthenogenetic, or perhaps autogenetic, creation of the first female form. It likely relates to the description on Plate 18 of the "globe of life blood" that "trembled / Branching out into roots" to form "a female form trembling and pale" (*The [First] Book of Urizen* 18: 1-2, 7, E 78). The design is as enigmatic as it is captivating: both qualities have led to much scholarly discussion. The image can be notionally connected with multiple iconographic and mythological typologies: the birth of Athena from the head of Zeus, the self-absorption of Narcissus, the creation of Eve from Adam's rib. Others have viewed it in the light of eighteenth-century embryological science, particularly William Hunter's *Anatomia Uteri Humani Gravidi* (1774).<sup>24</sup> On a much larger spatio-temporal scale, Peter Otto has discussed the design at length as an instance of Blake's "archaeologies of the present," uncannily haunted by the "archaic past" of Gothic imagery.<sup>25</sup> I believe that, intersecting with these mythological, biological, psychological, and historical overtones, *Vegetating in Fibres of Blood* is also a cartographic image, poised somewhere between a fantasy of regenerative

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<sup>23</sup> Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye*, 177.

<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., Stefani Engelstein, "The Regenerative Geography of the Text in William Blake," *Modern Language Studies*, 30, no. 2 (2000): 61-86.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Otto, "The horrors of creation: globes, englobing powers, and Blake's archaeologies of the present," in *William Blake's Gothic Imagination: Bodies of Horror*, ed. Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018): 184.

world-making and a nightmare of violent abstraction, as befits a text whose principal theme is the genesis of worlds.

The various copies of *Vegetating in Fibres of Blood* feature, to varying degrees of vividness, markings that suggest the arteries of a human heart, presumably identifiable with the “roots” described in the text. I focus here on the plate from “Copy B,” in which these arterial markings are particularly pronounced. Their corporeality is undeniable, but the appearance of networked lines across a circular (or, as the text suggests, global) surface also call to mind the convention, inherited via Arabic sources from ancient geographers including Ptolemy, of marking maps and globes with lines of longitude and latitude, forming a network known as a graticule. Blake would later mark a marginal globe in *Jerusalem* with a graticule which, combined with the typical compasses or dividers held by the figure above the globe, creates an overall impression of mathematised space (figure 58). The image suggests that Blake was well aware of what Cosgrove refers to as “the space-equalizing and area-fixing properties of the graticule.”<sup>26</sup> However, Blake’s graticule in the *Jerusalem* globe is perforated by lines of text: significantly, the words “east & west” encroach on the surface of the globe, flipping the usual compass-points as though to defy such rationalisations of space. Blake could have encountered the standardising convention of the graticule in numerous sources: for just one example predating *The [First] Book of Urizen*, we might compare the three images of terrestrial spheres illustrated on a plate in the fourteenth edition of Nicolas Lenglet Dufresnoy’s *Geography for Children*, published by Joseph Johnson in 1783 (figure 59). Each sphere has minimal cartographic detail when it comes to placenames or landmasses, but their surfaces are systematically marked with lines of longitude and latitude and divided into rigid climatic zones. In *Vegetating in Fibres of Blood*, by contrast, the network of lines is far more gestural in form, such that it also calls to mind a network of rivers or roads, like those depicted in John Aikin’s maps (see Chapter One)—the chief difference being that Blake’s arterial lines do not seem obviously to radiate from one centre.

If the plate can be taken as a visual anticipation of the nightmare visions of the earth becoming a “Ball” in “The Mental Traveller” and “Milton,” the potential for abstraction here collides with the unruliness of vital matter in a process of perpetual generation. The powerful collision of biological and cartographic systems in this image perhaps reaches out towards

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<sup>26</sup> Cosgrove, *Apollo’s Eye*, 106.

Blake's sense of the dialectical relationship between organism and environment: as Amanda Jo Goldstein writes, for Blake "beings *live* by recursive configuration with relations"—in this case, the spatial relations that form the contours of the physical world—"that preceded and condition their coming."<sup>27</sup> However, the potential for a fluid process of "recursive configuration" is repeatedly troubled throughout the book. As Mee argues, the "governing topos" of the cardiovascular system allows Blake to model "two different ideas of circulation": Urizen's "codified system of rigidly formatted space," and "an alternative, freer conception of the flow of energy."<sup>28</sup> According to the latter model, bodies might potentially be imagined as becoming *with*, rather than *within*, an environment or world. This possibility, however, appears as though constantly frustrated by Urizen's systems of "self-clos'd" circulation, as manifested here by the bounded network of lines.

Finally, then, viewed in the light of Blake's suspicion of abstraction both in *The [First] Book of Urizen* and in his later work, the depiction of a globular form appearing to spring from a human figure's brain, and the apparent violence and messiness of this act, seems to dramatise the folly and even the cruelty of trying to wrestle the world into a mentalised two-dimensional schema that can be viewed from the nowhere of abstracting visualisation. This is precisely the struggle with which Blake, as an artist, is concerned when it comes to representing profound multidimensionality on a two-dimensional pictorial plane.

I have also mentioned Blake's use of the circular form in the frontispiece to *Europe* known as *The Ancient of Days* (figure 22). The dimensionality of the circle in which the patriarch crouches is unclear, though it is legible as either a circle or a kind of translucent sphere. The image is important to recall at this juncture as it epitomises the political connotations of Blake's globes. Indeed, Blake repeatedly demonises what Otto terms "the sovereign's englobing or conglobing power."<sup>29</sup> *The Ancient of Days* is based on Milton's description of the creator-god with his "golden compasses" forming the circumference of the world. The depiction of compasses here (as well as in figure 58) also relates to a well-established iconography of Geographia, personified as a female figure holding compasses up to an earth-globe, evoking the Enlightenment globe's association with practices of

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<sup>27</sup> Amanda Jo Goldstein, *Sweet Science: Romantic Materialism and the New Logics of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 60 (original emphasis).

<sup>28</sup> Jon Mee, "Bloody Blake: Nation and Circulation," in *Blake, Nation and Empire*, ed. Steve Clark and David Worrall (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 64, 76.

<sup>29</sup> Otto, "Horrors of Creation," 181.

contemplation that were closely allied to imperial expansion. The frontispiece to a 1770 edition of Joseph Collyer and Daniel Fenning's *New system of geography*, published by Payne and sold by Johnson, is a typical example, showing "The Goddess Vesta presenting to the figure of Geography the Graphical Description of the World, instructing her in that Science" (figure 60).<sup>30</sup> In *The Ancient of Days*, the act of measuring the world with compasses is figured as an act of tyranny. The oppressor (probably Urizen) sits enclosed in a circle, apparently in the process of drawing another circle with his compasses, as he defines the parameters of the material universe. It is worth noting, however, that even in this image, which undoubtedly represents a frightening, nightmarish vision, the sovereign creator's circle is not completely enclosed. Fiery clouds are already beginning to encroach on the circle's circumference, perhaps visually undermining the figure's tyrannical pretensions. Apart from this breakage, the circle's circumference is one of the most seamless in Blake's body of work: one wonders whether in drawing the circle he may have even enlisted the aid of a pair of compasses, appropriating Urizen's favourite instrument.

Let us return briefly to the "Miltons Track" design (figure 3). Here Blake appears to grapple directly with the issue of dimensionality. In one sense, the image is legible as a diagrammatic cross-section of five intersecting forms—four spheres and an egg-shaped core. But while this cross-sectional design, especially given the firmness of its outlines, might suggest that we are looking at a two-dimensional slice of the Blakean cosmos, in many copies Blake has shaded the four intersecting circles in such a way as to suggest sphericity. In this sense, the image can be read as simultaneously two-dimensional and three-dimensional, though any suggestion of sphericity is in the first place in tension with the two-dimensionality of the pictorial medium itself. In creating this contradiction, Blake appears to push at the limits of representation. By contrast, many "Enlightenment" maps and diagrams do seem unquestioningly comfortable with the two-dimensional medium (as was the case, too, with our "Mental Traveller" diagrammers). We might compare, for instance, Conder's chart of the fixed stars in Bonnycastle's *Astronomy*, which I have discussed in Chapter One (figure 27). Blake was certainly not alone in acknowledging the unsatisfactoriness of two-dimensional

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<sup>30</sup> This edition of the text predated Blake's association with Johnson; however, as noted in Chapter One, Blake would later engrave a plate after John Webber for Johnson's 1785-6 edition of the *New System*, depicting native peoples mentioned in the narrative of James Cook's third voyage in the Pacific: see Essick, *Commercial Book Illustrations*, 40.

representation, but his tendency seems to have been more to problematise this rather than to seek to resolve it. We might compare “Miltons Track” with some figures included in *The Artists Assistant in Drawing*, a manual written by Carington Bowles and first published by Thomas Kitchin in 1768 (followed by multiple reprints). It is worth comparing “Miltons Track” with two of Bowles’ figures composed of intersecting ovals and circles (figure 61). As the text explains, diagrams VIII and IX instruct a draughtsman on two different methods of drawing an oval, in both cases using compasses to draw intersecting circles. These instructions fall within a section on perspective, advising the use of technical instruments to successfully render three-dimensional space on a flat page. Blake’s design seems almost to mock such devices: here he evidently did not use compasses to draw the circles; meanwhile, the design asks to be read as, by turns, two- and three-dimensional, foregrounding the limits of its own medium. The viewer is led to question the authority of the apparently harmonious and fixed whole with which we are presented—an effect that extends a critique to the totalising global images of Blake’s day, while also arguably sympathising with such efforts impossibly to render the whole from within, using tools that could never suffice.

*The Goddess of Fortune* (figure 62), Blake’s fifteenth design to Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, provides a fourth and final (for our present purposes) example of a Blakean globe. Though a commissioned work and therefore in many respects distinct from Blake’s mythography, the image again reveals Blake’s familiarity with globes as they appeared in the visual and material culture of his day. The artwork was left unfinished on Blake’s death, but its broad strokes and indeed several important details are in place: in the lower half of the picture, a naked female figure floats in a circular vat, the upper section inscribed “The hole of a Shithouse / The Goddess Fortune is the devils servant ready to Kiss any ones Arse”; above her, two groups of figures roll circular masses towards one another; one is inscribed (very faintly) “Celestial Globe,” the other “Terrestrial Globe.” On one level, the picture shows what is described in Dante’s text—the Avaricious and the Prodigal are fated to roll huge weights against one another, while the goddess Fortune looks on.

The identification of the giant weights with celestial and terrestrial globes is Blake’s innovation. The move can be aligned with scholars’ wider observations regarding Blake’s spatialisation of Dante’s narrative: for instance, in her study of Blake’s “topography of Hell,” Hayley Flynn notes that “Blake envisaged both the environment and topographical layout of

the Stygian lake with only minor prompts from the text.”<sup>31</sup> For Flynn, this aspect of Blake’s designs aligns the series with visual features of British landscape art in his time. Similarly, in *The Goddess of Fortune*, the globes’ labels can be seen as an example of Blake’s engagement with contemporaneous global visual and material culture. This part of the image evokes the pairing—by Blake’s time conventional in graphic and three-dimensional globes—of companion globes respectively depicting the earth and the zodiacal cosmos, usually on the same spatial scale. Blake may have been familiar, for instance, with engravings such as T. K. Powell’s two plates for the seventh edition of Daniel Fenning’s *A new and easy guide to the use of the globes*, printed for Joseph Johnson and others in 1798 (figures 63 and 64). In Powell’s engravings, the globes are imagined as three-dimensional models, mounted on an axle and four-legged stand in order to evoke three-dimensionality as well as, presumably, impressive size. In Blake’s hands, by contrast, the celestial and terrestrial globes are transformed into tiny, meaningless masses in a scene of cosmic absurdity.

The inclusion of spheres in the image also evokes an iconographic tradition in which spheres or globes had long featured as symbols of power in emblematic depictions of the goddess Fortune. In the text, Dante describes Fortune “turn[ing] her sphere” (“volve sua sphaera,” Canto VII, line 96), evoking this tradition. Blake’s depiction of Fortune as a naked female figure with raised arms recalls Fuseli’s frontispiece design for Theophilus Swift’s “The Temple of Folly” (published by Joseph Johnson in 1787), in which a semi-naked female figure stands astride a globe (figure 65). She is presumably Folly, given the subject of the book for which the image was designed, though the design closely recalls Dürer’s two depictions of Fortune standing on a globe, with which both Blake and Fuseli may have been acquainted (figures 66 and 67). In both images Fortune appears as a powerful, sovereign figure and the globe her mere plaything; the impression of global supremacy is enhanced in the later print (figure 67) by her position above an aerial view of a landscape. The power she wields over the world is ambivalently construed as simultaneously wondrous and terrible. As Cosgrove writes, in iconography that had by this time become conventional, “[t]he globes of Fortune and Fate [...] signify unpredictability as well as universality, conditions of life in the mundane world.”<sup>32</sup> Blake seems to have viewed the idea of such fickle and tyrannical arbitrators as troubling if

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<sup>31</sup> Flynn, *Visionary Topography*, vol. 1, 214.

<sup>32</sup> Cosgrove, *Apollo’s Eye*, 10.

not utterly absurd. Indeed, it seems clear from the inscriptions on this design, and from Fortune's spatial debasement within the image, that Blake had an axe to grind with the very idea of Fortune, at least when it came to the idea of her as an embodiment of an oppressive globalising force.

In Blake's depiction, Fortune does not stand astride a globe; rather, she is entrapped within circular confines. Blake superimposes onto Dante's scenario his own sense that Fortune is a hireling of Satan, a servile tormenter who wields arbitrary authority: she is "ready to Kiss any ones Arse," languishing in a "Shithouse." This is a marked departure from the *Inferno*, in which Fortune's existence is depicted as blissful despite her detractors. Blake's transformation of Fortune's sphere into the "Shithouse" that contains her suggests a scorn for restrictive circularity, as the oppressor becomes a prisoner of her own oppressive system, much like the encircled figure in *The Ancient of Days*. The move also recalls an epigram from Blake's notebook:

To God  
 If you have formd a Circle to go into  
 Go into it yourself & see how you would do  
 ("To God," E 516).

Cumulatively, these instances demonstrate that in Blake's work globalising vision is strongly connected with self-justifying systems of knowledge and power. His is a critical stance, which points to a greater degree of conceptual plurality than has previously been identified in eighteenth-century global images. Blake was certainly not operating in a vacuum without regard for the artistic and intellectual milieux in which he found himself—and in which he participated. His simultaneous fascination for and suspicion of global vision reveal his complex position within a network of global images, a fact which in turn reveals this network to be rather less monolithic than has often been assumed.

From this brief discussion of four global images in Blake's visual art, it should be clear that his engagement with the philosophical, intellectual, and political connotations of global vision was certainly not limited to "The Mental Traveller." Having taken this opportunity to zoom out to Blake's wider ideas about viewing the world as a whole, I return now to the ground level—to the poem that is the subject of this chapter—and attempt to walk through the text step by step.

## Walking through the Poem

In a rare instance of recent, substantive criticism on “The Mental Traveller,” James Chandler has argued that the characters’ literalised and often violently anatomised changes of place within the poem render absurd the naturalising and generalising underpinnings of the “sentimental mode.” “For Blake,” Chandler writes, rather than a change of place via “sympathetic imagination,” “it is more a matter of character categories revolving and metamorphosing into one another.”<sup>33</sup> The chief example that Chandler cites is the literal change of position whereby the “Woman Old” “nails” the “Male Babe” “down upon a rock” and “binds iron thorns around his head” (stanzas 3-4) shortly before he in turn “rends up his Manacles / And binds her down for his delight” (stanza 6) and takes up residence in her body as a “Garden” (stanza 7). The characters have changed places in the literal sense of bodily position, and the landscape itself has changed from rock to woman-as-garden.

Since the characters in the poem, including the narrator, move along such discontinuous and mutually interruptive routes, the reader’s effort to virtually “follow” any one route is compromised from the outset. As Chandler contends, the poem’s syntactical ambiguities—aided in part by the extreme compression intrinsic to the lyric form—are designed to be “inhospitable to the sentimental impulses his readers would bring to it.”<sup>34</sup> The notion of spectatorship, so central to Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and to the literature of sentiment, is in itself destabilised since Blake denies us a stable ground (syntactic, spatio-temporal, moral, or otherwise) from which to regard the poem. As any honest reader of “The Mental Traveller” will admit, it is a profoundly disorientating poem. Despite its position within the formally linear logic of the Pickering Manuscript, the apparent stability of a single narrating voice, the rhythmic meter of the poem, and the apparently cyclical thrust suggested by the final line (“And all is done as I have said”), the poem repeatedly breaks with its own internal logic. The result is an unruliness that critics’ diagrams have tended to flatten out.

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<sup>33</sup> Chandler, *Archaeology*, 226.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.



In what follows I shall attempt to foreground the internal breakages or ruptures that I believe to be fundamental to “The Mental Traveller.” In doing so I hope to show that the poem problematises the idea of a stable readerly point of view, and invites readers to reconceptualise the relationship between mind, body, space, and time as categories that have been forcibly divided in the fallen world, but which cannot help but retain a vital interrelatedness. Central to this interrelatedness is the idea that for Blake human life can be conceived as a form of “travel” that is at once mental, corporeal, and spiritual, again an idea with which Ingold’s idea of “being alive” has much in common: “locomotion and cognition are inseparable, and an account of the mind must be as much concerned with the work of the feet as with that of the head and hands.”<sup>35</sup> As I shall argue, moving one’s gaze through the poem is fundamentally bound up in a fraught cognitive effort to mentally trace the footfall of the characters within its landscape. Blake thereby sets the poem up as an analogue for experience not *of* the world but rather *in* the world.

One reason for the problem that arises when one tries to diagram “The Mental Traveller” is that it is difficult to identify just one kind or instance of travel within the poem. As I have suggested, one of the oversights of diagrammatic criticism on the poem is the multiplicity of modes and instances of travel that can be traced in the text. As I walk through the poem’s scenarios, I shall focus on how these multiple routes confound the desire for a stable readerly position.

Several uncertainties about setting and identity arise in the space between the poem’s title and the first two stanzas. It seems fairly self-evident to identify the titular “mental traveller” with the “I” of stanza 1, given that the speaker there is presented in the act of travelling. Yet in the interstices between the title and stanza 1, the nature of this travel has shifted from being avowedly “mental” to being embodied and spatialised, occurring in the “Land of Men [...] & Women too.” Already there are two categories at play, prompting the question of whether mental travel and embodied travel are strictly alternatives, or whether they can be cognitively allowed to co-exist. Paley takes “mental” to be the dominant dimension, arguing that “[i]t tells us that this poem is about ‘mental’ rather than ‘corporeal’ phenomena—internal rather than external, spiritual rather than physical,” a position echoed

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<sup>35</sup> Ingold, *Being Alive*, 17.

by Bouwer and McNally.<sup>36</sup> I contend that both “mental” and “corporeal” forms of travel are intended to be present here, and that the shift from the one to the other thematises precisely the fallen subject’s impulse to perceive these as alternatives. Another interpretative challenge is introduced in line 4 of the first stanza: who are these unknowing “cold Earth wanderers,” and *where* does the reader stand in relation to the “mental traveller,” the “actual” traveller of stanza 1 (if indeed they are distinct), and the earthly “wanderers” now introduced? Most commentators take the readers to fall into the category of “cold earth wanderers.”<sup>37</sup> If this is so, it follows that the reader “never knew” of the “dreadful things” witnessed by the speaker. The past-tense “knew” suggests that perhaps what follows is going to alter this state of unknowing.

However, it is also possible that Blake means earth-dwellers never knew of such things because they *can never know* of them. A similar tension exists in *The Four Zoas*, in which readers will find at the beginning of Night the First the statement that “[*What*] are the Natures of those Living Creatures the Heavenly Father only [*Knoweth*] no Individual [*Knoweth nor*] Can know in all Eternity.”<sup>38</sup> Like the opening to *The Four Zoas*, this line in “The Mental Traveller” may be a provocation to readers (if we are correct in assuming that readers are “cold earth wanderers”), at once mocking their benightedness and challenging them to push through this limitation, to continue their journey through the poem’s puzzles in the hope of gaining the knowledge they supposedly lack. Yet at every turn Blake ensures that any apparent completion (animated by an aspiration to transcendence) cannot be satisfactorily accomplished.

A consideration of stanzas 2-3 will highlight how the poem’s disjunctive syntax attempts to chart the division of fallen humanity’s faculties, never quite visualising the re-making of unity. The “I” of stanza 1 has now vanished, and does not reappear hereafter, giving the impression that the speaker is simultaneously present at the events described, and observing from afar. Moreover, not only has the tense shifted from past to present (“a Babe is born”), but the speaker now identifies his experience with that of readers, signalled by the first-person plural pronoun (“we Reap in joy the fruit / Which we in bitter tears did Sow,” my

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<sup>36</sup> Morton D. Paley, “The Female Babe and ‘The Mental Traveller,’” *Studies in Romanticism*, 1, no. 2 (1962), 97; Bouwer and McNally, “Man’s Eternal Journey,” 184.

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., John H. Sutherland, “Blake’s ‘Mental Traveller,’” *ELH*, 22, no. 2 (1955): 140; Bouwer and McNally, “Man’s Eternal Journey,” 186; Cohn, “MENTAL TRAVELLER,” 133.

<sup>38</sup> *The Four Zoas*, page 3, lines 7-8; E 301.

emphasis). Perhaps the speaker is not so different from “us” after all. If we identify the speaker with Blake the poet, this rehearses a slippage between the distance of the “Poetic Genius” and his own implicatedness in the conditions of the fallen world and especially in the continued unfolding of chaotic divisions into the present: as Otto writes, “[f]rom within this world, the author/narrator [of *The Four Zoas*] can do no more than map its contours.”<sup>39</sup> These various axes make for a very slippery situation indeed: travel that can be both mental *and*(/or?) corporeal, a narrator that can be both privy to special cosmic knowledge *and* himself one of the “cold earth wanderers” previously described as incapable of attaining this special knowledge. But, the poem seems to ask, are these really contradictions? It seems to me rather that their appearance of contradiction is itself symptomatic of the fragmentation Blake saw as inherent in postlapsarian life and thought, a fragmentation so prized and prescribed by the powerful as to have won the appearance of naturalisation, of being mere “common sense.”

The poem’s routes continue to multiply. Blake has now introduced a new figure, who is in fact to undertake the majority of the travelling in the remainder of the poem: that of a “Babe” (first emerging in line 5) who is born “there,” in this still unidentified “Land.” In stanza 2, the Babe remains genderless and unidentifiable. In stanza 3 it is assigned a male gender, but only in the context of a conditional statement: “*if* the Babe is born a Boy” (my emphasis). The protasis here prompts yet another question (what *if not?*), signalling to readers that this is only one possibility out of a larger set, and perhaps reminding us (the readers) once more of our limited capacity for knowledge through the pointed withholding of information. The conditional mood is indeed central to Blake’s ideas about prophecy, as suggested by his annotation to Watson’s *Apology for the Bible*: “If you go on So / The result is So” (E 617).<sup>40</sup> These words resonate with the narrative of “The Mental Traveller,” especially if we take the poem to be elaborating a vision of the fallen present, suggesting that without intervention, the “cold earth wanderers” will remain prisoners of their own ignorance. So the poem grinds on: in stanza 3, the reader is introduced to the figure of “A Woman Old,” usually seen as complementing the infant boy. Throughout the remainder of the poem, the “male” and

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<sup>39</sup> Otto, *Critique*, 341.

<sup>40</sup> For a discussion of conditionality in this passage, see Norvig, *Dark Figures*, 28.

“female” figures alternately age and grow young again in pointed resistance to the forward march of linear time.

While the figures’ ageing and reverse-ageing warp a clear sense of narrative time, the physical settings of the first half of the poem likewise present a challenge to visualisation. A mental leap must be made in the moment, mentioned above, when the female becomes the male’s “dwelling place / And Garden fruitful Seventy fold” (lines 27-38) and again from this moment to the description of the male “Wandering round an Earthly Cot” (line 30). The female seems to have disappeared from the narrative in stanzas 8-11, suggesting that she is indeed stationary during this part of the poem, and that the “Earthly Cot” is located within the domain of her body. In gendered terms, the episode may be compared to the moment when Tharmas descends into Enion’s woof, as previous scholars have noted, a moment in which a male power is absorbed into the female and one of the many iterations of the Fall recounted in *The Four Zoas* (5 [65-118]: 13-14, E 302).<sup>41</sup> The parallel is strengthened by the description of Enion counting Tharmas’ nerves: “every nerve / She counted,” weaving them into her “woof of terror” and thus ensuring his bodily subjugation (*The Four Zoas* 5 [I 65-118]: 16-17, 18, E 302). Yet the episode in *The Four Zoas* is not a perfect analogue, since Tharmas is absorbed into Enion’s realm, an extension of her bodily dominion, but not precisely her body itself. Moreover, in “The Mental Traveller” this episode occurs at a point when the male figure has assumed dominance over the female: he has “b[ound] her down for his delight” (line 24) and his residency in her bodily form is described as an act of parasitic overpowering: “He plants himself in all her Nerves” (line 25).<sup>42</sup> Aside from the lack of an easily locatable analogue elsewhere in Blake’s work, for the reader of “The Mental Traveller,” the image of the female as a “dwelling place” and “Garden” and as containing a cottage is cognitively demanding indeed. The imaginative scaling required is difficult to flatten into a literal concept of “travel”; it fundamentally challenges the reader’s mental capacity to visualise or “follow” the narrative route of the tale (and, all the while, one wonders *where* exactly the narrator-traveller stands while describing these events).

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<sup>41</sup> See Bouwer and McNally, “Man’s Eternal Journey,” 186.

<sup>42</sup> The episode is also reminiscent of the violation of Oothoon by Bromion in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, in which the oppressor states “Thy soft American plains are mine, and mine thy north & south”: Blake, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, 1: 20, E 46).

Following the introduction of the “Earthly Cot,” there are still more routes at play: when the male is grown to strength, he welcomes “the Beggar & the Poor” as well as “the way faring Traveller” (lines 38-39) to his cottage door. Boucher and McNally assume that this traveller is the *same* figure as the “mental traveller” from the poem’s title, but this is not necessarily so, or at least not straightforwardly so.<sup>43</sup> The titular reference to the mental traveller, and the mention here of a figure on a literal journey arriving at the man’s cottage door cumulatively suggest the presence of both aspects of travelling. The triad of beggar, poor man, and traveller, moreover, also raises a nexus of moral considerations that might be embedded in the conditions of journeying: as I shall treat in the next section on the cottage setting, when the host is himself thrown out of his home, he finds himself in the exact position of his previous guests, picking at the seams of a half-conjured sentimental imaginary. At this point (stanza 13), the narrative has become still more peopled, with the birth of “A little Female Babe” (line 44), who (as the indefinite article leaves open) is not necessarily the same figure as the initial “Woman Old,” and who is described as coming “to the Man she loves” (line 49) before driving out the “aged Host” (line 51) from his cottage.

In the second half of the poem, the shifts in setting are again highly discontinuous. On his wanderings the aged host finds “a Maiden” (line 56) to love—and again, the definite article suggests the possibility that this is a different female altogether from the initial female figure.<sup>44</sup> At this point, there is another challenge in following the complex scaling and perspectival shifts of the poem: as we saw at the beginning of this chapter, the cottage and garden dramatically “fade” (line 58) from view and Blake inserts the critical valorisation of the close-up “flat Earth” perspective over the abstracted “Ball” or “Globe” (stanza 16), in itself an emblem of Blake’s preference for particularities over generalities.

However, after the cottage has faded away (stanza 15), the action returns to a relatively recognisable landscape—that of a “dark desert all around” (line 68)—and the male and female are described as wandering through “Labyrinths of wayward Love” (line 83). From what appeared to be a pastoral dwelling in the English countryside, we now seem to be in an arid desert, perhaps a Biblical landscape. Such jarring geographical leaps, Blake seems to

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<sup>43</sup> Boucher and McNally, “Man’s Eternal Journey,” 187.

<sup>44</sup> E.D. Hirsch, like many scholars, argues that the maiden *is* the female babe grown up (E. D. Hirsch Jr., *Innocence and Experience: An Introduction to Blake* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964), 319). As does Sutherland, though he notes that “Blake does not say so directly anywhere in the poem”: Sutherland, “Mental Traveller,” 144.

suggest, are made possible only by engaging in mental travel. Yet in their wandering the figures are described in as bodily terms as ever, and eventually we witness the building of “many a City” (line 89) and “many a pleasant Shepherds home” (line 90). This phase possibly points, as E. D. Hirsch argues, to the earthly paradise known in Blake’s work as Beulah (also a place in Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*), a kind of oasis that can all too easily be mistaken for the desired Edenic *telos*: this paradise physically deteriorates in the very next stanza.<sup>45</sup> At this point the male becomes an infant once more, through the poem’s peculiar reverse-ageing process. He is given to “a Woman Old” (line 102) and nailed to a rock. (Does the indefinite article here again raise doubt as to whether this is the *same* “Woman Old” whom we encountered at the outset of the poem?).

Finally (or so it seems), the last line of the poem (“And all is done as I have told”) hints at the prospect of cyclical repetition, a move which is at the heart of Frye’s notion of circularity in the poem, which in turn influenced the circularity of so many of the critical diagrams of this poem. Yet, as I hope to have shown, the conditionality of the poem’s scenarios, and the persistent obstructions to any assumption of a seamless linearity, conspire to leave readers questioning the potential for reliable, automatic repetition. Perhaps one aim of this final line is to invite readers to actually re-read the poem, to re-start their “mental fight” by looking still more closely at the minute particulars that constitute what Blake would later term the “perfect Whole” of a vision (*Jerusalem* 91: 20, E 251). This cue to return to the place where the poem began also pushes against the formal linearity of the Pickering Manuscript’s pagination. The hint at a return to the beginning of “The Mental Traveller” playfully disrupts the expected forwards trajectory of the book form, encouraging at the very least a slight pause for reflection before the reader plunges into still another “mental” landscape, in the following poem entitled “The Land of Dreams.”

In all its twists and turns, the lifelines, routes, and cycles in “The Mental Traveller” are multiple and do not tend to be altogether contiguous or self-contained. Character categories and landscapes morph into and out of one another in ways that force readers to witness the limits of the divided system on which their own perceptions are based. The confusion caused by pronouns, conditional statements, tenses, and spatio-temporal shifts disrupts any one systematic reading. Despite this unruliness, Blake seems to be inviting the reader to take the

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<sup>45</sup> Hirsch, *Innocence and Experience*, 324.

time to walk through the poem's scenarios, in order both to glimpse the limitations of their own fallen condition and, hopefully, to come closer to understanding the vitality of specific states and moments unfolding in space and time.

With this in mind, it will be worthwhile to consider one of the places through which the figures in "The Mental Traveller" pass, and which is especially vital to the poem's possible ethical and political implications. I have gestured in this direction via Chandler's discussion of the poem's relation to the literature of sentiment, but there is room to advance this point in still more spatial terms. Let us return, then, to the cottage, where we began this chapter.

### A Cottage-door Poem: Dwelling on the Cottage in "The Mental Traveller"

Stanzas 7-15 of "The Mental Traveller"—roughly the central third of the poem—take place in and around a cottage. The cottage is the poem's most consistent physical setting. Despite its central and sustained place in the text, scholars have not dwelt on its rich associative valencies, especially its relation to the eighteenth-century "cottage-door" painting as it has been meaningfully explored by Ann Bermingham (2005) and John Barrell (2005, 2006) among other scholars.<sup>46</sup> I shall propose that this context is central to Blake's reaction towards aspects of the sentimental mode in this poem.

Juxtaposing the poem's cottage with those depicted in eighteenth-century cottage-door paintings, I suggest that Blake may have in mind a contemporaneous fashion for cottage scenery. However, if "The Mental Traveller" feigns likeness with the literary device of allegory only to resist it, the artistic genre of the "cottage-door painting" arguably shares a similar fate in the poem. Following Chandler's characterisation of "The Mental Traveller" as a resolutely "unsentimental" text, I shall put this notion in more overtly spatial terms by arguing that Blake positions the cottage as a site through which to spatially map the problems he perceives with a sentimental notion of sympathy and its expression in charitable acts. In particular, he brings before the reader's sight the very real threats continually posed to the cottage idyll by

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<sup>46</sup> Ann Bermingham, *Sensation and Sensibility: Viewing Gainsborough's "Cottage Door"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); see John Barrell's article in that volume ("Spectacles for Republicans," in Bermingham, 53-73), on which he expands in his chapter on "Cottage Politics" in John Barrell, *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), Chapter Five, 210-46; see also his *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), esp. Chapter Two.

removal and dispossession—aspects of rural life that are categorically absent from idealising cottage-door art from the period. In contrast to the privileged gaze assumed by cottage-door paintings, Blake shifts the male figure’s point of view so as to expose to the reader’s gaze the idea that in the fallen world the giving of charity itself depends—literally and figuratively—upon where one stands. The location of such inequality in a postlapsarian context is in part ensured by the unmistakable Biblical resonance of the imagery: as Bouwer and McNally rightly recognised, the pastoral garden and cottage which “fade” from sight cannot fail to remind us of a lost Eden.<sup>47</sup> But beyond the territory of Biblical typology, it is my claim that in “The Mental Traveller” Blake’s manipulation of spatial relations in the poem’s cottage scenes potentially indexes certain class-political dynamics of eighteenth-century society—manacles of a fallen present that he hoped, link by link, to unchain.

In this section, I therefore argue that physical places in Blake’s work do make reference to physical (rather than solely “mental”) spaces and places and that this is especially borne out by a consideration of the likely art-historical associations of the cottage setting in “The Mental Traveller.” This is not to say that the cottage “stands for” or “symbolises” something other than itself, but rather that its role as a setting in the poem reaches out to a set of referents, and that it does so imperfectly, in a way that actually maintains the poem’s resistance to one-to-one correspondence.

Over the course of the eighteenth century, paintings portraying rural cottages had risen to enormous popularity. The genre was most influentially developed in a series of landscapes painted by Thomas Gainsborough during the 1770s and 1780s. Gainsborough’s paintings show rustic families in front of their cottage doors (e.g., figure 68). In scenes suffused with a warm crepuscular glow, rosy-cheeked women and children spill out of their humble dwellings. Typically, they await the return of a breadwinning husband and father, who is often portrayed trudging home, shouldering a heavy bundle of firewood, and stooping under its weight. Considered from the point of view of the homeward-bound husband, the cottage door seems to mark in spatial terms what the fading daylight signals in temporal terms: a threshold between public labour and private repose. It is an idyllic portrait of a quiet country life.

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<sup>47</sup> Bouwer and McNally, “Man’s Eternal Journey,” 188.



As John Barrell has argued, in the eyes of the upper-class audience for which they were destined, the paintings spoke to “a polite fantasy of rustic retirement,” which was itself bound up in a politics of class.<sup>48</sup> It will be worth dwelling on Barrell’s argument about the relationship between class and cottage-door art since the contexts he explores suggest possible intertextual and historical links with the cottage scenes in “The Mental Traveller.” Barrell argues that “the image they created of rural privacy was itself thoroughly embedded in a political notion of how the poor should behave,” and by extension of the perceived responsibility held by the upper classes to ensure that they *did* behave so.<sup>49</sup> Relatedly, building on Bermingham’s discussion of the “aesthetics of sensibility” as optically embodied in Gainsborough’s cottage paintings, Barrell explores the class politics that would have conditioned polite spectators’ way of seeing such paintings.<sup>50</sup> In particular, Barrell notes discussions from Adam Smith to philanthropic loyalist pamphleteers such as Hannah More and Sir Thomas Bernard about the aesthetic grounds according to which cottage-dwellers would be deemed worthy of receiving the sympathy (and, by theoretical extension, the charity) of the wealthy. Despite differing emphases depending on whether “picturesque” or “moral” issues were their more immediate concern, these authors ascribed national significance to the behaviour of Britain’s poorest. Accordingly, on the whole, they opined that pity would be meted out to the poor provided that they were clean, humble, and industrious and, crucially, that they existed primarily as members of nuclear families with little to do with a village-wide collective. Any hint of dirt, indolence, or insolence (they argued) would incite only revulsion and fear: as Hannah More wrote, the “rich and charitable [...] turn away disgusted from filth and laziness.”<sup>51</sup> Such writers presented this “turning” towards a certain look of poverty and away from another as an entirely natural and purely instinctive reaction on the part of wealthy onlookers; in the process, the national vision in which they were embedded was summarily naturalised. The poor, by extension, were pressed into a prescriptive image (masquerading as a descriptive image) of the putative loyalty of the British public—supposedly upheld by the law-abiding, god-fearing, hard-working activities of even its poorest members. By contrast, radical writers of the 1790s focused on the

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<sup>48</sup> Barrell, *Despotism*, 214.

<sup>49</sup> Barrell, *Despotism*, 213.

<sup>50</sup> Bermingham, *Sensation*, 1.

<sup>51</sup> Hannah More, *Black Giles the poacher; with an account of a family who had rather live by their wits than their work* (London: J. Marshall, 1796), 4; cited in Barrell, *Despotism*, 215.

disempowerment of the rural poor in the face of despotism, and the ravages that would be wrought on Britain's most vulnerable by war with France. In his portrayal of cottage life in "The Mental Traveller," I shall argue, Blake echoes in spirit some of these radical writers' concerns, with the particular aim of de-naturalising the idealisation of rural poverty in polite discourse and visual culture.

The popularity of cottage-door scenery in contemporaneous visual art could hardly have escaped Blake's notice. While Blake would not necessarily have seen Gainsborough's genre-defining paintings first-hand, he is likely to have encountered some of the countless cottage-door paintings and prints that were pervasive in the London art world. Cottage-door paintings were exhibited at the Royal Academy in the years of Blake's close association with the institution. For example, in 1784 a "cottage scene" by William Redmore Bigg RA was exhibited in their summer show, which also exhibited two drawings by Blake.<sup>52</sup> A close contemporary of Blake, Bigg (1755-1828) was a student of Edward Penny RA (1714-1791), and was especially known for his depictions of acts of charity (figure 69), cottage scenes (figure 70), and acts of charity within cottage scenes, exemplified by his painting *A Lady and her Children Relieving a Cottager* (London, British Museum).<sup>53</sup> The latter painting is a particularly striking example of the latter case: the members of the wealthy family are extravagantly dressed, their Black attendant depicted as little more than a further ornament to their ostentatious wealth. It is difficult for the modern viewer to overlook the class-political—not to mention the racial—dimension of such depictions of aristocratic largesse. Yet during the 1770s and '80s, as Barrell has argued, such paintings "were not understood as political at all"; so steadfastly were they "grounded in the shared ideology of the polite classes."<sup>54</sup> As I shall argue, perhaps owing in part to a familiarity with the increasing politicisation of the cottage-door trope during the propaganda wars of the 1790s, Blake was acutely aware of the problems intrinsic to this way of behaving and of representing behaviour. In exposing such problems, he uses the sentimental mode's own tools against it. In "The Mental Traveller" he

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<sup>52</sup> *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, MDCCCLXXXIV. The Sixteenth.* (London: T. Cadell, 1784), 7 (no. 119).

<sup>53</sup> Again, I refrain from reproducing this image in my illustrations. The depiction of the Black attendant adheres to orientalisising conventions common in eighteenth-century artworks: such representational conventions and the material historical practices to which they relate would potentially be perpetuated by the casual inclusion of the image itself.

<sup>54</sup> Barrell, *Despotism*, 214.

does so by subverting the symbolic value that had accrued to the cottage in eighteenth-century art.

Blake himself had engraved a rather prosaic cottage-door scene after Stothard for Sterne's *Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, published in the *Novelist's Magazine*, Volume IX, in 1782 (figure 71). The plate shows Sterne's narrator, Yorick, enjoying some rural merriment outside a cottage door; it relates to what Robert N. Essick refers to as Sterne's "passing reference" to the time among the French peasantry when "Musick beats time to Labour."<sup>55</sup> The decision to depict a scene that receives only glancing mention in the text (which also contains no particular mention of a cottage dwelling) in itself attests to the formulaic use of such compositions in eighteenth-century British art to casually evoke a sentimental mood among polite spectators. Though Chandler does not note Blake's engraving for Sterne's sentimental novel, the plate lends weight to his argument that Blake's later poem "The Mental Traveller" is an unsentimental "rewriting" of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*.<sup>56</sup> Blake clearly knew the novel at the very least superficially; moreover, his work on the cottage-door engraving suggests familiarity with the "sentimental" use to which cottage scenery in particular was put in the visual arts, and especially the aesthetics of domestic respectability so fundamental to their appeal to polite notions of sensibility.

Alongside the particular sentimental relationships indexed by cottage-door visual art in the period, it is also worth considering the recurrent trope of cottages in "prospect poems" during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Comparison with Oliver Goldsmith's prospect poem *The Traveller, or a Prospect of Society* (1764) is particularly illuminating. Blake is likely to have been familiar with Goldsmith's poetry: in fact, William Hayley, Blake's patron and neighbour while at Felpham, had a 1796 edition of Goldsmith's *Poetical Works* in his library, which Blake may well have consulted.<sup>57</sup> As the subtitle indicates, *The Traveller* (whose title Blake may even be directly evoking in "The Mental Traveller") adopts an onlooker's perspective or "prospect," which is ostensibly the perspective one might also expect from "The Mental Traveller" following its opening stanza. Unlike Blake's shifting perspectives,

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<sup>55</sup> Essick, *Commercial Book Illustrations*, 31.

<sup>56</sup> Chandler, *Archaeology*, 275.

<sup>57</sup> R. H. Evans, *A Catalogue of the Very Valuable and Extensive Library of the Late William Hayley, Removed from his Seat at Felpham* (London: R. H. Evans, 1821), 39.

Goldsmith's traveller assumes a fixed, seemingly omniscient view from nowhere, removed from the society he regards:

And now, where Alpine solitudes ascend,  
I sit me down a pensive hour to spend;  
And, plac'd on high above the storm's career,  
Look downward where an hundred realms appear[.]<sup>58</sup>

Halfway through the poem, the speaker turns his attention to a rural idyll in which is located "the peasant's hut," described as a "humble shed," the residence of an industrious yet "Chearful" labourer.<sup>59</sup> The portrait of rustic tranquillity has much in common with sentimentalising visual art of this period. The cottage also operates in this poem as a site of charitable hospitality, figured, crucially, in terms of transactional reciprocity: "haply too some pilgrim, thither led, / With many a tale repays the nightly bed."<sup>60</sup> This explicit mention of reciprocity contrasts pointedly with Blake's disruption of smooth circuits of exchange in "The Mental Traveller," as we shall see. Blake was not, of course, alone in his suspicion of pastoral idealisation. Perhaps closer to Blake's poem in spirit is George Crabbe's later *The Village* (1783), an anti-pastoral poem in the manner of Stephen Duck, which critiques the sentimentality of poets of "the peaceful cot": "Go look within," he urges, "and ask if peace be there."<sup>61</sup> In this way Crabbe's poem highlights the interior of the cottage as a space whose realities are all too easily sentimentalised by those at a physical and socioeconomic remove. This spatiality is emblematised by the typical setting of cottage-door pictures *outside* the homes, at a safe distance from the real material conditions of poverty.

In "The Mental Traveller," Blake conjures the spectre of cottage-door art and poetry only to disassemble its very logic. He brings to the fore the inherent poverty and precariousness of country life that tended to be tidied away in the art of the cottage door. Through the male figure's eventual change of position from cottage-dweller and charity-giver to dispossessed beggar, Blake's poem forcefully maps out the cruel and seemingly arbitrary injustice of fallen society: under the present conditions *someone* must always be displaced, be poor, be in need of charity. As he had written in "The Human Abstract,"

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<sup>58</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *The Traveller, or a Prospect of Society* (London: Printed for J. Newbery, 1764), 3.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>61</sup> George Crabbe, *The Village: a Poem* (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, 1783), 12.

Pity would be no more  
 If we did not make somebody Poor;  
 And mercy no more could be  
 If all were as happy as we  
 ("The Human Abstract," *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* 47: 1-4, E 27).

The cottage scenes in "The Mental Traveller" map this injustice in spatial terms, forcing the reader to witness the fact that one's affective "point of view" depends literally upon a physical point of view, upon the ground on which one walks and the place in which one dwells—a reality which was no doubt of little interest to the aristocratic admirer of Gainsborough's picturesque scenes, especially to one such as Sir John Leicester who saw fit to incorporate Gainsborough's *Cottage Door* into a purpose-built space within his London town house.<sup>62</sup> A closer look at the cottage in "The Mental Traveller" will illuminate how Blake breaks down the potential for depictions of poverty to be easily sanitised and appropriated in this manner.

An important aspect of Blake's disruption of sentimental impulses inheres in the poem's refusal to accommodate the kind of smooth virtual exchange whereby polite viewers could put themselves "in the place of" the other, an assumption which was at the core of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. As we have seen, so unstable are the poem's "character categories" (to adopt Chandler's phrase), it is not even possible to identify one stable object of pity in the text. Chandler argues that such instability often literalises, if only to break apart, the imaginative process of exchange as envisaged by Smith. This constant unsettling of character categories complicates the principle of generality on which the sentimental mode is based—in terms of the cottage-door painting, the idea that a polite spectator could simply imagine himself or herself in the position of the poor based on a shared human, affective makeup, and perform acts of charity on this basis. To borrow Chandler's phrasing again, Blake's poem refuses to use the terms of "aggregated generalities" so favoured by Smith and Edmund Burke "precisely along the lines to which Blake must have taken exception."<sup>63</sup> In the hands of these writers, sentimental exchange becomes a balanced, natural, and uninterrupted circuit that can apparently transcend social imbalances entirely. Like the diagrammers of "The Mental Traveller," their well-intentioned abstractions come at the cost of minimising persistent and unjust hierarchies, and of obscuring difference. In contrasting

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<sup>62</sup> Bermingham, *Sensation*, 24.

<sup>63</sup> Chandler, *Archaeology*, 280.

“The Mental Traveller” with cottage-door art, I suggest that the poem works to disrupt such smooth circuits of exchange by inverting expected hierarchies and preventing the reader from settling on any one object of pity in this self-interrupting text.

In its very early stages, the portrayal of the cottage in “The Mental Traveller” is in one important respect reminiscent of idealised depictions of country life. The male figure is described in his “Earthly Cot,” numbering the “gems & gold / Which he by industry had got” (lines 30-31). These lines gesture to a recurring theme of cottage-door art: the idealisation of the rural poor’s labour. As seen in figure 68, while the performance of appropriate labour is often signalled by the presence of the homecoming husband, the real strain and burden of that labour is footnoted to the well-lit scene of domestic prettiness. Likewise, Blake’s male figure is shown as reaping the rewards of his “industry,” which he enjoys solely in the domestic comfort of his “Earthly Cot.” “Industry,” indeed, is a virtue invoked time and again in prescriptive accounts of cottagers’ activities.<sup>64</sup> Its usage here may nod to such calls for dutiful toil, which tend to include the promise of fitting (if humble) rewards, rarely addressing the fact that hard work brought no assurance of adequate income.

Even at this early stage, however, cracks start to appear in the veneer. Stanza 10, in elegiac language, speaks of the gems as representing “a lovesick eye,” “the akeing heart,” “The martyrs groan & the lovers sigh” (lines 34-36). The elegiac tone bespeaks a sense of disillusionment with the wholesomeness of earthly comforts, which now appear rather insubstantial. In its mannered artificiality, the language may even mimic in particular the hollowness of romanticised depictions of the cottage-dwelling poor: Gainsborough’s classically idealised women and children and Bigg’s representation of the cottager adorning his doorway with roses (figure 70) appeal to the sympathy of polite spectators of the conspicuously “artificial worlds” of landscape paintings, unconvincingly disguise the realities of poverty, and the social imbalances of which poverty both urban and rural was an unwelcome reminder.<sup>65</sup> The melancholy note sounds still louder in contrast to Blake’s Notebook poem “Riches,” in which these lines are closely mirrored, in a more positive light: “The countless gold of a *merry* heart” and “The rubies & pearls of a *loving* eye” (E 470, my

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<sup>64</sup> See James Hurdis, *The Favourite Village. A Poem* (Bishopstone, Sussex: The Author, 1800), 7; William Cowper, *The Task* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1785), book iv, line 374; “Philanthropos,” “Effects of War,” *Politics for the People: or, A Salmagundy for Swine*, 2 vols (London: D. I. Eaton, 1795), part II, 8.

<sup>65</sup> Bermingham, *Sensation*, 15.

emphasis).<sup>66</sup> As Paley writes, “[t]he epigram describes fulfillment, the stanza above [from “The Mental Traveller”] frustration.”<sup>67</sup> Such heartwarming sentiments have no place in “The Mental Traveller.” Still, however illusory it may be, in this period of relative prosperity, the man is able to offer charity to various objects of pity identified only as “the Beggar & the poor / and the way faring Traveller” (lines 38-39).

Blake’s description of the crowds of guests who flock to the host’s open door may also answer to the tendency for cottage-door paintings in the manner of Gainsborough to avoid the topic of group activities among the poor. When they do show scenes of gatherings, as in Blake’s engraving for *Sentimental Journey*, they tend to be cheerful in character and to be spatially confined to the outside of the cottage door—a space neither too private so as to suggest intrusion on domestic quietude, nor too public so as to verge on the political. As Barrell has argued, these characteristics supported a loyalist image of “the ‘peasantry’ as entirely defined by their domestic identity, each family inhabiting its own sequestered paradise, quarantined from contamination by any notion of collective life, even of collective labour.”<sup>68</sup> Blake turns this idealisation on its head. In “The Mental Traveller,” the cottage is not figured as a site for glad withdrawal to a familial realm—the cottager is, after all, a mere “aged Shadow” (line 29) who lacks the company of a wife and children so romanticised in cottage-door art—and the fantasy of gentle rural musicality gives no assurance of docility. Instead, the cottage is infiltrated by rowdy merrymakers, who obnoxiously “make the roofs & walls to ring,” their “eternal joy” growing in equal proportion to the host’s “grief” (lines 41-2). The host’s “forever open” door, once a sign of his good-natured hospitality, is now the site for active intrusion, culminating in the insidious birth of the “little Female Babe” (line 44), who eventually drives him out of the cottage. By inverting the typical spatial arrangements of idealising cottage-door art, Blake performs in spatial terms what Chandler finds him to be enacting in syntactic terms: he casts the “joints of his affective production as mind-forg’d manacles—links that, having been created by a human being can likewise be unmade.”<sup>69</sup>

In stanzas 12-15, Blake’s cottage becomes still more unsentimental. Over the course of a few lines, the host is “drive[n] out” of his home (line 51) and himself becomes “A Beggar

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<sup>66</sup> See Paley, “The Female Babe,” 100.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Barrell, *Despotism*, 243.

<sup>69</sup> Chandler, *Archaeology*, 281.

at another's door" (line 52). He has become a "type," under the deliberately anonymous, generalised character category of the "Beggar," seeking the charity of "another" when just a moment ago he was in the position of that very "other." The plight of the now "Poor Man" demonstrates Blake's awareness that a theory of moral sentiments itself depends on a tacit acceptance of the existence of poverty and injustice, rather than a resolve to unmake the very system which brings about their putative inevitability. Tracing the route of the outcast host, as he wanders "weeping" and "blind & age-bent sore distress" (line 55) in search of a new "Maiden" and a new home, Blake presses upon the reader the sheer affective change brought about by his literal change in position. Not only are the effects of this change physically registered in his body, his very way of viewing the world begins to alter: as we saw at the beginning of this chapter, upon taking the new "Maiden" "in his arms," the cottage fades from his sight and the false idyll of "The Garden & its lovely Charms" (line 60) is no more.

It should be clear from this closer look at the depiction of the cottage in "The Mental Traveller" that Blake's view of cottage-life stands in marked contrast to the idealising brushstrokes with which the sentimental mode painted the rural poor. By contrast, Blake's unsentimental cottage may be closer to in spirit to poetic revisitations of the cottage trope by radical writers. We have encountered an early hint of this in George Crabbe's *The Village*. As Barrell has noted, especially during the 1790s in the face of Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, writers such as Charlotte Smith, Joseph Cottle, and Coleridge focused on the cottage "as an ideal place of peace and safety no longer, now threatened by the oppression of the rich, unequal laws, or sudden invasion."<sup>70</sup> Writing in the very next decade, as Britain prepared for the expected arrival of Napoleon's army, it may be no coincidence that Blake figures the cottage as a site for invasion and dispossession.

As a final point, Blake himself may have been disillusioned with cottage life following the unceremonious conclusion to his residence at Hayley's cottage in Felpham, in the light of the notorious Scolfield trial. This point expands upon the insights of scholars such as Laurence Binyon, Robert N. Essick, Morton D. Paley, Tim Barringer, and Hayley Flynn, who have argued that the disappointments of Blake's Felpham years cast a long shadow, the traces of which they particularly locate in what Essick refers to as the "dark and foreboding undertone" of

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<sup>70</sup> Barrell, *Despotism*, 221.



Blake's later woodcuts for Robert John Thornton's *Pastorals of Virgil* (1821).<sup>71</sup> Essick even connects the specific appearance of Colinet's cottage in the *Virgil* woodcuts with that of the cottage in which Blake resided at Felpham, suggesting that after the Felpham period cottages held personal, nostalgic associations for Blake.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Paley has written that the cottages in this series and Blake's visual art more widely are "pastoral-primitive buildings evocative of the values of innocence."<sup>73</sup> By contrast, Blake's unsentimental cottage in "The Mental Traveller" may suggest a darker side to his reflections on the Felpham period in its immediate wake—a notion that would be consistent with Bentley's dating of the poem around 1803-4 or shortly thereafter.<sup>74</sup> I do not wish to imply that this notion authorises a reading of all aspects of Blake's work as undiluted autobiography. But, as I hope to have shown, the cottage setting of "The Mental Traveller" instantiates some of the plays and possibilities of meaning which richly animate Blakean places, and which diagrammatic readings risk eliding.

Bearing in mind the complex evocation of the pastoral mode in "The Mental Traveller," it would be well to consider the direction of the male figure and his lover's route from the cottage towards an urban setting: the place where "many a City" is built (line 91). Although there is a hint of relative hopefulness as the figures' arrival at the city coincides with "sweet Extacy" and the building of "many a pleasant Shepherds home"—the tone immediately darkens in the very next stanza: "But when they find the frowning Babe / Terror strikes thro the region wide" (lines 93-94), precipitating the apparent return to the poem's "dreadful" beginnings.

Despite the rather pessimistic portrayal of the city in "The Mental Traveller," in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, Blake revisits the city, transforming it into a site affording the possibility for

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<sup>71</sup> Essick, *William Blake: Printmaker*, 231. See also Laurence Binyon's introduction to his *William Blake: Being All His Woodcuts Photographically Reproduced* (London: Unicorn Press, 1902); Morton D. Paley, *The Traveller in the Evening: The Last Works of William Blake* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), Chapter One ("Dark Pastoral: Illustrations to Thornton's *Virgil*"), 20-52; Barringer, "I am a native rooted here"; Flynn, *Visionary Topography*, vol. 1, Chapter Four ("Blake's Pastoral: The Illustrations to *Virgil*"), 122-57.

<sup>72</sup> Essick, *William Blake*, 231.

<sup>73</sup> Morton D. Paley, "The Fourth Face of Man: Blake and Architecture," in *Articulate Images: The Sister Arts from Hogarth to Tennyson*, ed. Richard Wendorf (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1983), 202.

<sup>74</sup> Bentley, *Blake Books*, 341-2. Bentley proposes that the poems contained in the Pickering Manuscript may have been composed as early as 1800-4, noting that they were likely written down after the abandonment in 1805 of Blake's work for Hayley's *Designs to a Series of Ballads*. He also notes that three poems appearing in the manuscript ("Mary," "The Grey Monk," and "The Golden Net") appear to have been based on Notebook drafts made in 1803. Although the precise dating of each poem's original conception remains unknown, Bentley's findings strongly suggest that a number of the poems were composed towards the end of or shortly following Blake's time as a cottage-dweller at Felpham while working for William Hayley.

vision and even redemption. In this poem's divided world, however, the prospect of a way out remains firmly out of reach. It is, I think, to the visions of Blake's late art and illuminated books that one must turn in order to catch a glimpse (ever-partial) of the place—earlier yearned for but ever-unattainable in "Ah! Sun-Flower"—"Where the travellers journey is done" (E 25).

## Chapter Three. Blake's London

Whereas the "Ball" in "The Mental Traveller" seems to be an emblem of cold, distanced vision, in *Jerusalem* Blake adumbrates a very different kind of "ball":

To the Christians

I give you the end of a golden string  
 Only wind it into a ball:  
 It will lead you in at Heavens gate,  
 Built in Jerusalems wall  
 (*Jerusalem* 77, E 231).

The lines weave together the illuminated book, its creator, and its reader in the spirit of a shared journey towards "Heavens gate," located in the "wall" of Jerusalem, the Holy City that in Blake's myth formerly stood on the site of London. There is nothing here of the fading, shrinking horror of "The Mental Traveller." Indeed, underneath the *Jerusalem* passage, which appears at the top of plate 77, there is a vignette (figure 72) that recalls us from any Apollonian reveries back to what Blake, in "The Mental Traveller" (and again in *Milton*), calls the "flat earth." A tiny, gowned figure enacts the verse instruction to wind a ball from a string that trails over the landscape, towards the top of a hill where the clouds have begun to clear away. It is something like a visionary re-winding of the red thread followed by Theseus as he retraced his steps out of the heart of the Minotaur's labyrinth. In Blake's vignette, the figure appears to be partly guided by his/her winding of the thread, partly by the trajectory of the thread itself, and partly by the crooked lines of the landscape. The route, one could say, emerges at the encounter between each of these events; the "golden string" found in the pages of Blake's book is being used *like a map*. To reiterate the words of Robert Kitchin, Martin Dodge, and Chris Perkins, "the map does not represent the world or make the world: it is a co-constitutive production between inscription, individual and world."<sup>1</sup> This comment seems eminently applicable to Blake's major illuminated books (*VALA, or The Four Zoas; Jerusalem, and Milton*). However, whereas Dodge *et al.* suggest that maps are "always seeking

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<sup>1</sup> Kitchin *et al.*, *Rethinking Maps*, 21; see also Jeremy Crampton, *The Political Mapping of Cyberspace* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).

to appear ontologically secure,” Blake’s map-like books are perhaps better described as always seeking to destabilise their own ontological security—to foreground their status as works in progress, as maps in progress.<sup>2</sup>

The work-in-progress nature of Blake’s golden-string wayfaring is further nuanced by the threadlike tendrils (which double as a means of formally dividing the text) in the lower half of the *Jerusalem* plate. These lines complicate the apparent contiguity/continuity of the “golden string” in the vignette. They are fragmentary—broken, appearing in one sense as dead-ends, “leading” nowhere at all—and yet, their presence points to a plurality of possible pathways that may in practice end up being explored. The central tendril snakes upwards, appearing to terminate at (or to originate from) the base of the phrase “Mental Pursuit.” The passage exhorts, “Let every Christian as much as in him lies engage himself openly & publicly before all the World in some Mental pursuit for the Building up of Jerusalem” (*Jerusalem* 77, E 232). The lines strike an unmistakably prescriptivist note, and yet there may also be available a more descriptivist recognition that even the most determined traveller will be compelled to explore multiple routes and byways as the journey unfolds.

Scholars have especially assigned work-in-progress status to one aspect of Blake’s books: the city of Golgonooza, “the Spiritual Fourfold London.”<sup>3</sup> Because of its provisionality and flux, several scholars have emphasised the un-mappability of Golgonooza, though this has not always prevented them from attempting to map it anyway. Though it may be problematic for the critic to re-make Blake’s cities as stable maps, however, Blake’s city-writing practice can indeed be understood as a form of map-making—albeit a map-making that calls attention to its own provisionality. Further, as suggested by the lines from *Jerusalem* quoted above, the provisionality and mutability of Blake’s map-making practice is partly guaranteed by its basis in instances of embodied journeys—of walking—especially in and towards urban landscapes. At the bottom of the same plate from *Jerusalem*, companion verses suggest that the Holy City’s “wall” may not be so far off from “Londons towers” after all. In contrast to the interrogative mood of the prefatory verse to *Milton* (“And did those feet [...]?”), in this plate from *Jerusalem* Blake affirms that “Englands green & pleasant bowers” have indeed felt Jerusalem’s “feet” once before. Although many aspects of the verse and

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<sup>2</sup> Dodge *et al.*, 21.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, vol. II, 266; Jenifer Davis Michael, *Blake and the City* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2006), 189.

vignette unmistakably conjure pastoral scenery, the imbrications of London and Jerusalem here and throughout the book work to locate the pastoral-utopian visions within an urban context—"Londons towers." Both the "golden string" verse and the fact that Jerusalem is figured here (as elsewhere) as a woman in the act of walking, epitomise how in the major prophecies Blake envisioned cities in terms of moving bodies as well as built structures. And if, as Jennifer Davis Michael writes, in Blake's work "the people in the city become both living members of the body [i.e., the city figured as a body] and the artists who create it," a significant part of this creative process is envisioned through tropes of walking.<sup>4</sup>

In this chapter, I bring my "ground-level" approach to "The Mental Traveller" (as expounded in Chapter Two) to bear on the tropes of urban walking that recur throughout Blake's oeuvre. Walking is a pervasive theme in Blake's work, and although it is hardly limited to urban landscapes, I want to suggest that Blake gives particular weight to urban walkers as the continued agents of re-territorialisation and re-mapping within ever-emergent built environments. Before approaching urban territory, I begin the chapter with a consideration of Blake's ideas about totalities and wholes in *Jerusalem*, laying down some threads that will run through the remainder of the chapter. I consider three images of earth-disks, or globes, from *Jerusalem*, arguing that despite their appearance of wholeness, these images typify Blake's anti-cartographic cartography in foregrounding their own incompleteness and provisionality. Pursuing a close visual analysis of one of these images in particular, I argue that Blake urges viewers to think on multiple spatial scales at once as he indexes the complex relationship between individuals and totalities—especially in the context of totalising systems. Second, returning to the urban landscape, I propose a turn away from thinking primarily about Blake's "City" in the abstract, and towards a consideration of the activities of "city-walkers," which have curiously had more of an afterlife in the creative reception of Blake than in Blake scholarship. Meanwhile, much scholarly work on "Romantic" pedestrianism has

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<sup>4</sup> Jennifer Davis Michael, "The Corporeal City in Blake's *Milton* and *Jerusalem*," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 29 (2000): 109.

tended to have a rural and often strongly Wordsworthian focus.<sup>5</sup> Placing Blake's city-writing in dialogue with recent discussions about the "emergent" ontologies of maps, walkers, and landscapes in urban contexts particularly, it is my claim in this chapter that tropes of walking are fundamentally operative in Blake's model of mapping. Third, I undertake close readings of a range of visual and verbal instances of walking in and towards cities in Blake's work (from the early lyrics to the late visual art and the major prophecies), drawing out two broad and frequently intersecting "ways of walking." Along these lines, walking—which has held a demonstrable if somewhat tentative place in Blake's early city-writing—comes in the major prophecies to be fully operational in the convolutions of Blakean mapping.

### The *Jerusalem* Globes

Before arriving at the city, it will be worth zooming out once again to consider the whole-earth perspective that Blake pursues, in tension with his image of the ball of golden string as a ground-level map-in-progress. The three circular maps or globes appearing in Chapter Three of *Jerusalem* (figures 4-6) seem a far cry from the smooth, completist maps that we have encountered, for instance, in many of Joseph Johnson's geographical publications. The globes appear hazy and incomplete, their lines wavering and their surfaces indistinct, underscoring the provisional and partial nature of pictorial representation itself. As I have suggested in Chapter Two, Blake's global images represent an effort—deeply fraught and often contradictory in nature—to challenge the representational tendencies and epistemological underpinnings of Enlightenment-era world-pictures.

It is worth noting at the outset that the hazy outlines of these images are significant given Blake's commitment to linear style. In Chapter One, I referred to Blake's engravings for Cumberland's *Thoughts on Outline* (1796), suggesting (as have other scholars) that Blake's

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Robin Jarvis, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), which has a strongly rural focus and features chapters on Wordsworth, Coleridge, Dorothy Wordsworth, John Clare, and William Hazlitt. Catharina Löffler's study *Walking in the City* has a final chapter entitled "Romantic Visions of the City," but as the subtitle reveals the chapter centres almost exclusively on "William Wordsworth's 'Residence in London' (1805)" from *The Prelude* Book VII: Catharina Löffler, *Walking in the City: Urban Experience and Literary Psychogeography in Eighteenth-Century London* (Wiesbaden, Germany: J. B. Metzler, 2017), 293-318. Löffler does mention Blake in her study, but states only that a "possible focus" for future research "could be on the moral, spiritual and religious psychogeography of William Blake and his works *Milton* (1804-1810) and *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (1804-1820)" (*Ibid.*, 327).

knowledge of Cumberland's text may have carried over into his proclamations as to the merits of firm, determinate outlines, as expressed in the *Descriptive Catalogue* (1809), and as echoed in his insistence on the "Definite & Determinate Identity" of "Minute Particulars" in *Jerusalem* (see, e.g., *Jerusalem\_55*: 60-62, E 205). By contrast, it seems that in these images of global, general forms Blake seeks to undercut the potential for firm bounding lines. The lines encircling the globes are wavering and, in the case of Plate 54, broken—characteristics that seem visually to undercut the images' authority as stable or complete representations in the manner of so many Enlightenment-era maps. This tendency is just one aspect of Blake's anti-cartographic cartography: as we shall see, despite Blake's suspicion of general forms, his global images are nonetheless spaces for the expression of genuine ideas about ontology, epistemology, and cosmology.

The first example I have identified appears on Plate 54 (figure 4). Wedged between two dense passages of text is a disk-shaped image inscribed "This World," in which that world is mapped along axes of psychological contrarities. Despite the lack of placenames or topographic detail, Blake maintains some basic conventional cartographic signs, namely the circumscription of the earth with a periphery line, the suggestions of land-masses, and the label "This World." Meanwhile, the abstract nouns ("Reason," "Desire," "Wrath," and "Pity") serve, as Morton D. Paley notes in his commentary, like the cardinal points of a compass.<sup>6</sup> Flanking the disk or globe are swarms of naked human figures, appearing to swim or fly outside its confines; their presence alone indicates the diagrammatic map's failure to contain all constituents within its bounding line.

Blake also undermines the map's status as a stand-alone and completist representation of reality in the map appearing on plate 57 (figure 5). The image is a striking visualisation of three female figures emanating thread-like fibres which are attached to the surface of an earth-disk or globe at the centre of the plate, spliced with a panel of poetry. Again, Blake uses conventional map-signs—the disk-shape, the line to articulate and circumscribe its form, the buildings, namely St. Paul's cathedral and a Gothic cathedral to identify London and Jerusalem respectively, and the placenames—to recall the visual constitution of contemporaneous maps. However, the earth-disk is only loosely recognisable

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<sup>6</sup> Morton D. Paley, ed., *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 217.

as a warped map of the Earth: “Jerusalem” sits at the lower pole, “London” at the upper pole, with “York” appearing due-west of “London.” It is difficult to make sense of this, but it seems overly wishful to collapse it into some Blakean cartographic system. Moreover, the cleaving of the world-disk immediately denies the illusion of completeness and verisimilitude that might be feigned by a map.

My third example is the earth-globe or -disk appearing on plate 72 (figure 6). The surface of the map is inscribed with a vortical spiral of text, which reads “Continually Building, Continually Decaying, because of Love & Jealousy”; these words are a reprisal and modification of the line appearing on plate 53, where Blake is describing the building of Golgonooza: “continually building & continually decaying desolate!”—a line that has particular relevance to my discussion of Blake’s urban tropes later in this chapter (*Jerusalem* 53: 19, E 203). Here, too, the superficial certainty and fixity of the map-signs is offset by the implied involutory movement of the vortex-like spiral of words. This visual volatility or instability epitomises Blake’s use of cartographic signs to undermine the fixity upon which those signs are predicated. Considered together, the *Jerusalem* globes epitomise Blake’s anti-cartographic cartography, which is characterised by a reluctance to commit to the reductionism of diagrammatic representation, even in the act of visually rendering the world he imagines in two-dimensional form.

In these images, we also see Blake synchronising multiple spatial scales on the one pictorial plane, positing a complex tension between constituents and totalities. It is this tension on which I focus in the remainder of this section, in particular pursuing a close visual analysis of just one of these images, the earth-disk or globe appearing on plate 57 of *Jerusalem* (figure 5). In my reading of this image, I characterise Blake’s representation of the globe as anti-systematic and anti-totalising. In doing so, I suggest connections between Blake’s struggle with mapping totalities and both Frederic Jameson’s notion of “cognitive mapping” and Manuel DeLanda’s notion of “assemblages against totalities.”

As I sketched in the Introduction to this thesis, there is in Blake’s work a distinction between what Kevin Hutchings terms “true wholes” and “their fraudulent counterparts.”<sup>7</sup> I suggested that “fraudulent” wholes—those purporting to create unity through the imposition of oppressive systems—might usefully be likened to Frederick Jameson’s hypothesis of “an

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<sup>7</sup> Hutchings, *Imagining Nature*, 35.



aesthetic of cognitive mapping,” whereby individuals might confront their failure to map both “socially” and “spatially.”<sup>8</sup> Jameson’s formulation presumes the existence of an oppressive “social totality” even as it highlights the impossibility, for individuals, of fully representing that totality. A similar tension is identifiable in Blake’s depictions of globes. By contrast, I suggested, “true wholes” might get closer to Manuel DeLanda’s sense of the “assemblage” as a model in which social and material formations are regarded as having ontological priority over any sense of an *a priori* totality.<sup>9</sup> The image appearing on plate 57 of *Jerusalem* can potentially be read in both ways. Its vision of the world is by turns unredeemed and potentially redeemable. In what follows I shall elaborate both potential readings in order to draw out the tensions inherent in Blake’s anti-cartographic cartography.

In the first instance, this image can be seen, in a proto-marxist vein, in connection with the exploitative system of global industrial capitalism. According to this reading, Blake presupposes, as does Jameson in his theory of “cognitive mapping,” the *a priori* existence of such a thing as a “total” system. The image on plate 57 likely relates to a passage from much later in *Jerusalem*, in which Los enjoins the Daughters of Albion to “Form the fluctuating Globe according to their will” using their special craft—weaving (*Jerusalem* 83: 34, E 241). The question of “will” is equivocal: in Blake’s time the term “Daughter” was used to refer to young female workers in the British textile industry, and Blake’s portrayal of the spinning and weaving Daughters does seem to rehearse a nightmare-vision of industrial slavery, annihilating altogether the labourer’s “will.”<sup>10</sup> Curiously, the Daughters often appear as though complicit in the very system that oppresses and absorbs them: their totalising threads are apt to bind “the whole Earth” (*Jerusalem* 67: 29, E 220). Considered alongside Blake’s verbal descriptions of the Daughters, this global image seems in particular to reach out towards the world cotton industry, which from 1800 onwards was increasingly becoming centralised and organised from Britain, relying for its raw materials primarily on cotton grown by enslaved Africans in America.<sup>11</sup> According to this view, Blake’s map can be seen as registering the emergent global networks of industrial capitalism, whereby what Jameson

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<sup>8</sup> Jameson, “Cognitive Mapping,” 353.

<sup>9</sup> DeLanda, *A New Philosophy*, 8-25.

<sup>10</sup> James F. Moyer, “‘The Daughters Weave their Work in loud cries’: Blake, Slavery, and Cotton,” *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 48, no. 3 (2014-15): ¶13.

<sup>11</sup> Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Chapter Nine (“Cotton, Slavery and Plantations in the New World”), 187-210; and Chapter Ten (“Competing with India: Cotton and European Industrialisation”), 211-37.

terms the “phenomenological experience of the individual” can no longer be said to “coincide with the place in which it takes place”; rather, Jameson writes, “[t]he truth of that limited daily experience of London [...] is bound up with the whole colonial system,” a truth which individuals can never fully conceptualise let alone represent.<sup>12</sup> For Jameson, this is where the concept of totality in fact has great utility: “without a conception of the social totality (and the possibility of transforming a whole social system), no properly socialist politics is possible.”<sup>13</sup> Blake, however, is more insistent than Jameson on the impossibility of transforming systems by simply drafting new maps of “the whole.” Such logic, for Blake, in the first place underpins the dehumanising global reach sought and consolidated by global industrial systems. In this sense, the design on plate 57 can be seen as dramatising the enslaved Daughters’ struggle to map the conditions of cotton production in particular—a global “hemispheric system” based on slave labour in both American slave colonies and British industrial cities.<sup>14</sup> Yet, as his use of global tropes suggests, Blake remains reluctant to completely abandon any sense of global totality, even despite his vehement verbal denunciations of “general forms.” In images such as this one, there is an undeniable sense that Blake does (if always agonistically) view global vision as useful to think with, particularly when it comes to the question, as posed by Jameson, of “how to imagine Utopia.”<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, Blake seems reluctant to dismiss the Daughters’ cartographic efforts entirely, especially the corporeality thereof. In part, the ambiguity of this image hinges upon an ambiguity in Blake’s depiction of imagery of weaving. As Heather O’Donoghue notes, Blake frequently associates female weaving with war, abstraction, and enslavement in a quasi-Urizenic vein.<sup>16</sup> But as O’Donoghue is also aware, there is also a potentially redemptive side to the textile imagery, for instance in the figure of Enitharmon, Los’s female counterpart, as well as in the utopian image of golden string with which we began this chapter. Kathryn Sullivan Kruger has explored this potentially redemptive side of Blakean weaving in relation to *The Four Zoas*, as embodied by Enitharmon, “who at her shining Looms sings lulling cadences,” attempting to reclaim the practice of weaving in an abortive yet ever-hopeful

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<sup>12</sup> Jameson, “Cognitive Mapping,” 349.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>14</sup> Moyer, “Blake, Slavery, and Cotton,” ¶1.

<sup>15</sup> Jameson, “Cognitive Mapping,” 355.

<sup>16</sup> Heather O’Donoghue, *English Poetry and Old Norse Myth: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 97.

attempt to achieve regeneration.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in the final plate of *Jerusalem*, Enitharmon is pictured (to the right of Los with his hammer and tongs) holding a distaff or spindle from which hang the “fibres” of generation (figure 10). The “golden string” lyric effects a minute transposition of this more hopeful imagery of weaving (as regenerative artistic creation) onto the interfaces between the actions of creator (“I give”), text (“It will lead”), and reader-viewer (“Only wind it”), the latter thereby being allowed a certain degree of participation in the making of meanings and of destinies/destinations.

Although Los’s mapping of Golgonooza is overall privileged in *Jerusalem*, as we shall see, one does not have to view the Daughters as *entirely* excluded from Blakean mapping-in-progress. Indeed the image of women weaving a projection of the earth may even suggest Blake’s awareness of cartographic embroidery as a common women’s educational practice in his time.<sup>18</sup> In the design on plate 57, flesh-coloured fibres sprout from the figures’ hair and extremities, evoking the “nerves & veins” later mentioned by Los on plate 83. This is a remarkable attempt to create a world-map without minimising the corporeal entanglements which constitute the “fluctuating” world, and which are simultaneously constituted by it. In this reading, then, Blake’s global tropes here differ conceptually from marxist determinism and get closer to DeLanda’s sense that assemblages are perpetually undergoing modification via processes of “territorialization” and “deterritorialization”: “One and the same assemblage can have components working to stabilize its identity as well as components forcing it to change or even transforming it into a different assemblage.”<sup>19</sup> If the design can be seen as mapping the close entanglement between labouring (female) bodies and global systems of industrial exploitation and slavery, along with this indictment can also come recognition of the multiple spatiotemporal scales at which lives occur, an ontological awareness that is for Blake a vital first step in any attempt at re-mapping the present. Characteristically, Blake discloses this ontological imaginary by synchronising divergent scales—biological, geographical, cosmological—within one pictorial plane, exceeding the bounds of analogy to *literalise* the symbiotic relations between those scales. Abstract totality is not allowed to have

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<sup>17</sup> Kathryn Sullivan Kruger, *Weaving the World: The Metaphorics of Weaving and Female Textual Production* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, and London: Associated University Press, 2001), esp. Chapter Four (“The Loom of Language and the Garment of Words in William Blake’s *The Four Zoas*”), 87-107; J 88: 45 (E247).

<sup>18</sup> See Judith A. Tyner, *Stitching the World: Embroidered Maps and Women’s Geographical Education* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> DeLanda, *A New Philosophy*, 12.

the last word. This tension is also at play in the two other globes or disks I have mentioned (figures 4 and 6), both of which sit alongside human and angelic bodies, while animals and insects occupy the lower part of each plate (bats and insects in figure 4; a snake in figure 6). Such Blakean “impossible landscapes” unsettle a dualistic boundary between “external” world (conceived as an *a priori* totality) and psycho-biological experience.<sup>20</sup> In a similar vein, eco-philosopher Timothy Morton urges readers to embrace the “uncanny sense of existing on more than one scale at once” as a key moment towards an “ecological awareness” divested of a rigid and objectifying notion of an external “Nature.”<sup>21</sup>

Among all these competing spatialities, the plate 57 design features only three placenames: York, London, and Jerusalem. The latter two cities, and their hybridisation as Golgonooza, are the major focal points of Blake’s cartographic imagination throughout his body of work. It is to these territories that I now turn, tracing Blake’s continual, and continually abortive, efforts to map and re-map their contours. I begin by examining some previous approaches to this subject, many of which have sought to resolve these fragmentary mappings into a stable Blakean system.

### From “the City” to City-walkers

Despite Blake’s vexed, critical attitude towards totalising systems and forms, many scholars have been interested in rationalising the large-scale structure and symbolism of Blake’s cities. Their sites have long been surveyed in terms of entangled political, historical, mythic, and psychological storylines. To summarise all that has been written about the city in Blake’s work would be practically impossible, but I would like to point here to some scholarship that typifies this tendency towards general forms, despite accompanying caveats as to the “un-mappability” and particularity of Blake’s cities. Throughout *Fearful Symmetry*, Northrop Frye (1947), for example, did much to elucidate the dialectical interplay between the biblical cities Jerusalem and Babylon across Blake’s mythopoesis.<sup>22</sup> David Erdman and E. P. Thompson have both offered foundational “social” readings of Blake’s lyric poem “London,” emphasising its

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<sup>20</sup> Makdisi, *Impossible History*, 240.

<sup>21</sup> Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 25.

<sup>22</sup> Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, esp. Chapter Eleven (“The City of God”), 356-403.

historical and political resonances.<sup>23</sup> Kenneth R. Johnston (1970) charted the development of Blake's urban tropes from his early lyrics to the "mature myth" of the major prophecies, primarily seeking to map Blake's "basic plot" of fall and regeneration onto his "urban symbolism."<sup>24</sup> Samuel Foster Damon (1988) supplied a "map" of Golgonooza (figure 73) that has been enthusiastically reproduced in later scholarship, usually with qualification as to its provisionality and inadequacy—a tendency begun by Damon himself, who noted that "Golgonooza, being four-dimensional, cannot be reduced to a chart of two dimensions."<sup>25</sup> More recently, Saree Makdisi (1998) has argued that Blake superimposes a map of the world onto his visions of London, producing a diagram of the perceived correspondences between the two planes (figure 74), all the while maintaining that Blake's London is an essentially "un-mappable space."<sup>26</sup> In the twenty-first century, Jennifer Davis Michael (2006) has read Blake's cities in terms of broad metaphors derived from literary modes (urban, pastoral) and conceptual analogies (city as body, and, by an inversion of a familiar analogy, text as city/city as text).<sup>27</sup>

It is true that, as Johnston writes, Blake frequently characterises the city as "a giant mythic entity," and in this sense his interest lies very much with the city itself—variously as body, text, history, and so on.<sup>28</sup> However, recent scholars such as Paul Miner (2002) and Jeremy Tambling (2005) have restored a key emphasis on the "minute particulars" of Blake's London.<sup>29</sup> Tambling in particular views placenames as the (often autobiographical) basis of Blakean city-writing, and as operative in the meta-textual writerly process of building Golgonooza. Miner's article and Tambling's book are valuable reminders of the vibrant local and personal histories that live on in Blake's insistent catalogues of placenames. To take Tambling's argument a step further, it would be well to remember that Blake was also fundamentally interested in the human lives that are the lifeblood of cities. I would therefore like to shift the primary object of study slightly, and imperfectly, from city to city-dweller or, more precisely, to city-walker. This shift is broadly in the spirit of Michel de Certeau's urgings

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<sup>23</sup> Erdman, *Prophet Against Empire*, 270-82; Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast*, 174-94.

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth R. Johnston, "Blake's Cities: Romantic Forms of Urban Renewal," in David V. Erdman and John E. Grant, *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 441.

<sup>25</sup> Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, 163.

<sup>26</sup> Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism*, 167.

<sup>27</sup> Michael, Jenifer Davis. *Blake and the City*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Johnston, "Blake's Cities," 441.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Miner, "Blake's London: Times & Spaces," *Studies in Romanticism*, 41, no. 2 (2002): 279-316; Jeremy Tambling, *Blake's Night Thoughts* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 110.

for a conceptual shift in the social sciences “[f]rom the concept of the city to urban practices” in his chapter “Walking in the City” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, which has greatly informed key aspects of my own thinking in the present chapter.<sup>30</sup> Although Blake flirts with the concept of totality, as I have suggested, his is more consistently a ground-level perspective. In some important ways, however, when it comes to Blake’s city-writing, the distinction between city and city-dweller is a false dichotomy. Blake’s cities are also figured as people, and cities and city-dwellers appear to operate in his work as co-constitutive entities that cannot really be disentangled. Nevertheless, since a major strain of Blake scholarship has privileged “the City”—often to the point of abstraction—at the expense of the city-dweller, it seems necessary to redress the balance by dwelling for a moment on the latter. I hope that by using the phrase “city-walker” I can retain sufficient ambiguity so as to include both anthropomorphic cities who walk, and the urban population who walk within those cities.

In this chapter, I would like to highlight the recurrent tropes (both visual and verbal) of walking in Blake’s cityscapes, proposing that these instances—fragmentary and unelaborated as they often are—nuance a now commonplace understanding of Blake’s cities as processes of perpetual and communal becoming (“continually building & continually destroying desolate”) by locating a major aspect of this building process in the footfall of city-walkers (*Jerusalem* 53: 19, E 203). I am certainly not the first to notice the recurrence and richness of these tropes: self-styled “psychogeographer” Iain Sinclair has repeatedly emphasised its presence, and his own “appropriation” of this aspect of Blake has been energetically critiqued by Jason Whittaker.<sup>31</sup> Whittaker has focused especially on the journey taken by Los into “Albion’s bosom” in *Jerusalem*, in which he identifies an “imaginative perception of the city fixed in the meticulous recording of a precise location” which has been “so influential on the radical *dénouements* of later writers and authors.”<sup>32</sup> Other scholars who have discussed pedestrianism in Blake’s work tend to leave behind the depiction of walking with the lyric poem “London” from *Songs of Experience*, moving on to pursue master-narratives about historical representation or mythic city-making in his work.<sup>33</sup> What is needed

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<sup>30</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1984) [*La poétique de l’espace* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958)], 93. Throughout their work, Jennifer Davis Michael and Jason Whittaker have also noted some of the striking affinities between de Certeau’s work and Blake’s depictions of urban pedestrianism.

<sup>31</sup> Jason Whittaker, “Walking thro’ Eternity.”

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., Jennifer Davis Michael’s discussion of “London,” in her *Blake and the City*, 67-74.

is a closer look at how the Blakean city as work-in-progress might be partially conceived in terms of the many walks-in-progress that continually respond to and shape its landscapes. Walking, in Blake's work, can thereby be understood as a practice—a practice, importantly, that *makes* being-in-the-city.

What I wish to sketch in this chapter is a reading that can keep in focus the rich and multiple wanderings in Blake's cities, trying as much as possible to resist resolving their unruly lines into a unified whole, whilst also hoping not to impose what Peter Otto has called an "orthodoxy" of "strangeness and unruliness" for its own sake.<sup>34</sup> Blake's routes, I want to suggest, can be fruitfully understood, in the language of post-Deleuzian ontology, as "emergent" lines. Rather than mapping such routes out for the reader to merely witness, the gestures towards acts of walking signal Blake's wish to involve the reader in these emergent pathways. Blake hints that there may be a way out of the labyrinths of the fallen city, but since in his work (as in the world itself) "we do not know in advance which way a line is going to turn," a prior or predestined pathway cannot be supplied.<sup>35</sup> By involving the reader in the meta-textual project of building Golgonooza (again to extend Tambling's argument), Blake points to the possibility of a process which could never be fully rendered in the material form of his art—(re-)building the city of Jerusalem "in England's green and pleasant land," the impossibility of which in "real" geographical terms, "show[s]," for Talissa J. Ford, "the falseness not only of national borders but of national histories which chart the supposed progress from east to west, from country to city."<sup>36</sup> That this process might be nonetheless conceived and rehearsed along the lines of a journey Blake most famously suggests in the lyric quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the part of *Jerusalem* addressed "To the Christians," when he writes "I give you the end of a golden string." Interestingly, although this trope has not been the subject of extended scholarly enquiry, as Shirley Dent and Jason Whittaker have pointed out in their chapter entitled "Metropolitan Blake," many literary and artistic responses to Blake's cities pick up the thread of Blake's tropes of walking, and Dent and Whittaker have identified literary responses that centre on notions of "the streetwalker" and

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Otto, "Harold Bloom, ed. *William Blake: Modern Critical Views*, New York: Chelsea House, 1985; Nelson Hilton, ed. *Essential Articles for the Study of William Blake, 1970-1984*, Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1986" (review article), *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 21, no. 1 (1987): 31.

<sup>35</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 134.

<sup>36</sup> Talissa J. Ford, "'Jerusalem is scattered abroad': Blake's Ottoman Geographies," *Studies in Romanticism*, 47, no. 4 (2008): 538.

“the *flâneur*.”<sup>37</sup> I shall return to this tendency in my own discussion of the creative reception of Blakean mapping in Chapter Four.

There is a long literary history of city-walking (particularly in London), in which Blake is a key participant. John Gay’s *Trivia: or, the art of walking the streets of London* (1716) is one important and regularly cited example of the practical walker’s guides that were popular during the eighteenth century.<sup>38</sup> This trend coincided with an adjacent proliferation of still more encyclopaedically minded topographical street-guides and large-scale maps, of which Tambling lists some typical examples including John Rocque’s 1746 plan of London (figure 1) and Richard Horwood’s 1792-99 plan (figure 2).<sup>39</sup> There is also an important theoretical history of walking and city-dwelling, which I have already begun to evoke, if somewhat eclectically, in the present chapter. In what follows, I draw especially on de Certeau’s notion of the city-walker’s “practice of everyday life,” and on Ingold’s more recently formulated concepts of “wayfaring” and “being alive.” Ingold’s work develops on Heideggerian ideas about being as dwelling with a particular emphasis on embodied movement, also intersecting in important ways with the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Since urban architecture and “space,” broadly conceived, have been focal points of Blake scholarship, Blake’s cities have often been connected with the insights of philosophers such as Martin Heidegger (1971 [1954]), Gaston Bachelard (1994 [1958]), and Henri Lefebvre (2003 [1970]; 1991 [1974, 1984]), in their work on ontological, epistemological, and phenomenological aspects of built environments.<sup>40</sup> Some related ideas will have a place in the present chapter, but at the core of my own study will be bodies in motion as they exist and come into being (or are themselves “built”) within the emergent built environments that they in turn help to constitute, and the problems involved when it comes to mapping these phenomena. Aspects of my reading of

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<sup>37</sup> Shirley Dent and Jason Whittaker, “Metropolitan Blake,” in *Radical Blake: Influence and Afterlife from 1827* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 44-66.

<sup>38</sup> Michael briefly compares Gay’s *Trivia* and Blake’s “London” in her *Blake and the City*, 67, 70. The “afterlives” of *Trivia* have been extensively explored by O’Byrne: “The Art of Walking.”

<sup>39</sup> Tambling, *Blake’s Night Thoughts*, 100.

<sup>40</sup> Onno Oerlemans draws connections between Blake and Heidegger in “Romanticism and the City: Toward a Green Architecture,” in Anne Merrill Ingram *et al.*, *Coming into Contact: Explorations in Ecocritical Theory and Practice* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 176-77; on Blake and Bachelard, see, e.g., Morton D. Paley, *The Continuing City: William Blake’s Jerusalem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 149; Michael, *Blake and the City*, 86. Michael also draws upon Lefebvre’s book *The Production of Space* in her *Blake and the City*: see esp. 85-87.



Blake's urban walkers are also indebted to the work of historians, including the historian of British roads Jo Guldi.

One reason for the tendency to lose sight of Blake's routes in the city may be that the routes themselves are partial, scattered, and interruptive. Consequently, as we have seen in the case of "The Mental Traveller," Blake's individual routes (much like the texts and territories which they help to constitute) are extraordinarily difficult to map in any straightforward sense, as progressing along known roads, or as having any particular end in sight. What I want to propose is that Blake's walkers disclose ways of "being alive," to adopt Ingold's phrase, which emerge or come into being at the collision between bodies, minds, and matter. What I offer here is therefore not a Baedeker guide through Blake's mythopoeia. It is rather an attempt to recuperate Blake's sense of city-dwelling and city-mapping as practices that are repeatedly initiated and enacted by bodies moving through landscapes.

### Ways of Walking: Straight and Crooked

In *The Life of Lines*, Tim Ingold describes a game known as "crocodile" that is played by modern schoolchildren under the supervision of their teachers. In the game, Ingold writes, "[c]hildren are expected to walk two abreast, in a neat line"; this he contrasts with children's more instinctive way of walking when unsupervised, when their attention lies open to "myriad trifles" which "make the street a place of such absorbing interest to the miniature detective whose eyes remain close to the ground."<sup>41</sup> The description of the "game" prefaces Ingold's chapter entitled "The maze and the labyrinth," in which he proposes two modes of walking in urban settings: "The maze-walker, we could say, is a navigator; the labyrinthine path-follower a wayfarer."<sup>42</sup> The former assumes prior intentionality, the existence of an *a priori* map in the mind; the latter is framed as a more "open-ended practice of inquiry."<sup>43</sup> The difference, Ingold writes, "is also the difference between the march of the crocodile and the caprice of the child-detective on the way to school: on arrival at the gates, the child [...] submits to a regime intent on humanising its subjects through the imposition of adult discipline."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ingold, *Life of Lines*, 130.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

The terms of Ingold's description of the disciplined walking of "crocodile" bear striking resemblance to one of Blake's early treatments of city-walking in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. "Children are expected to walk two abreast, in a neat line" is an apt description of what we see in the designs to the poem "Holy Thursday" (figure 75). In the vignettes above and below the text of the poem, Blake has depicted "The children walking two & two in red & blue & green," as he puts it in the poem (*Songs of Innocence and of Experience* 19: 2, E 13). In the case of the upper vignette, the neatness of the line of walkers is literally underscored by a single solid line, locking them into place, and thereby serving the same formal function as the flat, narrow strip of land that holds the lower walkers in their place. As Jeremy Tambling has especially emphasised, "Holy Thursday" is also an urban poem.<sup>45</sup> "This poem," he writes, "maps London, named only here in the *Songs of Innocence*, making St Paul's dome a globular centre."<sup>46</sup> The poem's context, as is well known, is the ceremony that was held on Ascension Day from 1782, when six thousand children from charity schools were brought to St Paul's to sing in a special service. Tambling's sense that the poem "maps" London is based particularly on the placenames in line 4 ("Till to the high dome of Pauls they like Thames waters flow"), but he also remarks that the simile "like Thames waters" implies a particular way of walking, hinting that for Blake the landscape is also mapped by the movement of bodies. Tambling rather hopefully finds in the simile a sense of "rebellious" flowing, the image of the river reaching towards resistance to the disciplining bonds of the beadles, the "wise guardians of the poor" (line 12) who lead the children.<sup>47</sup> As David Fairer notes, we ought to be wary in finding only Innocence or Experience in "Holy Thursday," and it is quite possible that the Thames simile contains a note of unruliness that might chime with the innocence of Ingold's child detective.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the hint of conversational exchange between some pairs of children in the design may suggest that their spontaneity or unruliness is not completely quelled (indeed, Stanley Gardner saw this conversability as proof of the poem's essential innocence).<sup>49</sup> However, the river simile also seems in some respects to add to the impression

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<sup>45</sup> Tambling, *Night Thoughts*, 102-3.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> David Fairer, "Experience Reading Innocence: Contextualizing Blake's *Holy Thursday*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35, no. 4 (2002): 535-62.

<sup>49</sup> "[Blake] headed the text with a line of children, out of step, casually paired and apparently turning to talk as they walk [...]. A sense of relaxed formality and assurance comes through the design, without a trace of regimentation." Stanley Gardner, *Blake's Innocence and Experience Retraced* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 36-37.

being built here of orderliness, uniformity, and straight lines—and the river, too, is not necessarily exempt from regulation by the powerful (the Thames is, as we hear in “London,” “charter’d”). If we find innocence in the poem, this can hardly go unnuanced by a certain cynicism towards what Fairer has called the “disciplined innocence” sought by the regulative authority of charity school rulebooks.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, the scenario in “Holy Thursday” instantiates what Caroline Levine calls the “collision” of forms—esthetic and social—in a manner similar to Levine’s own chosen case study, the collision between “disciplinary techniques” of Lowood School and the “literary techniques of the novel” in *Jane Eyre*.<sup>51</sup> That the children’s very way of walking in “Holy Thursday” is regulated by their so-called (and likely ironically called) “wise guardians” restricts the potential for their mucky, motley realities to stand out in the form of unruly walking (or indeed any other kind of indecent unruliness). Blake turns to the notion of particularised plight in the “Holy Thursday” of *Experience*, but the final line of the *Innocence* version also issues a reminder that outside the orderly walking of Ascension Day, a poor child wandering through the city might wind up at our own door: “Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.” This suggestion that the poor might forge their own individual paths through the city, propelled by hunger, cold, and fear, poses to the reader a rather different scenario to the one offered by the designs and the description of the church service: Fairer concludes, “[i]f the poem begins with the great pageant of the charity children, when innocence is on display and public charity dons its best clothes, it ends by placing the matter, briefly and undemonstratively, at our own door.”<sup>52</sup> For Blake even at this early stage, mapping the city is not only a matter of naming its places; it is also bound up in the formal, regulatory exercise of power on the minds and bodies of the city’s walkers. Those who hold the maps—who keep the poor in their neat two-by-two lines, who draw the roads, shore up the riverbanks and commercialise the landscape—define the limits of what I propose to call “straight” walking.

In what follows, I place such “straight” walking in dynamic opposition to “crooked” walking. These terms I derive from Blake’s “Proverb of Hell” which states that “Improvent [*sic*] makes strait roads, but the crooked roads without Improvement, are roads of Genius” (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 10, E 38). In transferring the modifiers “strait” and “crooked”

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<sup>50</sup> Fairer, “Experience Reading Innocence,” 547.

<sup>51</sup> Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 3.

<sup>52</sup> Fairer, “Experience Reading Innocence,” 558.

from “roads” to walkers, I draw partly on the method of Ingold, in whose distinction between “maze-walker” and “labyrinth-walker” the notion that prior structures have to define routes is interrupted by the idea that the movements of walkers themselves are potentially prior to the structures (mental and actual) seen as organising their routes. I intend to suggest that, for Blake, these apparently distinct categories can often mutually inform one another—landscapes can act upon minds and bodies just as much as minds and bodies can act upon landscapes. Walkers—and cities—constantly come to being, and their routes constantly emerge, from their encounters with the landscapes through which they move, and by extension with whatever human powers may shape those landscapes.

“Strait roads” are the roads of discipline, of Experience; they are “charter’d” streets,” laid down—“improved”—by city-planners, and they are instrumental, a means of getting to a pre-determined point or points. Straight roads are the stuff of de Certeau’s *voyeur*, in love with “the pleasure of ‘seeing the whole.’”<sup>53</sup> But as Blake’s “Proverb” leaves open, “strait roads” are also routes or pathways, a way of walking; they are the straitjacketed movements of oppressed bodies held fast by the carceral “mind-forg’d manacles,” cleaving along prescribed, regimented lines, sticking to a regulatory map, a map which pretends to be prior to their movements; they do not (perhaps because they cannot, or think they cannot) create their own systems. “Crooked roads”—the “roads of Genius”—are roads of Innocence; they seem to be located in the “Proverbs” in the past, perhaps a past before the “Improvement” of what Jo Guldi has memorably called “the infrastructure revolution,” by Blake’s time breathtakingly, formidably underway.<sup>54</sup> It is hard not to take Blake’s misspelling of “Improvement” (“Improvent”) in the first instance as disparaging; and as a whole the “Proverb” clearly prefers the roads of Genius. In essentially abbreviating the noun, Blake performs a shortcut of sorts: perhaps this manoeuvre insinuates that the concept of “improvement” tries to take shortcuts to hasten preconceived ends, eliminating the inventiveness and spontaneity of “Genius.” However, it should be noted that Blake was neither a consistent opponent nor a consistent proponent of urban “Improvement,” as is clear if one contrasts this “Proverb” with a letter he wrote to William Hayley on October 26, 1803, applauding how “[t]he shops in London improve; everything is elegant, clean and neat; the

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<sup>53</sup> de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 92.

<sup>54</sup> Jo Guldi, *Roads to Power: Britain Invents the Infrastructure State* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2012), 6.

streets are widened where they were narrow" (E 738). What he seems to have been opposed to, and what his vexed descriptions of urban landscapes repeatedly try to unsettle, were the consequences of pursuing improvement at great cost to the urban populace as well as to the landscape itself. It is these consequences that are registered in the minds and movements of his straight-walkers.

"Crooked roads," then, seek to break free from the confines of infrastructure blindly built in the name of abstract "Improvement." They emerge from the minutiae of lived experiences, from what de Certeau calls "the practices that are foreign to the 'geometrical' or 'geographical' space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions," potentially subversive practices which constitute what he calls "an 'anthropological,' poetic and mythic experience of such space" as embodied in the routes taken by individual inhabitants ("practitioners of everyday life") within cityscapes.<sup>55</sup> Like de Certeau's notion of a "poetic and mythic" register in city-walking, "crooked" walkers are creative, transgressive, sometimes utopian; they wind the "golden string" without prior routes in mind, paying close attention to crookedness in the landscape itself. Blake's recurrent stress on mobility has affinities with de Certeau's notion that walking is an enunciative practice, like a speech act: walking appropriates and acts out a spatial system (as the speech act does with language), and "implies *relations* among differentiated positions" (as speech acts do in placing contracts between interlocutors), in a way that cannot be adequately represented in graphic form.<sup>56</sup> This linguistic framework gives expression to de Certeau's much-cited notion that "space" is "practiced place"—re-inserting individual actors into the urban grid (although de Certeau's terms, being based on an *a priori* system of signs, arguably still cannot rescue those actors wholly from the "extraordinary passivity" and indeed complicity that Lefebvre notoriously ascribed to them).<sup>57</sup> Blake's suggestions of path-forging walking also resonates with the concept of "desire paths," those routes that unfold through the path-finding and path-creating footfall of walkers as opposed to pre-determined roads scripted by "another Mans" system.<sup>58</sup> Like Los in *Jerusalem*, "crooked" walkers hope one day to draw their own maps of

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<sup>55</sup> de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 93.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-99.

<sup>57</sup> Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, 181.

<sup>58</sup> Often erroneously attributed to Gaston Bachelard, the concept of "desire lines" (or "desire paths") is proper to design and urban planning, designating the unsanctioned or unofficial paths carved out by the habitual footfall of walkers for purposes of expediency, exploration, safety, or aesthetic preference.

the city. The walkers of *Jerusalem* especially evoke this hope. However, even in their best attempts to eschew straight roads, Blake's crooked walkers often remain bound by an overmastering straightness of infrastructure, which seems all but impossible to mentally or physically overcome: this, it seems, is part and parcel of their fallen state.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, we should not forget, "Holy Thursday" had included suggestions that straight walking, too, cannot completely iron out the spontaneity of crooked walking. The plurality and variety of Blake's city-walkers makes them extremely difficult to square with a systematised schema such as this (which itself threatens to straighten out their crookedness). Though my categories are convenient contraries to think with, it will be necessary to draw attention to their many intersections and points of contact over the course of the ensuing discussion.

That Blake's terms in the "Proverb" were a carefully chosen pair of contraries with the weight of biblical tradition behind them may shed some light on why they especially lend themselves to wider application along these lines, and eventually to a consideration of the trope of pilgrimage. Blake's "Proverb" has a key literary antecedent (and contrary) in two biblical passages, which are echoed in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. I do not believe that previous scholars have noted this link, but it seems to me to further illuminate Blake's own indictment of the moralised language of "Improvement," as well as his emphasis on walking as a creative activity (possibly with the context of pilgrimage behind it). In the *Pilgrim's Progress* Goodwill utters his own moralised theory of roads, and of routes: "there are many ways butt down upon this; and they are crooked and wide: but thus thou may'st distinguish the right from the wrong, the right only being strait and narrow."<sup>60</sup> Bunyan echoes the Sermon on the Mount passage from which the now commonplace phrase "straight and narrow" originates: Matthew 7.13-14 has "Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" ("strait" here being a near-synonym for "narrow").<sup>61</sup> A Calvinist Baptist whose work embraces

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<sup>59</sup> Relatedly, Ingold would have it that the illusion of uniformity created by infrastructure is part of a fundamentally modern misconception: "Under the rubric of the "built environment," human industry has created an infrastructure of hard surfaces, fitted out with objects of all sorts, upon which the play of life is supposed to be enacted [...] in an attempt to get the world to conform to our expectations of it, and to provide it with the coherent surface we always thought it had" (Ingold, *Being Alive*, 124).

<sup>60</sup> John Bunyan, *The pilgrim's progress from this world to that which is to come* (London: H. Trapp and A. Hogg, 1778), vol. I, 25.

<sup>61</sup> Matthew 7.13-14, Holy Bible: King James Version.

the doctrine of predestination, the passage may have particularly appealed to Bunyan for its possible implication that “pathways” towards redemption could be pre-set or pre-formed in advance. In his use of “crooked” particularly, Bunyan may also have in mind another biblical passage, at Isaiah 40.4, which makes the distinction directly between “straight” and “crooked” roads, placing this in a context of improvement: “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough place plain.”<sup>62</sup> Blake’s “Proverb” in its opposition between “crooked” and “strait” seems to use the latter to mean what modern spelling would usually render as “straight,” rather than a near-synonym of “narrow,” i.e., the opposite of “wide.” In this, Blake seems to respond most directly to Isaiah and Bunyan, though all these various formulations are essentially the inverse of Blake’s. “Straight” is the index of good virtue, “crooked” of bad. Moreover, the Sermon on the Mount passage and Bunyan’s version place path-finding directly in the context of either a pilgrimage or a spiritual journey broadly conceived, and this trope is echoed in many of Blake’s depictions of walking, especially in the late visual art and major prophecies. As we shall see later in this chapter, in such depictions Blake appears to grapple with the Calvinist notion of *pre-destination*, a tendency which goes hand in hand with his reluctance to map fixed, predictive journeys towards *destinations*.

As well as having biblical resonances, the language of this “Proverb” may, as I have suggested, also relate to eighteenth-century infrastructural history. Guldi writes that infrastructural developments from the seventeenth-century onwards flipped on its head an earlier system in which “the route, not the road” defined the landscape, creating the impression that government-built roads mapped out legitimate routes as givens without leaving space for intervention by actual road users.<sup>63</sup> Still retaining some moralistic shades of meaning, “crooked” and “straight,” along with “narrow” and “wide,” were in fact favourite words in the debates surrounding the aesthetics, functionality, and social consequences of this kind of infrastructural “improvement” in Blake’s time. Where the moral metaphors of the Bible and Bunyan had privileged “straight” and “narrow” roads over “crooked” and “wide” roads, eighteenth-century writers crossed these categories, and a common ideal became

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<sup>62</sup> Isaiah 40.4, Holy Bible: King James Version.

<sup>63</sup> Guldi, *Roads to Power*, 5.

straight and *wide* roads, while narrowness took up its place with crookedness as a marker of poor urban planning.

Blake's depictions of crooked and straight walking in many ways intersect with and intervene in contemporary debates about improvement and progress. Many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers from across the political spectrum upheld the ideal of straight, wide streets offering clear pathways for pedestrians. John Gay, for example, is wary of "the narrow alley's doubtful maze" in the vicinity of Seven Dials.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, in his *Description of Jerusalem* (1801), self-styled prophet Richard Brothers idealised the streets of New Jerusalem that he envisioned for their "breadth" and "regular" layout, criticising by contrast the "narrow" and "very crooked" streets of London and Paris—a preference maintained in the regular, straight lines of the graphic plans of the New Jerusalem that Brothers included in the *Description* (figure 39).<sup>65</sup> The plan of the New Jerusalem in Brothers' *Description* is signed "Lowry," probably indicating that it is the work of Wilson Lowry, a prominent engraver who, Bindman writes, "was well known to John Linnell and John Varley, and very probably to William Blake."<sup>66</sup> In trying in such a literal manner "to unite the visions of Ezekiel with modern town planning," Tim Fulford contends, Brothers was wholly in line with a strain of biblical-prophetic millenarianism that saw "London replaced by a real millennial city, a new, rectilinear and salubrious Jerusalem of spacious squares and symmetrical buildings."<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, it would be a misrepresentation to suggest that Blake was alone in opposing straightness in roads and routes; other Romantic writers had objections to the idea too. Briefly commenting on the debate about road layouts (as one aspect of infrastructural "improvement"), Nigel Leask remarks that "the [Robert] Burns who wrote "I have such an aversion to right line and method, that when I can't get over the hedges that bound the highway, I zig-zag across the road just to keep my hand in" [CL i.131] can hardly be enlisted among the road-straighteners."<sup>68</sup> Burns' comment seems to share with Blake's "Proverb" a preference for crooked (or zig-zagged) routes that imaginatively break with rigid paths of

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<sup>64</sup> John Gay, *Trivia: or, the art of walking the streets of London* (London: Printed for Bernard Lintott, 1716), Book II, 26, line 80.

<sup>65</sup> Richard Brothers, *A Description of Jerusalem &c* (London: Printed for George Riebau, 1801), 34.

<sup>66</sup> David Bindman, in *The Apocalypse*, ed. Carey, 245.

<sup>67</sup> Tim Fulford, "Prophecy and Imagination in the Romantic City," *The Wordsworth Circle*, 41, no. 1 (2010): 53.

<sup>68</sup> Nigel Leask, *Robert Burns & Pastoral: Poetry and Improvement in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10. The embedded quote is from J. De Lancey Ferguson, ed., *The Letters of Robert Burns, 1780-1789*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), vol. i, 131.



“improvement” as laid down by others, reasserting the precedence of routes over and above roads. This nostalgia for the crooked road chimes with eighteenth-century ideas of Picturesque beauty in landscapes—a love for “continual curvatures” that Humphry Repton claimed some “modern improvers” were in fact taking too far.<sup>69</sup> Many Romantic writers evoked roads in more figurative terms to treat themes of historical progress, improvement, and so on. We might consider, for example, Wordsworth’s use of a road trope later in the same decade, writing on the topic of human progress:

The progress of the Species neither is nor can be like that of a Roman road in a straight line. It may be more justly compared to that of a River, which both in its smaller reaches and larger turnings, is frequently forced back towards its fountains.<sup>70</sup>

Without wishing to simplify such views on the nature-culture binary in general, these writers’ preferences for crooked, meandering roads do appear to echo a now stereotypical “Romantic” longing for an uncultivated nature and a corresponding antipathy towards urban culture. In Blake’s work, however, depictions of crooked walking within the built spaces of cities seem to gesture towards a potential marriage of “nature” and “culture,” a kind of utopianism that Oerlemans has also identified more broadly in the architecture of Blake’s cities.<sup>71</sup>

Indeed, Blake was deeply interested in the various axes of these debates, and in disrupting the ideal hierarchy of “straight” over “crooked” that was common in the eighteenth century. Yet his use of “wide” and “narrow” when writing about city streets is often actually in keeping with that ideal: Blake’s own ideal becomes something like “crooked and wide.” Tambling, commenting on Los’s major journey in *Jerusalem*, insists that “narrow” may have a negative inflection for Blake: “‘Narrows,’ water-courses, or narrow streets [...] imply ‘narrowed perceptions’[...], and ‘narrow’ is a significant word in Blake.”<sup>72</sup> In this case,

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<sup>69</sup> See Humphry Repton, *The Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of the Late Humphry Repton*, ed. J. C. Loudon (London: Printed for the Editor, and sold by Longman & Co etc., 1840), 86. I am grateful to Stephen Daniels for the suggestion that the trope of the crooked road might relate to eighteenth-century ideas of the picturesque.

<sup>70</sup> William Wordsworth, “Reply to Mathetes,” published by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in *The Friend* (London: Printed for Gale and Curtis, Paternoster-Row, 1812), 272.

<sup>71</sup> Oerlemans, “Romanticism and the City,” esp. 170-81.

<sup>72</sup> Tambling, *Night Thoughts*, 114.

as interpreted by Tambling, Blake may be taking issue with the kind of restricted walking and thinking that “narrows” imply. Markers of wideness and narrowness (expansion and contraction) are indeed central to Blake’s treatment of sensory perception and embodiment, as well as of cityscapes. There may also be a sense in which narrowness indexes a narrow Christian morality in relation to sin, which Blake strenuously opposed. These adjacent concepts will also nuance the following discussion of straight and crooked ways of walking.

In order to draw out Blake’s ways of walking, it will be fruitful to consider a few more examples from *Songs*. From the urban poems in *Songs*, it becomes apparent that Blake’s early sense of walking in the city largely (but not exclusively) cleaves to the cluster of characteristics that I have called a straight mode. This is in keeping with Johnston’s observation that, broadly speaking, “Blake’s awareness of the positive potential of urban imagery did not spring full-blown from his first consciousness of his surroundings,” but itself *emerged* as he grappled with the urban landscape across his oeuvre.<sup>73</sup> Beginning with the predominantly straight walkers of *Songs*, a broad shift can be traced towards the more utopian spirit embodied in the crooked walkers of Blake’s late visual art and especially the major prophecies. Closer inspection, however, often reveals dialectical fluctuations that interfere with such a totalising reading. “Holy Thursday,” for example, is an important example of straight urban walking and its limited capacity for creative mappings by streetwalkers, and yet it contains important gestures towards possible unruly routes that might disrupt the orderly course of the procession.

Perhaps the grimmest instance of straight-walking in *Songs* is “The Chimney Sweeper” of *Experience* (figure 76). The poem contains no placenames, but every student of Blake will know well that its backdrop lies in London’s smoke and the exploitation of child labourers as Blake had witnessed it in the capital. I mention this plate here chiefly because everything about the landscape suggests straightness, order: the street corner that the child passes is straight and angular, the houses to which he has no access strictly demarcated, even the rain falls in straight, sleety diagonal lines over the small, smudge-like figure.<sup>74</sup> “The Chimney Sweeper” design epitomises the kind of straight walking forced upon the powerless in the kind of urban system based on gridlike organisation, leaving its smudgy victims off the map

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<sup>73</sup> Johnston, “Blake’s Cities,” 414.

<sup>74</sup> The street corner is demarcated in all copies; it is usually quite distinct, save for Copy C, in which it is very faint.

entirely (and Blake's design works to redress this). The sweeper, it should be noted, is not actually looking where he is going; instead, he gazes upwards, as though looking for some god, some guide, to lead him to safety.

The straight walking of the sweeper of *Experience* seems to answer to the dream of Tom Dacre, the newly recruited sweeper of *Innocence*, in which he imagines

That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned & Jack  
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black,

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,  
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free.  
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing they run,  
And wash in a river and shine in the sun

("The Chimney Sweeper," *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* 7: 11-16, E 10).

It may be significant that Tom's dream of the sweepers being set "free" visualises them not only using the imagery of dirtiness and cleanliness also at work in "Holy Thursday," but also in terms of bodily movement. He pictures himself and his fellow sweepers "leaping" and "run[ning]" across a "green plain"—for in the *Songs* such crooked walking (or indeed, still more gleefully, running) remains largely confined to the more pastoral landscapes pictured in the poems. The design to the "Chimney Sweeper" of *Innocence* (figure 77) depicts the longed-for free and playful movement against a pastoral backdrop, in sharp contrast with the dystopic design to the companion poem. Yet the plate of *Innocence* is not without recognition of its dark contrary: inside the "C" of the title's lettering (figure 77.1), there is a miniscule silhouette of a figure whose hunched body and burdened back unmistakably forecast the form of the sweeper of *Experience*. Tom's pastoral dream remains a dream, and the reality—the nightmarish picture of the straight-walking city-sweeper—is mapped out in *Experience* in lines that are harsh, unforgiving, straight. Yet even in the grid of the *Experience* plate, there is perhaps a hint of emancipatory potential, should the viewer look for it: the sweeper has turned a corner, after all (meaning, in a simple sense, that his route is not strictly straight), and the line demarcating the pavement is slightly interrupted at the point where his feet fall. These minor bends and breakages in the gridded format sound little more than a whisper, but at the very least their presence suggests a reluctance on Blake's part to allow carceral structures to have the final say.

Probably the best-known and most widely discussed treatment of urban walking in all of Blake's work occurs in *Experience's* "London" (figure 78). It is tempting to regard "London," with its insistence upon the regulatory structuring of the city by way of charters, as the quintessential poem of straight walking. Both streets and Thames have been subjected to the "improvement" of charter; while Tambling maintains in hopeful spirit that the Thames' "flow[ing]" in this poem is a rebellious flowing, it is difficult to ignore just how restricted its "charter'd" flow seems in Blake's account, especially when considered alongside Wordsworth's description of the Thames as a river that "wanders at his own sweet will," as Michael notes.<sup>75</sup> It is difficult, too, to forget Thomas Paine's damning argument against charters in *Rights of Man*, of which many scholars have justly found echoes in "London": according to Paine, "[i]t is a perversion of terms to say that a charter gives rights. It operates by a contrary effect, that of taking rights away. Rights are inherently in all the inhabitants, but charters, by annulling these rights in majority, leave the right by exclusion in the hands of a few."<sup>76</sup> The concentration of rights into "the hands of a few" allows those in power to plan cities as though from above, neglecting the needs of the silent majority. That political power—for Levine a matter intrinsically of formal (and often spatial) "distributions and arrangements"—found expression in the forms of the urban landscape is central to Blake's image of "charter'd streets" and Thames, but it also pervades and entraps the minds (and bodies) of the majority who actually walk the streets; "mind-forg'd manacles" trap walkers into the false assumption, pressed upon them by the powerful, that as Ingold writes, there is a "temporal priority between mastery and submission."<sup>77</sup> By locating cognition prior to movement or action itself, "mind-forg'd manacles" ensure that the subject is always already a straight walker.

There is a further connotation to the word "charter" on which I would like to dwell. As Julian Wolfreys has observed, "'[c]harter'd' shares its etymology with 'charted'"—the latter being a synonym for "mapped."<sup>78</sup> In raising the spectre of the map, this possible slippage layers the word with a doubly menacing significance: the speaker's wanderings contend with and are even predicated upon an *a priori* mapped logic, a logic that presses the city and its

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<sup>75</sup> Tambling, *Night Thoughts*, 104; Michael, *Blake and the City*, 69.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, ed. Henry Collins (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 242.

<sup>77</sup> Levine, *Forms*, 3; Ingold, *Lines*, 139.

<sup>78</sup> Wolfreys, *Writing London*, 45-46.

inhabitants into a form of extreme abstraction—one that might be conceived as shared with and even as authorising the meting out of rights and privileges by way of charter. Wolfreys maintains that Blake’s writing of London (and of “London” the poem) unseats the logic of a pre-charted territory, instead *re*-charting London “as other, in indirect opposition to all restricting, cheating, dishonest, commercial charters.”<sup>79</sup> Yet, in doing so, Wolfreys arguably glosses over the sheer *difficulty* of this process, which is rehearsed in “London,” and which again rears its head in the prophetic books. The ghosts of charts and charters are not simply obliterated by Blake’s tracing of disruptive routes; those routes make strange and unsettle a unitary notion of “the city,” and yet they also register at every turn the constant collision between pedestrian act and urban structures of power. The scenario has much in common with the problematic that led Jameson to theorise his “aesthetic of cognitive mapping,” as Blake dramatises “the gap between the local positioning of the individual subject and the totality of class structures in which he or she is situated.”<sup>80</sup>

Indeed, at this stage in his life, Blake seems to have lacked confidence that there might be a way out of the urban maze. The walking “I” of “London” strives for connection with “every face” but finds a city connected (manacled) only by weakness and woe. In an earlier notebook draft of the poem had toyed with the idea of escape:

Tho born on the cheating banks of Thames  
 Tho his waters bathed my infant limbs  
 The Ohio shall wash his stains from me  
 I was born a slave but I go to be free  
 (Untitled, line 8, E 473).

However, when it came to writing the final version of “London,” Johnston argues, “Blake made word choices which specifically prevent a simple escapist response to the dreadful city of Experience.”<sup>81</sup> Thus “dirty street,” “dirty Thames,” “dismal streets” became “charter’d street,” “charter’d Thames,” “midnight streets,” while “german forg’d links,” which had pinned the source of ills on the monarch alone, became the more distributed, panoptic “mind-forg’d manacles.” As Johnston writes, Blake’s changes indicate a view that “London’s evils are

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<sup>79</sup> Wolfreys, *Writing London*, 46.

<sup>80</sup> Jameson, “Cognitive Mapping,” 353.

<sup>81</sup> Johnston, “Blake’s Cities,” 416.

not the fault of the city per se, but faults which Englishmen have brought upon themselves.”<sup>82</sup> A simple attempt to ignore or escape from these realities, by recourse to idealised American liberty (heard in the notebook reference to the Ohio River) out of the desire suddenly “to be free,” did not seem to suffice for Blake. But how do you make a map that proposes a way out of a system without simply replacing it with a new system? This problem vexes the present study as much as it vexes Blake’s own city-writing: the issue is aptly summarised by Lefebvre in relation to both urbanism and criticism:

Rather than constructing models, critical reflection provides an orientation, which opens pathways and reveals a horizon. That is what I am proposing here: not so much to construct a model of the urban as to open a pathway towards it.<sup>83</sup>

For Blake what the streetwalker needed was not a definitive map or “model” by which to “read” the city, but rather an *orientation* that could valorise and motivate the forging of new pathways and new horizons. Although he constantly eludes petrification via fixed models, Blake does get closer to shaping a kind of path-revealing and -creating orientation in *Jerusalem*, especially in the perambulations of Los.

Though the walker of “London” remains blinded by a profusion of restrictive urban models, there may just be a glimmer of hope for new horizons even in these “midnight streets.” Many readers of “London” have been eager to point out elements of “London” that may offer a balm to hurt minds, pointing out, for example, the potentially cheering light shed by the small fire burning in the centre of the plate. For Oerlemans, Blake’s suggestion in “London” that “the physical design of cities and buildings” is “necessarily ideological” itself paves the way for the utopian imaginings of *Jerusalem*, in turn proposing to the modern theorist, Oerlemans argues, a “fundamental first step” towards envisaging a “green architecture.”<sup>84</sup> The “London” plate offers little in the way of architectural utopianism *per se*; it is rather the walk-in-progress shown above the text that may contain some hope for small-scale regeneration as the work of urban wayfaring. The design gently invites second thoughts about the poem’s nocturnal dystopia. Inverting the scenario we have encountered in “Holy

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution [La Révolution urbaine]*, Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1970], trans. by Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), 66-67.

<sup>84</sup> Onno Oerlemans, “Romanticism and the City,” 181.

Thursday," it is now a child who leads an elderly white-bearded man through the streets. The beadles' rigid staffs have become the crutches of a weary old man who has lost, or forgotten, or grown tired of whatever map he used to know. He is lost, trapped, in need of guidance. Though a straight line marks out the terrain on which they walk, and straight bricks and doorways threaten to entrap the figures in a gridlock of orderly city lines, one cannot ignore certain markers of hopefulness in the picture. As the figures move towards the right, the firm line of the pavement seems to soften, and the figures' physical contact itself provides a welcome prophylactic against the alienated wanderings of the speaker who is part *voyeur*, part practitioner of everyday life, part peripatetic, part prisoner.

Like the sweeper of *Experience*, the "London" walker seems to long for guidance, for a way to imagine new maps of the city, new paths, new ways of walking. The major prophecies (in which we shall encounter a revised version of the "London" design) take up this task with the full force of grit and grandeur that make Blake one of the most unforgettable writers of London's streets. I have elsewhere explored Blake's tendency in his late visual art to depict journeys towards holy cities as emergent or processual, particularly in contrast to contemporaneous mappings of *The Pilgrim's Progress* according to a predestinarian "straight and narrow" logic.<sup>85</sup> In that article, I showed that an understanding of Blakean mapping as a kind of open-ended, golden-string wayfaring illuminates a little-explored aspect of his far-flung quarrel with predestinarian and preformationist ideas in contemporaneous Calvinism and life sciences respectively.<sup>86</sup> In relation to the former, Blake's model of golden string offers a re-mapping or re-tracing of the pilgrimage journey depicted in a particular Calvinist text, John Bunyan's seventeenth-century allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). I explored Blake's revisioning of pilgrimage as a journey taken step by step and without a predestined outcome in his late visual art, including but not limited to his designs for *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1824-27). As we shall see, in the context of the illuminated books, such pilgrimages *towards* cities are simultaneously understood in terms of journeys *within* existing cities, through an

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<sup>85</sup> Ritchie, "Mapping Bunyan, Mapping Blake."

<sup>86</sup> On Blake and predestination see, e.g., Andrew Lincoln, "Restoring the Nation to Christianity: Blake and the Aftermyth of Revolution," in *Blake, Nation and Empire*, ed. David Worrall and Steve Clark (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 153-66; on Blake and preformation, see Goldstein, *Sweet Science*, Chapter One ("Blake's Mundane Egg: Epigenesis and Milieux"), 35-71; see also her article "William Blake and the Time of Ontogeny," in *Systems of Life: Biopolitics, Economics, and Literature on the Cusp of Modernity*, ed. Richard A. Barney and Warren Montag (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 162-200.

overlaying of walking and building as the twofold work of city-dwellers engaged in the creation of emergent worlds.

### Towards a Crooked Walking: Urban Pedestrianism in the Major Prophecies

In the major prophecies, Blake cumulatively suggests that city-walking, as a means of active re-territorialisation, affords the potential to re-draw the maps of the “continuing city.”<sup>87</sup> This he suggests largely through *verbal* tropes of urban walking, though there is also a handful of key designs that work to envisage the utopian horizons of urban pedestrianism. The relative dearth of explicit visual treatments of city-walking in the late illuminated books is characteristic of Blake’s tendency, which should by now be familiar, to resist mapping spaces, places, and routes in definitive graphic form. In his study of Golgonooza, James Bogan identified in Blake’s late work a tendency *not* to map the city in the visual art, writing that “Blake has deliberately avoided drawing the visions of Golgonooza and of the fourfold Albion,” and arguing that the “work” of drawing those visions “is left to the reader, who is called upon to create these images in his own multi-dimensional mind.”<sup>88</sup> I find Bogan’s notion that the mapping of Golgonooza is the work of “Mental Fight” to be very astute, and a good model of the readerly process as set out for instance in the “golden string” lyric, but I would add to it two modifications. First, Blake does not avoid mapping cities altogether; what he avoids is making *totalising* maps. Blake’s half-articulated, half-intelligible graphic and verbal visions of urban landscapes—his visionary mapping—are partial and provisional, seeming to draw self-consciously upon maps’ inherent “partial perspective.”<sup>89</sup> By offering only glimpses of its contours, Blake stresses the need for continued labour in the building of a viable world. Second, further to engaging the reader’s mind to fill in the gaps, Blake is also pressing upon readers the importance of *bodily* work in constituting maps of the utopian city—and a vital

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<sup>87</sup> I borrow this phrase from Paley’s study of *Jerusalem*, felicitously entitled *The Continuing City* (1983). Echoing (apparently unintentionally) Bogan’s identification of Golgonooza with a mandala, Danièle Chauvin similarly dwells on the instability and ambiguity of this model: “le mandala qu’il dessine est un mandala perturbé qui porte, en même temps que les espoirs de régénération, les stigmates de la chute”: see Danièle Chauvin, “Golgonooza,” in *Romantic Geographies: Proceedings of the Glasgow Conference, September 1994*, ed. Colin Smethurst (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 1994), 280.

<sup>88</sup> James Bogan, “Blake’s City of Golgonooza in *Jerusalem: Metaphor and Mandala*,” *Colby Quarterly*, 17, no. 2 (1981): 98.

<sup>89</sup> Proppen uses Donna Haraway’s phrase “partial perspective” in relation to maps in Proppen, “Cartographic representation,” *passim*.



vehicle for this message is the recurrent trope of city-walking in his late mythography. Blake's visions of the redeemed city, although not as completist as Richard Brothers' fully mapped and predestinarian-looking account (figure 39), do in this sense imply a similarly material form, except that for Blake the redeemed city's futurity means that it cannot yet *materialise*, preventing a too-concrete visualisation in the present.<sup>90</sup>

In what follows I assemble a range of examples of urban pedestrianism in *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and especially *Jerusalem*, finding amongst these fragments a desire—tentative in its beginnings, often unfulfilled, and always under threat—for the kind of mazy, creative wandering that I have called “crooked” walking. Yet, despite hints of optimism in *Milton* and *Jerusalem* especially, Blake everywhere thwarts the potential for an easily escapist or transcendent resolution. In other words, if Blake's urban walkers seem impossibly to point to a “way out” of the manacled consciousness of the present, under the fallen conditions of that very present, a pre-formed way out cannot be successfully or entirely mapped. To map a predetermined trajectory to redemption, or to map an already redeemed world, would mean posing as an Arbitrary Dictator. In contrast, Blake's city-walkers dramatise an enduring hope in the creative, potentially subversive, activities of human feet. Always in motion, Blake's city-walkers are practitioners, partially blind, rather than distanced surveyors claiming to see with an all-seeing eye: in de Certeau's terms, the *practice* itself takes precedence over what appears on a map as a mere “trace left behind,” as a road already travelled.<sup>91</sup>

### *VALA, or The Four Zoas*

The positive potential of city-walking did not spring fully formed from the forge of Blake's mythography. For one thing, it was not until Blake's formidable manuscript work *VALA, or The Four Zoas* that he turned with any seriousness to the issue of city-building proper, or indeed to its utopian potential.<sup>92</sup> Following the destruction of Jerusalem in *Night the First*, Urizen

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<sup>90</sup> Tim Fulford, following Paley, argues that Blake's redeemed city “was symbolic of the liberation of human imagination from the repression that flourished in the real city”: Fulford, “Prophecy and Imagination,” 55.

<sup>91</sup> de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 97.

<sup>92</sup> Johnston, following Erdman, finds there to be no instances of city-building in Blake's mythography prior to *The Four Zoas*: Johnston, “Blake's Cities,” 422, fn. 12. For a much earlier instance of Blake's interest in the biblical treatment of cities, with a nod to city-building, see the mention of “Cains City. / built With Murder” in the manuscript jotting “then She Bore Pale desire” (E446), evoked among a list of antediluvian biblical cities symbolically associated with “Pride.”

constructs his geometric city-world in Nights II and III, and in Nights V and VIIIb we hear of the building of Golgonooza—its first appearances in Blake’s myth, signalling, as Johnston writes, “a giant step forward in [Blake’s] search for a concrete expression of the redemptive side of prophecy.”<sup>93</sup> In the remainder of his mythographic accounts of cities, Blake rehearses an on-going struggle with the very notion of finding “concrete expression” for a redeemed city, which is always situated at several removes from the fallen present. However, whereas in *Milton* and especially *Jerusalem* the activities of city-walkers point to a more hopeful wish eventually to assemble concrete maps of a redeemed city, in *The Four Zoas* such positively valued city-walking is scarce, and this is partly a reflection of the fact that the “truncated cities of *The Four Zoas*” tend to lack “human scale,” as Johnston puts it.<sup>94</sup> What we do find, however, are some instances of straight walking (or at least straight movement) within the built environments that emerge in the poem, establishing an anti-ideal, a contrary against which Blake then pushes when searching for a redemptive alternative.

The most striking example of “straight” movement in *The Four Zoas* occurs in Night the Second, wherein we hear of the built world made by Urizen in an attempt to create order in the wake of Jerusalem’s destruction. Urizen is the quintessentially diagrammatic urban planner, hurriedly rationalising the terrifying “unformd void” into the geometric, “weighd & orderd” shapes (*The Four Zoas* 34 [ll 287-386]: 8, E 322; 33 [ll 251-86]: 9, E 321). Aptly, the kind of “travel” pictured in this geometric world is not embodied by human agents; it is instead attributed to “the stars of heaven,” described as being formed “like a golden chain / To bind the Body of Man” (*The Four Zoas* 33 [ll 251-86]: 16, E 322). As in “London,” the built environment is thereby figured as a reification of a state of mind, which in turn entraps the minds and bodies of its inhabitants “in an attempt,” as Ingold writes of modern “built” spaces, “to get the world to conform to our expectations of it, and to provide it with the coherent surface we always thought it had,” in Heidegger’s terms erroneously giving building (the “golden chain”) temporal priority over dwelling (“the Body of Man”).<sup>95</sup> It is worth quoting at length from the lines describing the travelling stars in Urizen’s city-world:

Travelling in silent majesty along their orderd ways  
In right lined paths outmeasurd by proportions of number weight

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<sup>93</sup> Johnston, “Blake’s Cities,” 423.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Ingold, *Being Alive*, 124.

And measure. mathematic motion wondrous. along the deep  
 In fiery pyramid. or Cube. or unornamented pillar  
 Of fire far shining. travelling along even to its destined end  
 Then falling down. [...]  
 Others triangular right angled course maintain. others obtuse  
 Acute Scalene, in simple paths. but others move  
 In intricate ways biquadrate. Trapeziums Rhombs Rhomboids  
 Parallelograms. triple & quadruple. polygonic  
 In their amazing hard subdued course in the vast deep  
 (*The Four Zoas* 33 [ll 251-86]: 22-36, E 322).

In Urizen's world, (celestial) bodies move ("travel") in "orderd ways," they each have a pre-determined, (pre-) "destind end," their courses are "hard" and allow no latitude, and their movements describe straight lines through striated space. Yet the sheer splendour of these lines will give some sense of the very real allure that Blake ascribes to Urizen's mathematisation of space and celestial bodies; it is "wondrous," "amazing"; earlier, Blake had praised Urizen's Mundane Shell as "infinitely beautiful," a "wondrous work" (*The Four Zoas* 32 [ll 251-86: 7, E 321]). But such hyperbolic language, and the piling up of geometrical terminology ("Scalene," "Trapeziums," "Rhombs," "Rhomboids," etc.), also veers into absurdity, ridiculing the kind of lifeless rationalism with which Urizen has tried to reduce the abundant world.

The straight, angular motions of Urizen's stars are presently juxtaposed with the crooked ("flexible") wanderings of Los and Enitharmon in a still pastoral-sounding (albeit vast and cosmic) landscape:

Los & Enitharmon walkd forth on the dewy Earth  
 Contracting or expanding their all flexible senses  
 At will to murmur in the flowers small as the honey bee  
 At will to stretch across the heavens & step from star to star  
 Or standing on the Earth erect, or on the stormy waves  
 Driving the storms before them or delighting in sunny beams  
 While round their heads the Elemental Gods kept harmony  
 (*The Four Zoas* 34 [ll 287-386]: 9-15, E 322).

These lines suggest a moment of temporary unity between Los and Enitharmon, the embodiments of time and space respectively, as they walk harmoniously in the world. As is typical of Blake's depictions of crooked walking, the lines of movement in this passage are harder to visualise—to map mentally or graphically—than those of Urizen's stars: they are

gestural, “flexible,” un-mappable; they occur in a fluidly conceived cosmos akin to Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of “smooth” space. As was the case in *Songs*, such hopeful-sounding, liberated walking tends to occur within a pastoral past (or soon-to-be-past) in *The Four Zoas*: Los and Enitharmon walk among “flowers small as the honey bee,” and in the lines following this passage Los speaks of encounters with “the Lilly pale & the rose reddening” in “beamy gardens” as he wanders on the earth (*The Four Zoas* 34 [ll 287-386]: 16-23, E 322-23). By contrast, when it comes to the building of Golgonooza in *The Four Zoas*, walking does not have a prominent place, and Golgonooza is imagined only in the broadest of brushstrokes—in terms of Blake’s developing mythography it is in its most embryonic stages. It is to the later elaborations of urban landscapes in *Milton* and especially *Jerusalem* that we must turn for a more developed vision of the redemptive potential of city-walking practices.

### *Milton: A Poem in 2 Books*

The verses prefacing *Milton* represent a critical moment in the development of the pedestrian trope in Blake’s mature myth. The famous opening lines of the lyric concern walking most directly: And did those feet in ancient time / Walk upon Englands mountains green (*Milton* 1: 1-2, E 95). These opening lines, usually taken to particularly evoke the Christian legend that Joseph of Arimathea had brought the young Christ to visit Britain, also call to mind images of pilgrims and saints more generally, cumulatively marking England out as a site of sacred significance. Yet the imagery is potentially equivocal: could it also be haunted by the spectre of Druidic processions? Whose, exactly, were *those feet*? The poem offers no antecedent. The motif that takes over in the remainder of the poem is of course building, not walking: the lines “And was Jerusalem builded here, / Among these dark Satanic Mills?” are complemented by the speaker’s resolve in the final quatrain never to “cease from Mental Fight [...] Till we have built Jerusalem, / In Englands green & pleasant land” (*Milton* 1: 7-8, 15-16, E 95-96). But the tropes of walking and building need not, as I have suggested, be viewed as entirely distinct. In conjuring the spirit of holy “feet” that have formerly “walked” in an England of the pastoral past, Blake implicitly raises the question of whether holy feet may again grace England’s landscapes (subject to un-pastoral “Satanic Mills” as they are), but also whether the course taken by such future wanderings would follow in the pre-scripted footsteps of “ancient time.”

Similarly, will the newly built “Jerusalem” follow the same plan as its previous iteration? By overlaying a remembered “green” England of the past in the first quatrain with the present reality of “Satanic Mills,” and finally returning to the pastoral, and now future-tense, dream of a “green & pleasant land,” Blake places a question mark over the potential for “Jerusalem” to take its former shape under the conditions of the present. The lyric deflects the answers to such questions onto a future outcome that depends upon “Mental Fight.” Yet, as the “golden string” lyric would later do in *Jerusalem* (“It will lead you...”), despite the verse’s reference to the “Londons Towers” of “now,” the future-tense verbs in the *Milton* lyric bespeak a degree of hopefulness, albeit open-ended and uncharted, that there may indeed be a way to bring about a viable version of “Jerusalem.” That the precise route to and nature of this end remains ever-elusive within the pages of the illuminated book is significant, as we shall see, when it comes to the poem’s treatment of the theological issue of predestination.

Considered in isolation, the mention of “feet” and walking in the prefatory verses to *Milton* is somewhat enigmatic; as the book advances, however, feet, footfall, and the activity of walking take on an astonishing prominence.<sup>96</sup> Blake’s emphasis on feet, especially bare feet, has affinities with Ingold’s notion that modern cities have structurally concealed and forgotten the inscriptional nature of pressing one’s feet upon the earth, of perceiving the world through the feet:

It appears that people, in their daily lives, merely skim the surface of a world that has been previously mapped out and constructed for them to occupy, rather than contributing through their movements to its ongoing formation. To inhabit the modern city is to dwell in an environment that is already built.<sup>97</sup>

Ingold’s sense, conversely, is that “[t]hrough walking, in short, landscapes are woven into life, and lives are woven into the landscape, in a process that is continuous and never-ending,” a conception that chimes strikingly with Blake’s emphasis on the primacy of footfall in the major prophecies.<sup>98</sup> In *Milton*, the theme of walking is first initiated even before the prefatory verses, in the title-page of the book (figure 79). As most commentators concur, the nude,

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<sup>96</sup> Jennifer Davis Michael provides a valuable account of the imagery of feet in Blake in her “Blake’s Feet: Towards a Poetics of Incarnation,” in *Prophetic Character: Essays on William Blake in Honor of John E. Grant*, ed. Alexander S. Gourlay (West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 2002), 205-24.

<sup>97</sup> Ingold, *Being Alive*, 44

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

barefooted figure who strides forward with back to the viewer is most likely to be Milton, though it is also possible that the walker could represent William Blake himself, or the reader “entering” into the illuminated book. Images like this one have often been pressed into critics’ efforts, beginning with those of Joseph Wicksteed in his study of Blake’s *Book of Job* designs, to formulate an orthodoxy of “left” and “right” in Blake’s work as denoting a “materialistic” or “spiritual” attitude respectively.<sup>99</sup> Such “orthodoxies” seem to me to participate in the wider systematising impulse in Blake scholarship; in attempting to establish a catch-all rule these critics are forced to ignore or rationalise inevitable inconsistencies. Furthermore, they fail to take into account the inherent doubleness of the designs, which had to be made in reverse on the copperplate prior to printing, and hence arguably remain haunted by their own origins in an inverted conception. Whatever one’s stance on what Johnston calls “the *arcana* of left/right orientations in Blake’s illuminations,” it is immediately apparent from this title-page that the notion of embodied, pedestrian journeying is of great importance to *Milton*.<sup>100</sup>

In the title-page of *Milton* the landscape in which the figure advances appears nothing if not “atmospheric.”<sup>101</sup> Vortical, flame-flecked clouds billow out before him, and there are no conspicuous markers of place which could be said to map any particular setting. What the title-page design sets in motion is the theme of journeying which is the major theme organising the narrative of the poem. In the designs, the theme is especially picked up in the map of “Miltons track” on plate 36 (figure 3; see my discussion of this design in Chapter Two), but also two designs of a more explicitly pedestrian character: first, the image showing Milton “entering” Blake’s left foot (figure 80), before Blake binds the “Vegetable World” to his foot as a sandal and “walk[s] forward thro’ Eternity”; and second, the depiction of Blake walking in his garden at Felpham when Ololon, Milton’s female emanation, appears to him in Book 2 (figure 81) (*Milton* 21 [23]: 14, E 115).

As these examples suggest, none of the visual depictions of walking in *Milton* take place in overtly urban landscapes, and indeed it would be misleading to imply that urban pedestrianism is the only or even the predominant kind of walking in the poem. However, it is of central importance to *Milton*’s narrative and to its theology that the city of Golgonooza

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<sup>99</sup> See Joseph Wicksteed, *Blake’s Visions of the Book of Job*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1924), esp. 87-97. Wicksteed’s formulation was eagerly endorsed, in typical encyclopedic spirit, by S. F. Damon in an entry on “the foot” in his *A Blake Dictionary*, 140.

<sup>100</sup> Johnston, “Blake’s Cities,” 420.

<sup>101</sup> Recall Ingold’s description of “smooth” space, *Being Alive*, 132.

(which is all the while being built by Los's "continual labouring") is the gateway to "Eternity," and hence the destination towards which Milton can be said to strive: "For travellers to Eternity. pass inward to Golgonooza" (*Milton* 31 [34]: 26, E 130; 17 [19]: 30, E 111). Yet despite the apparently (and, as I have argued, deceptively) straight trajectory of "Milton's track" as represented in the diagrammatic design (figure 3), Milton's journey in the poem (and its reprisal in the journey of Ololon in Book 2) is told in terms that seem far from a straight line towards a destination; it unfolds through mazes of space and time, across a constantly shifting spatio-temporal scale, "contracting and expanding" like the scaling in Los and Enitharmon's wanderings in *The Four Zoas*. This kind of scaling is epitomised in the famous "vortex" passage from *Milton*, in which Blake describes "[t]he nature of infinity" in terms of event-places through which "a traveller" passes, perceiving each moment as a "Vortex" that "roll[s] backward behind / His path, into a globe itself infolding" (*Milton* 15 [17]: 21-35, E 109). Blake tracks the epistemological challenge of accurately mapping this process in a series of tentative similes: once traversed, the vortex appears to the human eye "like a sun: / Or like a moon, or like a universe of starry majesty [...] Or like a human form" (*Milton* 15 [17]: 24-27, E 109). Discussing this passage, Ingold contrasts the perspective of Blake's "cosmic traveler" looking back on his journey and seeing "bounded bodies" with philosopher Henri Bergson's sense that "this closure is an illusion of the intellect."<sup>102</sup> But these two models may have more in common than Ingold supposes. Indeed, the hesitancy registered in Blake's successive similes seems to foreground the intellectual effort underpinning such rationalisations, in turn suggesting their illusory nature. This reading would certainly chime with Blake's sense elsewhere in *Milton* of global abstraction as "a delusion of Ulro" (*Milton* 29 [31]: 16, E 127).

Nor is the journey towards and through Golgonooza forecast as a pre-destined certainty, and this parallels Blake's reluctance to accept a strict predestinarian theology without modification. In *Milton*, Blake uses the word "destination" on three occasions, each time accompanied by the modifier "fixed," as part of an attempt to weed out perceived errors in Milton's (and, by extension, Blake's readers') vision. On each occasion, "fixed destinations" are associated with a rigid Moral or "Natural" Law which seeks to hold in place either "the three Classes of Men" or celestial bodies ("the Sun & Moon"), in the manner of Urizen's fixed

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<sup>102</sup> Tim Ingold, "Whirl," in *Veer Ecology*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Ducker (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 422-23.

stars in *The Four Zoas* passage cited above (*Milton* 5: 13, E 98; 6: 32, E 100; 27 [29]: 54, E 125). The phrasal repetition suggests an equivalence between moral and natural law, each seen as defining lines of movement in advance, restricting (by predetermining) latitude in either a religious-moral sense or a physical sense, both of which could also pertain to the tropes of embodied journeying throughout the poem. Moreover, once again, because Golgonooza is a continual work in progress, the ever-emergent, living form created by Los's "continual labouring," the creation of a two-dimensional map of either the journey towards the city, or the city itself, would be, as Erika Behrisch writes, "virtually impossible on the two-dimensional surface of the page."<sup>103</sup>

Since Golgonooza, the "spiritual fourfold London," is imagined as rooted in and stemming from the city of London, Blake makes frequent reference to actual places in the metropolis through which passage to Golgonooza, and thence to Eternity, might be achieved.

From Golgonooza the spiritual Four-fold London eternal  
In immense labours & sorrows, ever building, ever falling,  
Thro Albions four Forests which overspread all the Earth,  
From London Stone to Blackheath east: to Hounslow west:  
To Finchley north: to Norwood south [...]  
(*Milton* 6: 1-5, E 99).

As this passage indicates, in *Milton* these locales are still predominantly enumerated from a long-range, surveyor's perspective, which does give some weight to the abstracted perspective of Makdisi's diagram (figure 74), despite the ultimately misleading impression the diagram gives of fixity and stability. Indeed, it is not until *Jerusalem* that the city's veins are more seriously (though not exclusively) envisaged as being enlivened by pedestrian practices. Ironically, it seems that Blake himself needed to work through a "top-down" or abstracted view of "the City" before plunging into the more minute matter of step-by-step bodily movement, of city-walking, in his final prophetic book. Yet, in both *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, I wish to suggest, the naming of particular places in London is itself central to the poem's initiation of a map in progress. Damon's "map" of Golgonooza (figure 73) suppresses any indication of the entanglements between Golgonooza and London that are so fundamental to Blake's visionary city-mapping: Golgonooza, in his visualisation, appears as a floating

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<sup>103</sup> Behrisch, "Corporeal Cartography," 444.



fantasy-world bearing little relation to the historical and geographical London that Blake writes into his prophecies. By contrast, other scholars have devoted more attention to the dovetailing of London and Golgonooza. For Tambling, part of the work of London place names in the prophetic books is to virtually “build” Golgonooza by mapping it and thereby preserving its rich local and personal histories: “Place names help to hold onto a past so wholly swept away as to seem never to have existed. To write the city through these place names is to build it: it is the work of Golgonooza.”<sup>104</sup> Many of the places named in *Milton*, for instance, hold particular autobiographical associations for Blake—to name just one example, Blake’s place of residence in the 1790s is recalled and raised to Biblical proportions in the mention of “Lambeths Vale / Where Jerusalems foundations began” (*Milton* 6: 14-15, E 99). Miner’s excellent article assembles many of these biographical resonances in a particularly glittering array.<sup>105</sup> But it is Tambling’s meta-textual reading that particularly interests me here. Commenting on the tendency towards autobiography especially in the placenames of *Jerusalem*, Tambling contends that “[t]o name the places within it [i.e., the city] constructs the subject’s autobiography, and attempts to make something of the city, to build it, in writing, as Jerusalem.”<sup>106</sup> By extension, I insist, drawing on Ingold’s notion of the viewer of an artwork as its “fellow traveller,” readers are invited to participate actively in this building-via-mapping of Golgonooza.<sup>107</sup> As Behrisch argues, thanks to readers’ assumed familiarity with the named places, Blake hopes to ensure those readers’ participation: “Blake’s reader, simply by existing in the same geographical and corporeal space of the poem, becomes always already a part of the narrative and a fellow traveller.”<sup>108</sup> That Blake hopes for readers’ participation to take the form both of mental *and* corporeal travel is articulated with special insistence in the city-walkers of *Jerusalem*.

### *Jerusalem: The Emanation of The Giant Albion*

Whereas walking, footsteps, travel, and journeys have had a demonstrable part to play in *The Four Zoas* and particularly *Milton*, it is in *Jerusalem*, Blake’s last “prophecy,” that walking,

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<sup>104</sup> Tambling, *Night Thoughts*, 110.

<sup>105</sup> Miner, “Blake’s London.”

<sup>106</sup> Tambling, *Night Thoughts*, 116.

<sup>107</sup> Ingold, *Being Alive*, 216.

<sup>108</sup> Behrisch, “Corporeal Cartography,” 454.

especially of what I have called the “crooked” kind, comes more particularly to be a fully-fledged aspect of Blake’s cities. As its name itself may indicate, *Jerusalem* is by far Blake’s most urban poem. London, and the cities into which Blake folds and overlays its geography, is again described in catalogues of placenames that attain to an even more sprawling scale. But further to these insistent topographical surveys, in *Jerusalem* more than anywhere else in his work, Blake repeatedly turns his attention to the matter of bodily movement in the city (often with some sense of movement *towards* a viable version of the city), as acted out by numerous city-walkers. In this section, I begin by examining some visual evidence from *Jerusalem* that suggests an emphasis on emergent, pedestrian journeying. I then explore some of the verbal descriptions of walking, arguing that *Jerusalem* presents a valorisation of walking as a spontaneous, creative, and potentially autonomous act that could afford the ability to re-territorialise the built environment on new terms, laying the foundation for visionary re-mappings by its inhabitants. I argue that *Jerusalem* aims to initiate or inspire this kind of re-mapping, but again maintain that Blake deliberately resists attempting to *complete* this process himself, offering up the illuminated book as a map in process that is eminently open to co-constitution by its readers.

The visual evidence for Blake’s interest in city-walking in *Jerusalem*, though not insignificant, is scattered and fragmentary. Its very fragmentary nature itself signals Blake’s reluctance to map (and hence appear to pre-scribe) a single, straight, and narrow path. As in *Milton*, the frontispiece design to *Jerusalem* (figure 82) introduces the theme of walking. The expurgated inscriptions that are still visible in a posthumous proof copy suggest that the figure is Los entering at “the Door of Death for Albions sake Inspired,” setting out on his journey through “the interiors of Albions / Bosom” with his “globe of fire,” as Blake puts it later in the book (*Jerusalem* frontispiece, E 144; 45 [31]: 3, E 194).<sup>109</sup> Los, whom Whittaker aptly dubs “Blake’s spiritual hoplite in *Jerusalem*,” looms large in *Jerusalem* as a walker of London’s streets—the core “interior” of Albion—as we shall see in relation to walking as a means of visionary city-mapping in the verbal art of *Jerusalem*.<sup>110</sup> Like the figure on the title-page of *Milton*, and like the figures in the watercolour known as *Friendship* (figure 83),

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<sup>109</sup> On the deletion of these lines, Paley argues that the change “was probably made not for any doctrinal reason but simply because these lines had a busy effect on a powerfully simple full-page design”: *The Continuing City*, 60, fn. 4.

<sup>110</sup> Whittaker, “Blake’s Psychogeography,” 280.

another of Blake's early nineteenth-century artworks, this first walker of *Jerusalem* is oriented, pointedly, to face away from the viewer. In the light of this orientation, Tristanne Connolly argues that the *Jerusalem* frontispiece "suggests that the reader should enter the book," initiating, in the bodily terms of entering "Albions bosom," the reader's own rehearsal of a "spiritual journey" in reading the book.<sup>111</sup> Such a reading is in line with a host of prevalent meta-textual interpretations that could be cited here—the text as a body, the body as a city, the city as a text, and so on. But I think there is another, perhaps simpler, point to be made here about Blake's sense of walking as a fundamental model of being, or of becoming. There are, we should not forget, two bodies in this scenario: that of Albion, and that of the walker. It seems to me that the bodily context for the "spiritual journey," as rehearsed by the movements of Los (or whomever we take the figure in this first design to be), is of equal importance to the bodily terms describing the site being entered into and surveyed from within: the picture suggests that even those journeys that we conceive of as "spiritual" cannot occur without, and indeed unfold in tandem with, the movements of our bodies in the world.

Los's bright globe of fire also suggests another visual cognate of the ball of golden string. As we shall see, Los uses it to illuminate parts of the terrain around him as he moves from place to place in the partial blindness that is shared by all crooked-walking urban wayfarers: to quote de Certeau,

The ordinary practitioners of the city live "down below," below the thresholds at which visibility begins. [...] These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms.<sup>112</sup>

Seen in this light, the partial blindness signalled by the cavernous darkness behind the opening door on this frontispiece is a fundamental condition of Los's wayfaring ontology, as it is described verbally later in *Jerusalem*. Lefebvre has also remarked upon a similar phenomenon in theorising the notion of "blind fields" in the conceptualisation of "the urban." For Lefebvre, this figurative "blindness" is a problem besetting both critical frameworks and lived experience: "[b]lindness consists in the fact that we cannot see the shape of the urban, the vectors and tensions inherent in this field, its logic and dialectic movement, its immanent

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<sup>111</sup> Tristanne Connolly, *William Blake and the Body* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 21.

<sup>112</sup> de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 93.

demands. We see only things, operations, objects.”<sup>113</sup> Blake, for his part, seems to thematise a certain condition of blindness in the urban context. As Whittaker writes in relation to Blake’s characterisation of Los as an urban pedestrian later in *Jerusalem*, “Los is, initially, lost: he has no plan to find what he is looking for because he is a foot soldier and streetwalker, denied the maps of the generals of the war or the architects of the city.”<sup>114</sup> Yet in making this remark Whittaker perhaps leaves open the possibility that such official maps *could* rescue the urban pedestrian from a blinded, lost state, rather than themselves working to obscure the reality of that state and hence to reinforce the illusion of its transparency—a transparency which Lefebvre denounces as “deceptive.”<sup>115</sup> The issue, for Blake, is I think more fundamentally bound to lived—to walked—experience in the city. As I have suggested, Los’s globe of fire might even be understood as a map of sorts, another iteration, and qualification, of the “ball” of golden string that is supposed to lead wayfarers to Heaven’s gate. For all his efforts to instrumentalise it, however, Los’s (and our own) field of vision remains ever constrained. His efforts, rather, dramatise the necessity for continual labour in excavating the intricate workings of what Lefebvre calls the “urban phenomenon,” and the colliding practices that work to produce it.

Three further designs ought to be borne in mind in relation to pedestrianism in *Jerusalem*. The first, which we have already encountered, is the small vignette on plate 77 showing the crooked wanderings of the bearer of Blake’s “golden string.” This tranquil scene I wish to compare to a second image, the fiery full-page design occurring at the end of Chapter One, showing the figures of Hand and Jerusalem in the act of walking (figure 84). The villainous Hand, often identified as an avatar of Blake’s opponent, the critic Robert Hunt, appears in this scene in an attitude that mimics, satanically, Christ’s posture on the crucifix. And, if the bearer of the end of the golden string visualised in plate 77 appears open to carving out a co-constitutive journey emerging in the present, Hand is poised between a mentality that is regressive (note his backwards glance) and relentlessly *progressive*, as he strides undauntedly onwards in a way that implies disdain for the actual conditions of the present: the inscription to his left, perhaps his utterance, similarly evokes a sense of pride in the supposed taming of all crookedness in space or time—“I MY ORDERD RACE HAVE RUN”—and

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<sup>113</sup> Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, 40.

<sup>114</sup> Whittaker, “Blake’s Psychogeography,” 286.

<sup>115</sup> Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, 120.

scorning the fact that “JERUSALEM IS NAMED LIBERTY / AMONG THE SONS OF ALBION” (*Jerusalem* 26, E 171). If these are his words, Hand here proclaims himself the champion of straight walking, moving in a way that recalls the “orderd ways” of Urizen’s fixed stars as described in *The Four Zoas*, pre-scripting the future as a *fait accompli*. Anne Mellor, among others, proposes that the words are those of Blake himself, noting that if this is so, the words “become even more subtle. Blake’s race is now ‘orderd;’ he is creating his own system.”<sup>116</sup> If they are Blake’s, then the words mark out a defiant challenge to the scene visualised in the design, in which Hand appears as the master of his own “orderd race,” and Jerusalem appears dejected, far from liberated or liberating, as she walks in Hand’s shadow. If Blake is indeed claiming to be carving out his own visionary “orderd race,” there is an underlying creativity in this act that may in fact resonate with the task he entrusts to readers in the “golden string” lyric, which similarly adopts the first-person voice, to “wind” their own paths to redemption, striving for “Jeruselems Wall.”

That Jerusalem is shown in this design (as elsewhere) as “a City yet a Woman” is of vital importance for our understanding of city-walking in the major prophecies (*The Four Zoas* 122 [IX 205-45]: 118, E 391). Michael likewise argues that in *Jerusalem* we ought to pay attention to both the walking of individual figures such as Los *and* those of Jerusalem the city.<sup>117</sup> As we have seen in the case of plate 77, one permutation of the trope of utopian walking in Blake’s repertoire is that of the return of Jerusalem’s “feet” to Albion, which brings to mind biblical accounts of the Israelites’ exile to Babylon, expressing the hope for homecoming, for redemption, though this return is only imagined in the vaguest and most fragmentary of terms. Nor is Jerusalem the only embodied city depicted in the act of walking. This brings me to a third visual depiction of walking from *Jerusalem*, which entails the most overt treatment of the theme of city-walking—the scene shown on plate 84 (figure 12). This picture, which is a well-known recapitulation and development of the design to “London” (figure 78), differs from the earlier prototype in a few simple but notable ways. Johnston concisely lists these differences:

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<sup>116</sup> Anne K. Mellor, *Blake’s Human Form Divine* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1974), 209.

<sup>117</sup> Michael, “Blake’s Feet,” 214.

it is apparent that the two figures have rounded a corner [...] not available in the *London* version of the design, that they are moving to (the reader's) left into the light instead of to the right into darkness, and that they have passed by," or, perhaps, come through "a door [...] which they were just approaching in *London*," and, finally, "[t]he Gothic cathedral and Romanesque temple in the left background of the design are additions to Blake's conception of the scene in *London*."<sup>118</sup>

Plate 84, which through text and design weaves together multiple cities (London, Babylon, Jerusalem), is of special interest for the present study of "ways of walking," since, as I shall suggest, it simultaneously evokes at least three of the kinds or aspects of walking that I have been discussing: the city as a walking body, the pilgrim walking *towards* an urban "destination," and the city-dweller walking *within* a city. The picture, I argue, holds aspects of "crooked" and "straight" walking in particular tension, gesturing to competing narratives of urban decay and renewal, and placing pressure on the potential for autonomous path-finding by individual city-walkers. In the first instance, it seems fitting to begin with the idea, suggested in the accompanying text on the same plate, that the old man in the depiction is a personification of London itself: "I see London blind & age-bent begging thro the Streets / Of Babylon, led by a child," sing the daughters of Albion from their exile in Babylon (*Jerusalem* 84: 11-12, E 243). The lines, particularly in their mention of Babylon, place us in the territory of biblical exile. They also recall the exile of the aged host in "The Mental Traveller," who was also portrayed as "blind & age-bent" after being driven from his cottage (l. 55, E 485). London, then, is imagined as though in a physical and spiritual exile, searching for a way back into Jerusalem. In Blake's account Jerusalem itself has been destroyed ("Jerusalem lies in ruins"), and its inhabitants have been "compell'd to build / And to inhabit" Babylon (*Jerusalem* 84: 6, E 243; 84: 8-9, E 243). Both the former Jerusalem and the present Babylon are described as having their foundations in Lambeth, in London, the city which figures as the fulcrum of Blake's vision of the "distress & woe" of the fallen present. The sense that these various biblical-historical narratives are folded into London's geography, and thence to the rest of the geographical world, is imagined in terms of movement through specific streets, known to Blake as the places where he lived, worked, and walked in the capital:

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<sup>118</sup> Johnston, "Blake's Cities," 420, 419.

The voice of Wandering Reuben echoes from street to street  
 In all the Cities of the Nations Paris Madrid Amsterdam  
 The Corner of Broad Street weeps; Poland Street languishes  
 To Great Queen Street & Lincolns Inn, all is distress & woe  
 (*Jerusalem* 84: 13-16, E 243).

That the design on plate 84 can be associated with exile and a wish for return to (and rebuilding of) Jerusalem simultaneously evokes the second kind of walking, which is that of the pilgrimage. As the figures move towards the (viewer's) left, they first approach what Johnston has called a "Romanesque temple," and which cannot fail to evoke the dome of St. Paul's (recalling, perhaps, the air of Druidical procession towards St. Paul's in "Holy Thursday"), and slightly more remotely, a Gothic cathedral which most commentators take as suggesting Jerusalem, in line with Blake's well-known idealisation of Gothic forms in his work, and an interpretation substantiated both by the rays of sun above that part of the picture and the fact that the child appears to point towards the Gothic building. The design also echoes the conversational theme of "Holy Thursday" (figure 75), the prototype design in "London" (figure 78), and especially *Friendship* (figure 83), that other portrait of amiable pilgrims, proposing perhaps a soft-handed version of guidance and sociality which could potentially counteract either blindness and the chaos of disorientation, or the straitjacketing impositions of single-visioned map-makers.

Finally, then, there is the matter of walking *within* cities, as depicted in *Jerusalem* plate 84 (figure 12). The architecture in the left background, evoking St Paul's and Westminster, suggests that the setting is London, but the verbal account suggests that the walking takes place in the streets of Babylon.<sup>119</sup> In formal terms the layout of the city streets in this picture appears quite literally "improved" when compared with its earlier form in *Songs*. The streets are straight, and neatly paved, creating the impression of a rather straight line (back) towards the spires of Jerusalem. However, recalling that this particular setting, if we are to follow the verbal account, is the city of Babylon, this firm infrastructure may be intended as adverse, or as deceptive, offering a false promise of escape. Recall Blake's earlier description of Babylon in Chapter One of *Jerusalem*: "Her Streets are paved with Destruction [...] her Synagogues

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<sup>119</sup> Miner points out that the view of Westminster on the left and St Paul's on the right is "an unusual but *accurate* perspective," if viewed from Battersea Bridge: Miner, "Blake's London," 300. On a typical north-oriented map, of course, although they would be represented at opposing ends of the city, Westminster would indeed appear at left (in the west) and St Paul's at right (in the east).

with Torments / Of ever-hardening Despair squard & polishd with cruel skill,” an architecture of impersonal “improvement,” an “ever-hardening” infrastructure, which stands in pointed contrast to the ever-emergent, affective structures of Golgonooza, the “Labour of merciful hands”: “The stones are pity, and the bricks, well wrought affections: / Enameld with love & kindness” (*Jerusalem* 24: 32, 35, E 169; 12: 30-32, E 155). In plate 84 we find suggestions of both a hardened built space and a more affective, “merciful”-handed vision of a shared journey which seems to contain a hope for modification of the built circumstances, for recuperating Jerusalem even as “she” appears always at a distance: as Blake urges early in *Jerusalem*, “Go on, builders in hope: tho Jerusalem wanders far away, / Without the gate of Los: among the dark Satanic wheels” (*Jerusalem* 12: 43-44, E 156). Such tensions in the poetry between present-tense despair and cautious, future-tense hopefulness are visualised in the design to plate 84, and prevent a reading of the picture as either completely optimistic or completely pessimistic. Once again, no single narrative or physical pathway is concretely mapped. Like de Certeau’s practitioners, we are as blind to the way forward as the old man himself. What seems clear, nonetheless, is that the competing narratives to which the iconography and composition gesture work to block easy recourse to imagined destinations, instead foregrounding embodied wayfaring—an instance of which, after all, dominates the scene.

Whittaker, too, has noted the striking affinity between Blake’s walkers and de Certeau’s theory of the “pedestrian practitioner.”<sup>120</sup> In his article Whittaker focuses primarily on one particular act of urban pedestrianism in *Jerusalem*—the walk that Los takes on plate 45 [31], wending his way from north London to the Thames:

Los took his globe of fire to search the interiors of Albions  
 Bosom [...]  
 And saw every Minute Particular of Albion degraded & murderd  
 But saw not by whom; they were hidden within the minute particulars  
 Of which they had possessd themselves; and there they take up  
 The articulation of a mans soul, and laughing throw it down  
 Into the frame, then knock it out upon the plank, & souls are bak’d  
 In bricks to build the pyramids of Heber & Terah. But Los  
 Searchd in vain: clos’d from the minutia he walkd, difficult.  
 He came down from Highgate thro Hackney & Holloway towards London  
 Till he came to old Stratford & thence to Stepney & the Isle

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<sup>120</sup> Whittaker, “Blake’s Psychogeography,” 284.



Of Leuthas Dogs, thence thro the narrows of the Rivers side  
 And saw every minute particular, the jewels of Albion, running down  
 The kennels of the streets & lanes as if they were abhorrd.  
 Every Universal Form, was become barren mountains of Moral  
 Virtue: and every Minute Particular hardend into grains of sand:  
 And all the tendernesses of the soul cast forth as filth & mire,  
 Among the winding places of deep contemplation intricate  
 To where the Tower of London frownd dreadful over Jerusalem:  
 A building of Luvah builded in Jerusalems eastern gate to be  
 His secluded Court: thence to Bethlehem where was builded  
 Dens of despair [...]

[...] travelling thro darkness & horrid solitude:  
 And he beheld Jerusalem in Westminster & Marybone,  
 Among the ruins of the Temple: and Vala who is her Shadow,  
 Jerusalems Shadow bent northward over the Island white.  
 At length he sat on London Stone [...]  
 (*Jerusalem* 45 [31]: 3-26, E 194; 49-42, E 195).

Los's use of the "globe of fire" to light his journey recalls, it should be noted, a similar action taken by Urizen in *The [First] Book of Urizen*, when he "explor'd his dens [...] With a globe of fire lighting his journey," as reprised in *The Four Zoas* when we hear of "Urizen with a Globe of fire / Lighting his dismal journey thro' the pathless world of death" (*The [First] Book of Urizen* 22: 46-48, E 81; *The Four Zoas* 70 [VI 83-130]: 1-2, E 346). Urizen, however, remains entirely "in darkness clos'd" as he continues to sorrow over his inability to control his environment: "he curs'd / Both sons & daughters; for he saw / That no flesh nor spirit could keep / His iron laws one moment" (*The [First] Book of Urizen* 23: 22, E 81; *The Book of Urizen* 23: 23-26, E 81). His immediate, and bodily, response is to issue forth a "Net of Religion" to further bind the inhabitants of the various "Cities" (*The Book of Urizen* 25: 22, 23, E 82). In *The Four Zoas*, similarly disturbed by the unruliness and misery of his dens, Urizen appears as a map-maker of a particularly determined kind, "Writing in bitter tears & groans in books of iron & brass / The enormous wonders of the Abysses once his brightest joy" (*The Four Zoas* 70 [VI 83-130]: 3-4, E 347). By contrast Los, although alert to the workings of an impersonal, nameless power inflicting the oppression that he witnesses (he "saw every Minute Particular of Albion degraded & murderd / But saw not by whom," lines 7-8; a power designated only by the anonymous "they"), makes no immediate attempt to bind the suffering "Minute Particulars" to his own laws, his own system, nor to codify them in any "books of iron & brass." However, when Los takes up his tools ("He seizd his Hammer & Tongs, his iron Poker & his

Bellows”) to get to work building, we may hear a slight echo of Urizen’s measuring tools (“He formed scales to weigh; / He formed massy weights; / He formed a brazen quadrant; / He formed golden compasses / And began to explore the Abyss”) (*Jerusalem* 46 [32]: 8-9, E 195; *The Book of Urizen* 20: 36-40, E 81). Los is faced with the problem that haunts Blake’s work from early to late: how can one create a new system without simply impersonating the very oppressors who enslave the current system?

Blake offers no easy solution, but there is a hint of promise in Los’s walk here, in which he (although he also remains, like Urizen, “clos’d”) strives for openness to his surroundings and attention to the localised “minutia” he encounters. Like the wanderer of “London,” who walks through “each” street and peers at “every face,” Los sees—is open to seeing—“every Minute Particular of Albion.” In this sense, Los also stands in contrast to the wary, safety-conscious narrator of John Gay’s *Trivia*, who advises readers against venturing down certain streets lest they should encounter poverty or lawlessness. Neither avoidant nor objectifying, each step of Los’s journey tentatively paves the way for a potential (if, for the moment, unrealised) intervention in the lives and landscapes of the manacled metropolis.

Where is Los walking to? We know, loosely, *why* he is walking—to “search the interiors” of London (“Albions / Bosom”), to see its “Minute Particulars”—but we are not told in advance what course his journey will take, or where it will end, and plotting it turns out to be a somewhat difficult task. In geographical terms, Los’s long-winded journey proceeds, as Whittaker writes, “in a line, or rather a curve,” from Highgate in the north, south-east through Hackney, Holloway, Stratford, Stepney and the Isle of Dogs, curving along the Thames westward towards the Tower of London before heading to the site of Bedlam (“Bethlehem”), west to Westminster, north-west to Marylebone, south-east to the Temple and finally east to London Stone.<sup>121</sup> As for the location of Bedlam, mentioned as a waypoint in Los’s journey, both Tambling and Whittaker suggest (in keeping with Erdman) that Blake had in mind the building at Moorfields, though both note that Bedlam had been moved to Lambeth in 1815, when Blake was still working on *Jerusalem*.<sup>122</sup> If Blake did have the Moorfields site in mind, Los’s journey follows a crooked course from the Tower of London up slightly north to

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<sup>121</sup> Whittaker, “Blake’s Psychogeography,” 286; Tambling, *Blake’s Night Thoughts*, 114.

<sup>122</sup> “He makes no indication that any Lambeth associations are in his mind”: David V. Erdman, “Lambeth and Bethlehem in Blake’s *Jerusalem*,” *Modern Philology*, 48, no. 3 (1951): 191; Tambling, *Night Thoughts*, 114; Whittaker, “Blake’s Psychogeography,” 286.

Moorfields; if he had the new Lambeth location in mind, Los's journey becomes still more crooked, as he would have to cross the river and venture quite far south before coming back up towards Westminster presumably via Westminster Bridge. Paley allows that Blake may have intended the Lambeth site, but he is also uncomfortable with the order of the locations mentioned, and suggests that two of them ought to be switched in the interest of straightness: "unless Hackney and Holloway are reversed, Los's journey is not a straight route."<sup>123</sup> But far from moving with the apparently mechanical ease of an "orderd" or "right lined path" towards a "destind end" as celestial bodies do in Urizen's city-world, Los's lengthy and meandering journey through London is "difficult" (line 13). Part of this difficulty arises from the agonising nature of the social landscape he beholds, as much a trial on his senses as the "narrows of the Rivers side" (line 16)—"Narrow Street," as Erdman writes, "being the name of the lane that ran along the chartered Thames below Stepney."<sup>124</sup> As we have seen, "narrows," for Tambling, also "imply 'narrowed perceptions,'" for Blake a negative state that also entails a constriction of "vision" and of liberty (earlier in *Jerusalem* we have heard of the fallen Albion wandering "[i]n the dark world a narrow house!") (*Jerusalem* 19: 14, E 164). Indeed, this slum area is where Los witnesses the ultimate devaluing of human life, beholding "every minute particular, the jewels of Albion, running down / The Kennels of the streets & lanes as if they were abhorrd" (*Jerusalem* 45 [31]: 17-18, E 194).

Faced with this wasteland, "barren" of "Moral / Virtue," Los's "difficulty" is also related to the strain of his walking as a form of (potentially) regenerative labouring. Like the strain of "Mental Fight" set out in the prefatory verses to *Milton*, such labouring is in no way easy, nor is its success guaranteed. It is with agony that Los plunges himself into the "winding places of deep contemplation intricate" (line 22), striving to fathom the profound social and moral ills that afflict the city and its inhabitants, rather than to simply superimpose his own idea of what the redeemed city would or should look like, as Richard Brothers' *Description* attempts to do. In Chapter One of *Jerusalem*, this kind of effortful labour is what we have already witnessed in the description of Los at work building Golgonooza, not in disengagement from social realities, but profoundly, personally, *corporeally* immersed in the collective life of city-dwellers:

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<sup>123</sup> Paley, *Traveller in the Evening*, 180.

<sup>124</sup> Erdman, "Lambeth and Bethlehem," 190.

Striving with Systems to deliver Individuals from those Systems;  
That whenever any Spectre began to devour the Dead,  
He might feel the pain as if a man gnawd his own tender nerves  
(*Jerusalem* 11: 5-7, E 154).

Both Whittaker and Tambling are well aware that Los's walk takes place in "dark despair" through a dystopic London from which he appears, in this passage, ultimately alienated (*Jerusalem* 45 [31]: 6, E 194).<sup>125</sup> However, Whittaker is more willing to perceive a certain potential for visionary (re-)mapping: "what Los is engaged in," he writes,

is a very particular – even peculiar – visionary reterritorialization that bears little in common with the architectural spectacles of a deistic planner. Los's hammering at the anvil is also a metaphor for his pounding the streets, *mapping out and remapping Albion* so that the byways of London bisect those of Jerusalem, and the counties of Albion are contoured alongside the hills and rivers of the Holy Land.<sup>126</sup>

The "difficult" nature of Los's journey is partly owing to Los's lack of a map, but for this very reason *difficulty* is all the more fundamental to the creative labour of his walking—creative labour which is itself predicated on that initial lack, or rejection, of a prescriptive map. Thus, as Talissa J. Ford has also argued in relation to this passage,

The distinction Los's trip requires us to make is another one entirely, not between *real* and *imagined space*, but between *found* and *produced space*. [...] Los, in other words, literally *makes* his way, buildings "builded" around him as he goes.<sup>127</sup>

Los carves out, curves out, his desire paths *as he moves along*, as he encounters each "Minute Particular." It is perhaps due to his openness to the "minutia" of the metropolis, however "degraded & murderd" they appear, that he is able to "behold," fleetingly, "Jerusalem in Westminster & Marybone." Yet, despite rightly finding this positive potential in Los's pedestrianism, Whittaker may be overstating its positivity, its immediate transformative power, as presented in the text. Taking up his place at London Stone—a place of Druidic

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<sup>125</sup> On Los's alienation, see Tambling, *Blake's Night Thoughts*, 115.

<sup>126</sup> Whittaker, "Blake's Psychogeography," 285 (my emphasis).

<sup>127</sup> Ford, "Blake's Ottoman Geographies," 540 (original emphasis).

sacrifice (“where Soldiers are shot,” according to John Rocque’s 1746 plan of London)—Los does not simply come to redemption and recover Jerusalem by going for this walk.<sup>128</sup> He remains tormented by the sights he has seen and troubled by the difficulty of his task. Los must continually labour to imagine, and realise, more than “only the petrified surfaces” of ailing Albion; his journey is far from over (*Jerusalem* 46 [32]: 5, E 195). What is needed is not mechanical marching, nor aimless wandering, but rather continual, effortful, *difficult* journeying. In Los’s difficulty, we can glimpse the paradoxes that trouble Blake in his agonistic mapping—a desire to record and to situate, but a simultaneous horror of inscribing fixity. As Wolfreys writes, in writing the city, Blake works to “deconstruct the purely real, purely representable,” transforming it into a world “with a topography which resists mapping in the conventional sense, and yet which Blake himself maps without fixing it in place.”<sup>129</sup> Yet the laying down of even the most provisional maps is for Blake so deeply fraught, so deeply dangerous, as to appear almost a complete impossibility in both ontological and epistemological terms.

On the following plate, however, we are granted what appears to be a glimpse of Jerusalem (the woman) (figure 85). This design seems to place Jerusalem’s feet in London, proleptically gesturing to the lower lyric on *Jerusalem* plate 77, which hopes for Jerusalem’s return to grace the green and pleasant land. The site of London is almost casually conjured in the forms of the buildings depicted on either side of the figural group: one in the manner of St Paul’s on the (viewer’s) left, and a Gothic edifice in the manner of Westminster on the right (an inversion of their positions as seen in plate 84, figure 12). On a literal reading, this arrangement accurately evokes the perspective one would have regarding the two buildings from north of the Thames, which is where the majority of Los’s journey appears to take place.<sup>130</sup> However, it is not quite the view that Los would have had from London Stone, almost directly east of St Paul’s, which is where he is seated when he “hear[s] Jerusalem’s voice” (*Jerusalem* 45 [31]: 43, E 195). In any case, the arrangement of Westminster at left and St. Paul’s at right flips the typical representation of the locations on a north-oriented map, a further case of Blake’s tendency towards what Damon calls, in relation to Blake’s depiction of York to the direct west of London on *Jerusalem* plate 57, a “wrenching of geography,”

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<sup>128</sup> Erdman, “Lambeth and Bethlehem, 190, fn. 31.

<sup>129</sup> Wolfreys, *Writing London*, 38.

<sup>130</sup> Miner, “Blake’s London,” 300.

complicating a straightforward visualisation that might map Jerusalem flatly onto London's streets, or vice versa.<sup>131</sup> The crooked walks of Los disorientate and deflect any such efforts, instead motioning to the potential for city-walkers' active intervention into the streets of the city and the lives of the other beings who walk them.

With this in mind, I recall some well-known lines from Chapter Two of *Jerusalem*, the profound significance of which I hope to have illuminated through my discussion of embodied journeys as the lifeblood of Blake's cities:

I behold London; a Human awful wonder of God!  
 He says: Return, Albion, return! I give myself for thee:  
 My Streets are my, Ideas of Imagination.  
 Awake Albion, awake! and let us awake up together.  
 My Houses are Thoughts: my Inhabitants; Affections,  
 The children of my thoughts, walking within my blood-vessels  
 (*Jerusalem* 34 [38]: 29-34, E 180).

Blake's vision of "Human" London here powerfully proclaims his sense of walking as a fundamental enactment of perpetual becoming, particularly in the context of the (humanised) cities that emerge and evolve in tandem with their human "Inhabitants." Blake here literalises a trope that was common enough in Romantic-era city-writing, whereby London was imagined as a living body with veins (i.e., streets) enlivened by the circulation of bodies and business. Wolfreys notes that in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven, a Poem* (published by Joseph Johnson & Co. in 1812), Anna Laetitia Barbauld envisions London's streets as sites "[w]here through each vein spontaneous plenty flowed" (l. 167), observing that for Barbauld "the streets are now the veins of a huge, continually mobile body."<sup>132</sup> Similarly, Miner makes a direct connection between Blake's streets-as-veins and an anonymous 1776 text entitled "A walk through London and Westminster," which supposes that a visiting "Otaheitan" would view London as "a great and uncommon animal, where the streets are so many veins where people circulate" in "the heart" of the city.<sup>133</sup> In Blake's version, the entangling of the speaking city's being (its "Thoughts," "Affections, and "blood-vessels") and the movements of pedestrian city-dwellers exceeds the bounds of mere analogy. Those interrelations, I

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<sup>131</sup> Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, 455.

<sup>132</sup> Wolfreys, *Writing London*, 74.

<sup>133</sup> Miner, "Blake's London," 279.

maintain, are not mere fancy; for Blake they anatomise the lived and felt conditions that make the city, and that make being-in-the-city.

The visions that Blake conjures of “Londons opening streets” depend vitally upon the recording of pedestrian activities—not to prescribe or pre-script the *precise* paths to be followed (as in a map that wants us to view its paths as finite), but to impress upon readers the primacy of movement as a precursor to our own visionary (re-)mappings (*Jerusalem* 34 [38]: 32, E 180). Hence, also, the concluding verse to the lyric which appears near the start of *Jerusalem* Chapter Two, and which dreams up a vision of a cosmopolitan utopia wherein walking and building, just like their practitioners, go “hand in hand”:

In my Exchanges every Land  
Shall walk, & mine in every Land,  
Mutual shall build Jerusalem:  
Both heart in heart & hand in hand  
(*Jerusalem* 27: 85-88, E 173).

As has often been pointed out, the mention of “Exchanges” here evokes London’s Royal Exchange, the centre of commerce during the period. In 1760 Thomas Hope had produced a plan of the site indicating the location of different merchants from across the globe (“Hamburgh,” “Portugal,” “Barbadoes,” “Turkey,” etc.), literally mapping a global commercial geography onto London’s landscape (figure 86). Against such commercial, grid-like figurations, Blake advances his own fourfold vision of a communitarian city constituted by walking, world-making inhabitants—a vision whose end-product remains resolutely unmapped because it is continually in formation. Indeed, although there is a sense in Blake that pedestrian movement is *towards* something or somewhere (and is in this loose sense “teleological”), the possible routes to be taken cannot be prescribed: they are necessarily many and mazy, and can be brought about with the active involvement of readers as fellow travellers. This, above all, is the invitation that Blake offers up to us in the form of prophetic books—of maps in process—containing, for those who wish to wind it, “the end of a golden string.”

## Chapter Four. London Blakeans

In the Autumn of 2019, I attended a series of five Blake-themed walks across London, led by self-styled “poetopographer” and “urban shaman” Niall McDevitt.<sup>1</sup> Born in Dublin but long based in London, McDevitt began leading his “Blake Walks” after encountering Blake’s baptismal font at St. James’ in Piccadilly during a poetry event. In an interview with me in 2021, McDevitt recalled how it all started back in 1996:

I had a poem accepted for a Poems on the Buses/Friends of the Earth installation on the theme of *London – The Living City*. [...] It was displayed on the 38 and 73 bus routes for a year. Apparently there were 7 million passenger journeys in that period, so I could lay claim to a vast readership. At the end of the year the poets assembled at the London Transport Museum to be presented with laminated versions of their poems, and then taken on a mystery tour by bus. The destination turned out to be St James’ Piccadilly. Poets gathered around the Grinling Gibbons baptismal font where Blake had been baptised on Dec 11, 1757. We recited our poems, and I did a bonus acapella “London” to a tune of my own.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly before taking part in this project, McDevitt had also witnessed three readings by Allen Ginsberg at Royal Albert Hall, Waterstones Hampstead, and Megatripolis.<sup>3</sup> This, too, got his Blakean senses tingling:

Witnessing the elderly Ginsberg launching several books, singing, playing harmonium, reciting poems, answering questions etc. made poetry seem possible. He was/is one of the greatest Blakeans of modern times and so his influence reconnected me with Blake. Ginsberg also took an interest in Blake sites having filmed on Primrose Hill with Iain Sinclair in the late 60s.<sup>4</sup>

After these experiences, McDevitt explains, “I sought out other Blake sites.”<sup>5</sup> This culminated in the best-attended series of walks yet, held in 2007 on the occasion of Blake’s 250<sup>th</sup> birthday. By the time I attended the Blake Walks in 2019, the series was being organised by a London-

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<sup>1</sup> Niall McDevitt passed away during the writing of this thesis, on September 29, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Niall McDevitt, interview with the author, March 4, 2021. The interviews were conducted with the approval of the Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee (AHEC) at The University of York. All quotations from these interviews are drawn from written responses to the questions provided, or from transcripts made following semi-structured, spoken interviews based on the same questions.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



based small press called New River Press, which has also published collections of McDevitt's poetry.

McDevitt would later document the 2019 Blake Walks on his blog, *Poetopography*.<sup>6</sup> In the blog post, McDevitt described how he had explained and speculated about Blake's biographical networks, from known connections with George Richmond and Frederick Tatham, to possible connections with British Israelist "prophet" Richard Brothers. He also sketched some of the networks of people participating in the walks, noting attendance of writer John Higgs (author of *William Blake Now: Why He Matters More than Ever*, 2019, and *William Blake Vs the World*, 2021), New River Press editor Heathcote Ruthven, and punk poet Stephen Micallef. Photographer and publisher Max Reeves, founder of a small press called Entropy Press, was also present at the walks. The events were fairly informal: attendees paid a small fee of £10 to join in, often getting involved by performing a recitation to the group or by producing their own mappings along the way (e.g., figures 87-89). The walks were put on hold during pandemic lockdowns but resumed for a series of five walks in August 2021.<sup>7</sup>

My encounters with this amorphous, motley group of Blake enthusiasts brought home to me the vitality and variety of Blake's afterlives on a local scale within the streets of London where Blake lived, worked, and walked. It also revealed to me a glimpse of a kind of underground or off-grid Blakean scene which seemed at once to relish its own *smallness* and to proclaim its own infinite, quasi-spiritual, and definitely political significance. As McDevitt asserted, his practice of "poetopography" "promotes urban reenchantment by carving a series of poetic 'ley lines' into the capitalist grid."<sup>8</sup> Yet this spirit of occultism-cum-activism operates in a manner that self-consciously, even performatively, ensures a fairly local reach. One personal recollection will be illustrative: at one of the Blake Walks, poet Stephen Micallef handed me a handwritten invitation to "Blake's 262<sup>nd</sup> Birthday," to be held at Tate Britain later in November, organised by his own Blakean group, the religious-sounding William Blake Congregation (which I shall discuss in more depth later). The invitation was handed to me on a scrap of paper, on which the details had been scrawled in blue biro (figure 90). There was

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<sup>6</sup> Niall McDevitt, "A Thank You Letter to My Fellow Blake Walkers," *Poetopography*, December 9, 2019, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://poetopography.wordpress.com/2019/12/09/a-thank-you-letter-to-my-fellow-blake-walkers/>.

<sup>7</sup> This series, which turned out to be the last instalment of the walks before McDevitt passed away in September 2022, was the basis of the *Blakeland* series of films by Irish filmmaker Sé Merry Doyle.

<sup>8</sup> McDevitt, interview.

minimal online promotion (the event was shared via the “William Blake Congregation” Facebook page and so visible only to followers of that page), there was no fee, not even the formality (and relative impersonality) of a printed document. This gesture perfectly performed the word-of-mouth, unofficial *modus operandi* adopted by these Blakean networks, a quality that would inform the process of selection when it came to inviting Blakeans to interviews. Without an established map, I meandered through the territory of the London Blakeans, necessarily relying on word-of-mouth recollections and recommendations, or on what often seemed relatively close-knit social media networks, though there were also instances in which practitioners used social media with the apparent hope of reaching wider audiences. At times, it was necessary to put pressure on the limitations of this meandering method—for instance, to investigate the possible presence of right-wing Blakeans working in similarly if not more off-grid ways to these often bohemian, predominantly left-wing practitioners. I shall return to this problem throughout what follows, since this kind of splintering has characterised Blake’s legacy in important ways.

The tension between political urgency and ambition in rhetoric and niche localism in practice repeats a tension that notoriously inheres in Blake’s own self-published work, indicating a vexed and little-explored through-line in Blake’s legacy within London. In this chapter, I highlight the fact that Blake’s legacy among independent publishers, artists, and poets in London—including McDevitt, Reeves, Micallef, Ruthven, and many others—has been far more extensive than Blake scholars have tended to acknowledge. I argue that this aspect of Blake’s afterlife can in turn inform a reading of Blake’s work that engages book history and network theory, as well as close analysis of the formal and thematic affordances of his oeuvre. In this sense, I argue that Blake’s work actively lends itself to a methodology that, in Mark McGurl’s terms, can effectively “toggle between empirically acquired contextual knowledge and the invigorating experience of a close reading of literary texts themselves, which may condense more knowledge about their environment, in their own way, than any one contextual framework is likely to reveal.”<sup>9</sup> Following the example of Georgina Colby *et al.*, I view contemporary small-press publishing as an important arena of production in which the

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<sup>9</sup> Mark McGurl, “Ordinary Doom: Literary Studies in the Waste Land of the Present,” *New Literary History*, 41, no. 2 (2010): 336.

relationship between “contextual knowledge” about textual materiality and “close reading” is actively made “visible” and often problematised.<sup>10</sup>

In this chapter, I trace the complex ways in which twentieth- and twenty-first-century artists, poets, and independent publishers in London have variously responded to Blake’s biography, methods of artistic production, and mapping of London’s topography. It is an attempt to map the diverse range of people and places that continue to revitalise Blake’s legacy as a poet-artist of and in London’s streets. Scholars have tended to overlook the sheer variety of London-based practitioners responding to Blake as a maker of books and a maker of worlds. I argue that the activities of London-based Blakean practitioners can help to illuminate at least two key aspects of Blake’s reception. First, independent publishing houses both bespeak and foster a certain reputation, increasingly accrued to Blake, of experimental artisanship that is or strives to be independent from and/or in opposition to dominant or institutionalised means of production (as enshrined, in today’s market, in the so-called “Big Five” publishing conglomerates that have been increasingly consolidated during the last two decades).<sup>11</sup>

Second, these Blakean practitioners in London have picked up the “golden string” of Blake’s geographical imagination in ways that suggest the presence of certain thematic affordances within Blake’s oeuvre that have often been downplayed by Blake scholars. I posit that these ventures participate in the on-going project of (re)imagining and re-mapping an ever-emergent urban “text,” which Blake’s work itself metatextually sets in motion, and that they do so in an embodied, open-ended manner that is arguably more attuned to Blake’s own practice than are critical attempts definitively to rationalise his anti-systematic mappings. These thematic affordances, namely the presence of cartographic tropes in Blake’s work and his agonistic workings-out of these tropes, can be usefully likened to the kind of formal and generic “capabilities” that Mike Goode has identified in Blake’s use of proverbs in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. According to Goode, certain textual forms “afford and limit meaningful possibilities,” which are themselves illuminated by the work’s subsequent reception.<sup>12</sup> It is my contention that, on a thematic level, Blake’s reception by Londoners in

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<sup>10</sup> Georgina Colby *et al.*, *The Contemporary Small Press*, 12.

<sup>11</sup> The “Big Five” being Penguin/Random House, Hachette Book Group, Harper Collins, Simon and Schuster, and Macmillan.

<sup>12</sup> Goode, *Romantic Capabilities*, 2. See also W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

recent decades has indeed tuned into Blake's self-conscious inclusion of inchoate yet recognisable cartographic forms in his multi-media books.

In response, then, to W. J. T. Mitchell's question, as adapted by Goode, "What do William Blake's Pictures Want?" I propose that, in their continual formal and rhetorical emphasis on their own incompleteness and provisionality, what Blake's works "want" is *continuation* (as opposed to completion).<sup>13</sup> This also relates to Goode's sense of the tension between what he perceives as the "viral" quality of Blakean soundbites in contemporary media environments and the fact that "Blake's multi-media creations were unsuccessful at realizing those ambitions in his own age": still, Goode writes, the "viral" capability of Blake's art arises in part from "the art's verbal and visual self-citations—its tendency, as William Kumbier aptly put it, to repeat itself as 'its own best source.'"<sup>14</sup> Similarly, I posit, one of the fundamental "capabilities" of Blake's work lies in its tendency to underscore its own representational *incapabilities*. Blake's texts afford continuation because they constantly self-remediate or self-continue, all the while continually dramatising the self-defeat of their own endlessly generating and degenerating systems: hence the ending of "The Mental Traveller" appears to signal a simple act of self-continuation, but the very conditionality and discontiguity of the text has already opened up a set of conflicting spatiotemporal routes and interpretive possibilities to the ostensibly cyclical system. However, this need not mean—and indeed it has not meant—the end of the line for Blake's texts, whether this be sheer perplexity or all-too-neat schematisation as we have encountered it in scholarship's diagrammatic tradition. Rather, creative practitioners have tested out the potentialities of mapping as a means of *continuing* Blake's own mappings and, accordingly, of thinking the political spatially and in often radical ways. Blakean mapping emerges as an immensely generative and creatively enabling phenomenon. In turn, such texts can shed new light on the radical workings, conceptual potentialities, and ongoing resonance of Blake's (anti-)cartographic imagination.

### Continuation and Readerly Intervention: Blake's Early Readers

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<sup>13</sup> Goode, *Romantic Capabilities*, Chapter Three ("The Joy of Looking: What William Blake's Pictures Want"), esp. 66-67.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

Contemporary small-press works are not the only context in which Blake's "golden string" has been picked up. Numerous better-known continuations of Blake's urban cartography—from James Thomson's "The City of Dreadful Night" to fictional works by so-called "London visionary" novelists such as Michael Moorcock and J. G. Ballard—have been well explored by, among others, Shirley Dent and Jason Whittaker.<sup>15</sup> These texts certainly seek thematically to revivify Blakean mapping in some way or another, but they differ from contemporary small-press work in that they do not make quite so visible the locally networked nature of their own material production, a feature that is inherent both to Blake's books and many contemporary small-press publications. Nor do they appear to be quite so interested in the multimedial makeup of Blake's verbal-visual books. However, another particularly important model of continuation, and one which is closer to the model of self- or small-press publishing, is identifiable in the practice of direct readerly intervention—namely, annotation and extra-illustration—into the space of Blake's books.

Blake himself was famously a prolific annotator and extra-illustrator of other authors' works, indicating his predilection for these kinds of readerly practices.<sup>16</sup> In turn, Blake's own work has also been a site for similarly direct readerly interventions. The example on which I focus here is not distinctly urban; however, it does pick up on the trope of pilgrimage which is so central to Blakean city-mapping, as I have explored throughout this thesis. In doing so, it constitutes an early readerly response characterised by an impulse to continue or expand the interpretive and thematic pathways that Blake's plates—and the gaps between them—afford or make possible. Copy D of *Europe a Prophecy* has been heavily annotated by a reader, identified by Bentley and others as Blake's friend George Cumberland, to whom the owner Ozias Humphry is supposed to have lent the book at some point.<sup>17</sup> As Samuel Foster Damon first pointed out, Cumberland's interventions are mainly copied from a popular eighteenth-century literary anthology, Edward Bysshe's *The Art of English Poetry* (first published 1702;

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<sup>15</sup> Dent and Whittaker, "Metropolitan Blake"; Whittaker, "'Walking thro' Eternity.'"

<sup>16</sup> Blake's marginal annotations to the works of numerous authors (e.g., John Caspar Lavater, Sir Francis Bacon, Joshua Reynolds, Bishop Watson, George Berkeley, etc.) have been much discussed by scholars. See, for example, Jason Allen Snart, *The Town Book: UnReading William Blake's Marginalia* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), and Adams, *Blake's Margins*. On Blake as an extra-illustrator, see e.g., Luisa Calè, "Gendering the Margins of Gray: William Blake, Classical Visual Culture, and the Alternative Bodies of Ann Flaxman's book," in *Blake, Gender and Culture*, ed. Helen Bruder and Tristianne Connolly (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), 133-143.

<sup>17</sup> Bentley, *Blake Books*, 159.

multiple reprints).<sup>18</sup> In one striking case, on the verso of the title page (and thus facing plate 3), which shows a figure lurking in a cave as a wanderer passes (figure 91), Cumberland has copied out Anne Radcliffe's poem "The Pilgrim" (figure 92), which had appeared in Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) as well as in an earlier periodical publication. The poem concerns the journey of a "Patient Pilgrim" who, making his way through an Apennine landscape, is ambushed and murdered by a "lurking Robber." At the top of plate 3, Cumberland has added the pen note "The assassin" (figure 93), more explicitly identifying the figures in Blake's design with those in the Radcliffe poem. Other annotations include block quotations from Shakespeare, Dryden, Milton, and others, the Radcliffe poem being by far the most extensive addition.

Cumberland's annotations can be read variously as performing the functions of interpretation, glossary, learned commentary, remediation, supplementation, and so on. In fact, Blake repeatedly and almost obsessively performs similar interventions into his own work—for instance, by revisioning words and images from across his own oeuvre in different contexts, by altering the sequence of plates in different versions of his illuminated books, and by gouging out words (prior to printing) in the address "To the Public" in *Jerusalem*. These performative acts of self-remediation are crucially enabling to the various forms of continuation that Blake's readers, like Cumberland, have so often pursued. What interests me particularly about the Cumberland annotations is, first, the coterie context of this readerly behaviour: viewed as a kind of self-publication, Cumberland's customisations were likely intended as supplementary material not only for his own diversion but also for the benefit of Humphry and potentially other friends in their London network. Similarly, in her work on extra-illustration, Lucy Peltz has especially emphasised how the practice "took shape within a limited circle of gentlemen amateurs with antiquarian sensibilities in the 1770s and 1780s," before becoming a more actively commercialised activity especially during the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Cumberland's behaviour was, then, very typical within networks of gentlemen collectors of the time, indicating the inclusion of Blake's output, to some degree, within wider practices of reading and sociability (or what Peltz, following Eagleton, terms "clubbability") in

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<sup>18</sup> Samuel Foster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1924), 347-51.

<sup>19</sup> Lucy Peltz, *Facing the Text: Extra-Illustration, Print Culture, and Society in Britain, 1769-1840* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 2017), 5.

the London networks of his day.<sup>20</sup> Second, Cumberland's addition of "The Pilgrim" can be seen as effecting a curious dovetailing between an interest in both interpretive pathways and the theme of pathways and travelling as encountered in Blake's books. Both facets of this remediation of Blakean material are also present in the activities of many of the self- and independently published contemporary texts which I shall examine in this chapter, in ways that suggest practitioners are reproducing, to various degrees of self-consciousness, the external and internal network structures of Blake's books, in both social and geographical terms: Entropy Press's slogan, "Think Small!" is particularly telling.<sup>21</sup> Still, the tendency for these practitioners' work to fall into coteries is somewhat different, in that the presses may have begun with the intention of promoting dispersal through a wider network—a tension, as we shall see, that often persists in their outputs.

This evidence of readerly engagement from within Blake's own networks and during his own lifetime also calls into question the notion of Blake's "independence," the romantic myth of the self-publishing poet-artist somehow operating in utter obscurity and isolation. I return to this issue throughout the remainder of this chapter.

### Blake and Independent Publishing in London: A Chronology

It will be important to set the scene of recent Blakean independent publishing in London in some detail, since the majority of these ventures have not received much, if any, serious attention from Blake scholars. In this section, I offer a chronology of key activities. For a simplified, visual timeline of relevant publishing activities, see figure 94. For contextual purposes, I have included the Blake Congregation and Blake Society on the timeline since, although these were not primarily conceived as publishing ventures, they have each published material from time to time. I have also included the earlier iteration of Entropy Press (1987-90), though this was based in Auckland rather than London, as well as some other publishers based in England but outside of London. Overall, the timeline indicates that, although some of the pre-'80s Blakean small-press ventures (Enitharmon Press in London, as well as Golgonooza Press and Goldmark Atelier, both outside of London) continued into the

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>21</sup> "About," *Entropy Press*, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://www.entropypress.co.uk/>.

twenty-first century, there was a lull in the establishment of *new* Blakean presses in London from the '80s until 2009 onwards. One reason for this is likely to have been increasing economic stringencies under Thatcherite Britain and the subsequent recession of the early '90s, in the wake of which small-press publishing would have seemed less and less financially viable. More recent ventures face similar challenges in an increasingly unaffordable London; some (like Hercules Editions) rely on Arts Council funding, others seem to struggle on "independently," relying on modest profits from sales and presumably supplemented by personal finances. Indeed, no publishing venture can be truly independent of the capitalist economy and must, in order to survive, adopt a business model of *some* kind—a fact that Blake, too, was obliged to confront, and a tension to which I return later in this chapter.

Tracing this chronology in more detail, I begin with the establishment, in 1970 amid the so-called British Poetry Revival, of Iain Sinclair's Albion Village Press (1970-1979). Albion Village Press is a particularly well-known instance of a London small press with Blakean redolences. Primarily, these redolences are apparent in the content of Albion Village publications, for instance Sinclair's *Lud Heat* (1975) and *Suicide Bridge* (1979). The name "Albion Village Press" sounds Blakean indeed, though Sinclair has noted that really "[i]t only accidentally picked up this 'Albion' name because it happened to be the street where I was living."<sup>22</sup> Around the same time as he set up the press, Sinclair had put on an exhibition alongside his friends Renchi (Laurence) Bicknell and Brian Catling, a show that the Whitechapel Gallery spontaneously agreed to host, called *Albion Island Vortex* (1974). It featured a sketch-map of various London landmarks, including Nicolas Hawksmoor churches and sites associated with Blake, criss-crossed by so-called lines of influence / the invisible rods of force active in this city" (figure 95), made by Sinclair and Catling and later reproduced in Sinclair's *Lud Heat*. Alan Moore, creator of the gothic graphic novel *From Hell*, identifies *Lud Heat* and this sketch map as major influences on his work.<sup>23</sup> The exhibition was partially recreated in a more recent iteration at Gallery 46, entitled *A House of the Last London* (2017).

Sinclair has since been widely published by mainstream publishing houses such as Penguin Books. There is a tension in Sinclair's career between his beginnings as a self-

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<sup>22</sup> Sinclair, interview with the author, January 19, 2021.

<sup>23</sup> John Rogers, "Alan Moore and Iain Sinclair on London mythologies and the power of place," *The Lost Byway*, September 23, 2017, accessed April 7, 2021, <http://thelostbyway.com/2017/09/alan-moore-iain-sinclair-london-mythologies-power-place.html>.



publishing poet in the countercultural hive of the 1970s and his rise to the status of “national treasure” published by Penguin and the like.<sup>24</sup> Yet Sinclair has also continued to participate in smaller-scale projects, such as the Flat Time House collaboration *The Bard*, to which I shall return. Another, earlier, collaborative event that he recalled in our interview was entitled “The Tygers of Wrath” after one of Blake’s “Proverbs of Hell,” held at South Bank Centre in 2000 (figure 96). Sinclair describes an audiovisual performance involving a reading of Blake’s “The Mental Traveller” by himself, Brian Catling, and Vahni Capildeo. Other participants in the event were Alan Moore, Jah Wobble, Billy Bragg, and more. In recent years, transcripts of Sinclair’s lectures have been published by the Swedenborg Society, edited by Stephen McNeilly, who has shown a particular interest in invigorating the Swedenborg Society’s engagement with Blake as well as its publishing activity.<sup>25</sup> Speaking about these independently published projects, Sinclair says “If anybody offers an opportunity for one of those, I’ll probably do it, all of them for nothing or whatever, just because I want to do them.”<sup>26</sup>

Shortly after the emergence of Sinclair’s Albion Village Press, Brian Keeble, with the help of neoplatonist Blake scholar and poet Kathleen Raine, also set up a small-press named “Golgonooza Press” in Ipswich in 1974—a venture that ran up until 2004. Keeble and Raine were both important figures in Blake’s legacy within “esoteric” networks in London, gathering for instance at institutions such as Watkins Books in Covent Garden, long frequented by esotericists (and Blakeans) from W. B. Yeats to Aleister Crowley. Watkins also runs the publishing imprint responsible for Tobias Churton’s biography of Blake, *Jerusalem!: The Real Life of William Blake* (2015). Back in the ‘60s, Kathleen Raine had encouraged and advised on the establishment, in London, of the still-active independent publishing house Enitharmon Press in 1967, founded by Alan Clodd, and named after the figure from Blake’s mythology. Enitharmon has been run by director Stephen Stuart-Smith since 1987. Both Raine and Keeble were heavily involved in the Temenos Academy, an educational charity with a focus on “spiritual” traditions. The Temenos group developed from a journal called *Temenos*, which originally ran from 1982-1991, at which point the Academy was founded under the patronage

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Macfarlane, “Iain Sinclair’s struggles with the city of London,” *The Guardian*, July 15, 2011, accessed February 16, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jul/15/ghost-milk-iain-sinclair-olympics>.

<sup>25</sup> Sinclair, *Swimming to Heaven: The Lost Rivers of London*, London: Swedenborg Society, 2013; *Blake’s London: The Topographic Sublime* (London: Swedenborg Society, 2018).

<sup>26</sup> Sinclair, interview.

of the Prince of Wales. Countless articles from the old journal and its reincarnation have focused on Blake's philosophical and "spiritual" ideas. The website for their current journal features an image of Blake's *The River of Life*.<sup>27</sup> The royal patronage and apparently apolitical agenda of the Temenos group, and of Blakean participants such as Kathleen Raine and Brian Keeble more generally, suggest the existence of a split within Blake's posthumous reputation, between a relatively conservative kind of spirituality or mysticism that is the preserve of a self-selecting "spiritual elite," and a more strongly politicised left-wing characterisation (though the latter, as in Sinclair's work, is often not without its own occult impulses). As Shirley Dent has clarified, this kind of "spiritual elite" reception of Blake (of which we have encountered another version in the Ancients) had strong roots in Blake's nineteenth-century readership, especially Swinburne, Gilchrist, and the Pre-Raphaelites. According to Dent, this reception "had little to do with encouraging a popular *understanding* of Blake and ironically set in train a *pop culture* misconception of Blake as a poet best suited to sub- and countercultures, a hallmark of the esoteric and obscure."<sup>28</sup> This charge should be borne in mind in relation to the localism of London-Blakean small-press ventures, which, whatever their communitarian ideals, may themselves start to look somewhat elitist or selective in their very smallness.

Also outside of London, but with ties to London networks, is the idiosyncratic business Goldmark Atelier, located in Rutland. Goldmark was begun by Mike Goldmark as a bookshop and publishing house in the 1970s and now operates as a print studio, gallery, and publisher. They published Sinclair's early novel *White Chappell: Scarlet Tracings* (1987), and later Aidan Dun's *Vale Royal* (1995), a long poem on London which draws heavily on Blake. Goldmark's connections with the London scene were well expressed in an event they organised at Royal Albert Hall, bringing together Blakean poets including Allen Ginsberg, Brian Catling, Aidan Dun, Michael Horovitz, and Iain Sinclair (figure 97). More recently, Goldmark has exhibited and published work by the local artist David Suff, for instance his *A Conversation with Wm. Blake* (2019), which has strong roots in the London site of Bunhill Fields, where

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<sup>27</sup> "Temenos Academy Review," accessed April 14, 2021, <https://www.temenosacademy.org/temenos-academy-review/>.

<sup>28</sup> See Shirley Dent, "'Esoteric Blakists' and the 'Weak Brethren': How Blake Lovers Kept the Popular Out," in *Blake, Modernity and Popular Culture*, ed. Stephen Clark and Jason Whittaker (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 57 (original emphasis).

William and Catherine Blake are buried. Goldmark also issued a new edition of Dun's *Vale Royal* in December 2022.

The '80s saw the emergence of two important Blakean groups, the Blake Society (founded 1985-present) and the William Blake Congregation (founded 1985-6), groups which represent two rather different embodiments of Blake's London legacy. Of the two, the Blake Society is the more formalised group, at least in financial terms: having secured the use of Blake's former residence at South Molton Street, it is a registered charity and charges membership, currently at an annual rate of £25 (or £15 for the unwaged). The Society has produced numerous publications, ephemera, and other outputs up to the present day.<sup>29</sup> "The William Blake Congregation," by contrast, is a much more informal, unofficial affair. It was founded in 1985-6 by the poet Simon Miles, and since his death has been run by poet Stephen Micallef and artist Helen Elwes.<sup>30</sup> Congregants gather to mark the occasions of Blake's death day, baptism, and birthday. Such is the extent of their devotion, Niall McDevitt noted, Micallef has been known to jest that "Even the great man's dental appointments are worthy of celebration."<sup>31</sup> The Congregation have also published Blakean material: notably, in the year of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Blake's birth, Micallef, Elwes, and artist Felicity Roma Bowers invited over 60 artists and poets to contribute to *The William Blake Birthday Book* (2007). The pages of the book, Elwes explains, were made to be the size of the plates from Blake's *Milton*.<sup>32</sup> The *Birthday Book* bears the imprint "Bow of Burning Gold," in reference to the *Milton* lyric. Many pages make reference to Blakean places, for example the relief print by poet-artist John Gibbens (e.g., figure 98).<sup>33</sup>

Micallef and Elwes are also regular contributors to "Blakefest," an annual festival begun in Felpham in 2014 and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which celebrates

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<sup>29</sup> For example, Henry Eliot's and Andrea McLean's double-sided "Map of Golgonooza," published in 2014. In 2021, the Society launched *VALA: The Journal of the Blake Society*, "a free online publication that celebrates William Blake's art and legacy in exciting new ways" ("VALA", accessed November 17, 2022, <https://blakesociety.org/vala-3/>). The journal can also be purchased in print.

<sup>30</sup> Earlier, Micallef had founded the Brixton Poets, a regular poetry event held at various squatted venues across Brixton, which he ran from 1986-97. He recalls publishing printed matter in the *Brixton Poets Magazine*, and that Blake "was one of the founding poets of the Brixton poets, who we put in our magazine, because he lived in Lambeth" (Stephen Micallef, interview with the author, February 26, 2021).

<sup>31</sup> McDevitt, interview.

<sup>32</sup> Helen Elwes, interview with the author, February 27, 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Gibbens self-published a series of "illuminated pamphlets" called the Inkjet Books, produced from 2002 until his death in 2015, many of which focus on London topography. He was also involved in a band with Armored Weston called The Children, whose 2011 album "In Memory of Grace" included a recording of Blake's "Tyger."

Blake through sundry activities, including walks following the “Blake Trail” designed by London artist Chris Price (figure 99), a map which has been installed in the centre of the local town Bognor Regis. The Blakefest website notes the thematic resonance of walking in relation to Blake’s work: “It is no coincidence that Jerusalem opens with ‘And did [those] feet?’ To Blake, feet were uniquely important since they connected man to the land and through the vessel of man, the land to Heaven.”<sup>34</sup> Blake’s short residence in Felpham is deeply etched into the area, visible not only in the cottage and Blakefest activities, but also in the existence of a “Blakes Road” running from the cottage down to the seaside.

Over the course of the last decade, there has been something of a resurgence of new Blakean presses in London: Entropy Press, Curiosity Magazine, Hercules Editions, New River Press, and Night Bird Press N2 being the main examples. Some of these presses are closely connected with groups or individuals whom we have already encountered: the photographer Max Reeves re-established Entropy Press in London’s East End (2009-present) (Reeves had originally started up the press in Auckland in 1987-90). In London, Reeves made the acquaintance of Micallef and McDevitt. He soon began publishing a series called *Papakura Post Office: A Spazmodical Zine*, which incorporated Blakean cover art, Blake-influenced poetry (including by Micallef and McDevitt), and Reeves’ photographs of contemporary London. Entropy has also published zines containing Micallef’s Blakean poetry.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, New River Press was founded by Robert Montgomery and Greta Bellamacina and is edited by poet Heathcote Ruthven, all close acquaintances of Niall McDevitt. NRP has published works by McDevitt, as well as organising McDevitt’s “Blake walks” through London and employing Blakean cover art in publications such as *Poetry Against Homelessness* (figure 100).

Other newly established presses seem to have sprung up at some remove from the close-knit networks surrounding McDevitt’s Blake walks and the Blake Congregation. Circa 2010, Henry Eliot and Matt Lloyd-Rose launched their independent project Curiosity magazine, producing maps of “literary” landmarks in London, many of which included mention of Blake and Blakean places.<sup>36</sup> In 2012, poet Tamar Yoseloff and photographer Vici

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<sup>34</sup> “2014 Blake Trail,” *Blakefest*, accessed February 19, 2021, <https://blakefest.co.uk/projects/2014-blake-trail/>.

<sup>35</sup> Entropy has so far published Micallef’s *Blake and Hayley: The Felpham Poems* (2017), a series of sketches and handwritten poems based on Blake and Catherine’s three years living in Felpham, Sussex (1800-3). Reeves is currently editing some forthcoming books of Micallef’s poetry relating Blake to areas of London such as Soho, Camden, and Bow (Max Reeves, interview with the author, January 22, 2021).

<sup>36</sup> The Curiosity pair have since gone onto work with Particular, an imprint of Penguin Books; Henry Eliot is now the Creative Editor of Penguin Classics).

MacDonald founded Hercules Editions, named after the road where Blake and Catherine lived during the 1790s and where MacDonald has also lived for many years. Supported by Arts Council England, Hercules Editions has published several small books combining words and pictures, occasionally with a focus on London, psychogeography, and Blake. Finally, still more recently, artist Louisa Amelia Albani started up her own small press, Night Bird Press N2, through which she self-published *William Blake's Mystic Map of London* (2019), with art by Albani and written contributions from Hackney writer and walker Simon Cole. The book was on sale in the Tate shop during the 2019/20 Blake exhibition. These new publishing ventures, existing somewhat outside of pre-existing Blakean groups, suggest the existence of a more widespread impulse to pick up on both Blake's publishing practices and his idiosyncratic cartographies of London.

Meanwhile, on the web, Blake has been adopted as a quasi-patron-saint of the predominantly online British socialist magazine *Culture Matters* (founded by northerner Mike Quille circa 2015). The website's homepage features an image of the frontispiece to *Jerusalem*, and quotes from the famous *Milton* lyric that was set to music by Hubert Parry in 1916.<sup>37</sup> The lyric has been notoriously co-opted by numerous different causes and is often considered as an unofficial national anthem, in ways that have provoked particular political friction. For instance, it was invoked by Boris Johnson at a Tory conference in October 2020, in proclaiming that a "New Jerusalem" would rise out of the ravages of the coronavirus pandemic. By contrast, on the *Culture Matters* homepage, it is invoked in line with "our cultural struggle or 'mental fight' against class divisions, to achieve a cultural commons in a socialist society – a new Jerusalem, as William Blake called it, and not only in England, but across the world."<sup>38</sup> Back in London, or emanating from London, as I have mentioned, McDevitt operated a blog entitled "Poetopography," in which he recorded his numerous "Blake walks," walks relating to other London literary figures such as Marlowe and Shakespeare, poetry, events, and various other musings about urban geography.<sup>39</sup> McDevitt's sundry poets' walks suggested a particular attitude towards the literary as inherently opposed to a kind of urban institutionality, despite the fact that many of his favourite literary figures,

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<sup>37</sup> Mike Quille, *Culture Matters* homepage, accessed February 16, 2021, <https://www.culturematters.org.uk/index.php>.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Niall McDevitt, *Poetopography*, accessed February 16, 2021, <https://poetopography.wordpress.com/>.

especially Shakespeare, have themselves attained to institutional status, the evocation of which has itself become almost inherently instrumentalist.

Elsewhere on the web, Chris McCabe has increasingly worked using Instagram to disseminate visual poetry. His Instagram work often includes extracts from *The Practical Visionary* (2018), a collaborative project undertaken with poet and artist Sophie Herxheimer and published by Hercules Editions, which is deeply engaged with Blakean cartography (see, e.g., figure 101). McCabe has also co-edited a print anthology of Instagram poetry entitled *Instagram Poetry for Every Day* (2020). In our interview, he compellingly compared his use of Instagram to Blake's model of production:

I think my relationship with Instagram feels closer to what William Blake was doing than my relationship with, say, Hercules Editions, because it's a curated space. There's all kinds of debates now about how insidious Instagram is becoming and the algorithms they use and all that, so it's certainly not the same and it's not completely independent. However, it is a curated space and it is instantaneous in the way that Blake would've known. [...] It's also illuminated of course, it's backlit by Android or Mac or whatever.<sup>40</sup>

McCabe's comments provide a particularly fascinating insight into a frequent contemporary idealisation of the unmediated, self-“curated space” Blake was able to pursue in the illuminated books, often conceived in opposition to large-scale commercial publishing and institutionality. But, as McCabe himself seems to be aware, the ideal of “escape” from digital capitalism is illusory, given the complex algorithmic structures in which Instagram posts are embedded. In general, this tension is replicated in the uncomfortable position of small and independent publishers in relation to free market capitalism: so often, as Caroline Hamilton remarks, “many such publishers act against capitalist *logic* while engaging in capitalist *activity*.”<sup>41</sup>

## Blakean Exhibitions

Closely associated with the world of “independent” digital and print publishing is that of exhibitions, many of which raise similar issues relating to financial and intellectual

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<sup>40</sup> Chris McCabe, interview with the author, January 28, 2021.

<sup>41</sup> Caroline Hamilton, “Sympathy for the Devil?,” *Overland* 205, 2011, accessed April 15, 2021, <https://overland.org.au/previous-issues/issue-205/feature-caroline-hamilton/>.

independence. Towards the end of the recent blockbuster Blake show at Tate Britain (September 11, 2019 – February 2, 2020), two other exhibitions highlighted the ongoing vitality of Blake’s legacy in London. The first, entitled *The Bard* (January 30 – March 8, 2020), was held at Flat Time House, the sculptural former home of artist John Latham in Peckham. The exhibition, co-curated by Flat Time House director Gareth Bell-Jones and poet Chris McCabe, included twentieth-century reprints of Blake’s designs to Thomas Gray’s *The Bard* and *The Fatal Sisters* (originally commissioned by John Flaxman in 1797), lent by the Sir Denis Mahon Foundation, and a series of wall-mounted poetry contributions extracted from longer poems composed for the project by seven contemporary writers now based in London but coming from diverse backgrounds: Chris McCabe, Niall McDevitt, Karen Sandhu, Iain Sinclair, Keith Jarrett, Robert Montgomery, and Tamar Yoseloff. The exhibition was accompanied by walks across Peckham Rye led by McDevitt and McCabe, and a small pamphlet containing the lines of poetry displayed in the exhibition. Many of the contributions homed in on an anecdote from Gilchrist’s *Life of Blake*, in which the young Blake is said to have seen a vision of angels bespangling a tree on Peckham Rye: Iain Sinclair, in his contribution, entitled “Mental Travellers” after Blake’s “The Mental Traveller,” writes of “[a]ngelic incidents” in “a cemetery suburb on the hill,” and south Londoner Keith Jarrett reimagines the legend for the present day:

The following analogy is founded on a tradition  
Current in SE15, whereby the lesser-spotted angels  
Circulate from the upper deck of the number 12 bus  
For is not this the source of all miracles and visions?<sup>42</sup>

McCabe himself has explored this topic extensively, devoting himself to the mission of trying to locate the actual tree where Blake might have spied the angels.<sup>43</sup> He also appeared in a 2016 Radio 4 programme *A Vision on Peckham Rye*, recorded on the Rye, in which McCabe discussed the legend of the angelic bespangling alongside Levi Roots of Reggae Reggae Sauce

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<sup>42</sup> Iain Sinclair, “from Mental Travellers: Or, The Battle of the Books,” in *The Bard*, ed. Chris McCabe (London: Flat Time House, 2020), 16 [since published as a standalone pamphlet: *Mental Travellers: Or, The Battle of the Books* (London: Face Press, 2022)]; Keith Jarrett, “A Basic Diagram,” *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>43</sup> Chris McCabe, “Peckham Rye (Hymn to Blake),” in Chris McCabe and Jeremy Reed, *Whitehall Jackals* (London: Nine Arches Press, 2013), 79-81; McCabe, *Cenotaph South: Mapping the Lost Poets of Nunhead Cemetery* (London: Penned in the Margins, 2016), 31-50.

fame, writer David Almond, Blake Society representative Christine Vinall, and students from Harris Girls Academy East Dulwich.

That February, another exhibition, entitled *The Wraiths of Golgonooza* (February 26 – February 29, 2020), was held at Noformat Gallery in Deptford, also in southeast London, supported by a not-for-profit arts organisation called Second Floor Studios & Arts. This show revisited Blake’s concept of the utopian city of Golgonooza. It was the outcome of a collaboration between Sussex-based artists Jill Laudet and Sarah Cliff, and consisted of installations assembling various materials (clay, metal, stone, wood, textiles) and repeated words, images, and concepts often drawn from Blake’s work and its reception. Laudet made particular use of Samuel Foster Damon’s diagrammatic map of Golgonooza (figure 73), which she emblazoned as a “gilded mandala” on her artworks (figure 102) as, she explained in a recent interview with me, a shorthand for Golgonooza, “an alternative life-sustaining city for all, an act of resistance to the contemporary oppressive power complex.”<sup>44</sup> The four “guardian” figures in her installation sought to body forth Blake’s descriptions of Golgonoozan coordinates and the four gates guarding the imagined city (figure 103). Cliff, meanwhile, included etchings and relief prints in her multimedia installations (e.g., figure 104), using experimental printing techniques which she has elsewhere connected with Blake’s experiments with printing methods.<sup>45</sup>

Both of these exhibitions were non-commercial ventures which did not charge entry fees, were sponsored by not-for-profit organisations, and were comparatively small in scale. Both projects embodied a strong enthusiasm for Blake’s biographical and imaginative geography, and for its continued resonance in a contemporary context. The participants in both projects were also concerned with issues of intellectual, financial, and institutional (in)dependence, as they relate both to Blake’s work and to their own creative endeavours. In the introduction to the *Bard* pamphlet, entitled “Commission as Vision,” McCabe speaks for instance of a tension between ideas of Blake’s financial dependence upon patronage and the potential for intellectual independence in commissioned works like the Gray engravings: “we make a mistake, I think, by placing *The Bard* and *The Fatal Sisters* in the category of made-to-

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<sup>44</sup> Jill Laudet, interview with the author, February 3, 2021.

<sup>45</sup> Sarah Cliff, brochure for *The Ballad of Gibbet Hall*, held at Seven Oaks Kaleidoscope Gallery, October 2-19, 2019.



order designs for someone else's tastes."<sup>46</sup> Commenting on the nature of commissions in a present-day context, McCabe continues, "Blake's life plays out the dynamic between the creative and the freelancer in a way that is familiar to any poet trying to cut bread from their words today."<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, concentrating instead on Blake's illuminated books, Laudet argues that

[f]or visual artists, choosing to create and present our own work, as Blake did, and not being dependent on selection or commission, can be seen as a form of independent publishing, which has a long history within traditions of radicalism and agit prop.<sup>48</sup>

Cliff likewise comments on Blake's legacy as "a free-thinking, independent artist," noting the production of the illuminated books by Blake and Catherine "unfettered by patronage and fashion," yet also recognising that "given the opportunity, I am sure he would have preferred his work to have been published commercially and broadly disseminated."<sup>49</sup> Such tensions surrounding Blake's status as "independent" or not are prevalent within networks of artists, poets, and publishers who are themselves frequently flitting between various institutions, collaborations, informal networks, and self-publication according to shifting permutations of choice and necessity. Issues of precarity prevail, and many practitioners look to Blake, despite his own difficulties, as something of a lodestar in the realm of self-publishing.

Most recently, members of the anarchist group calling itself "Blake Bloc"—including figures we have already encountered, such as McDevitt and Reeves—staged a "guerilla" makeshift exhibition on the corner of Broadwick and Marshall Streets in Soho, the site of Blake's family home, on the occasion of "the unusual conjunction of Holy Thursday and April Fools Day" (tweet by Reeves, April 1, 2021). The display included plates from *Jerusalem* and other Blake designs printed out and sellotaped to a shopfront (figure 105), as well as posters advertising a Karl Marx Walking Tour, print-outs of the Blake Bloc banner, and a plastic pocket containing issues of McDevitt's poetry pamphlet entitled "Albion," Issue #1 of the *Free Poetry Series* published by "countercultural" publisher Ragged Lion Press (figure 106). The *al fresco* exhibition, staged next to the site of Blake's notoriously ill-attended 1809 one-man show, can

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<sup>46</sup> McCabe, "The Commission as Vision," in *The Bard*, id. ed., 4-5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>48</sup> Laudet, interview.

<sup>49</sup> Sarah Cliff, interview, with the author February 8, 2021.

be seen as seeking both to lay a claim to Blakean territory by an avowedly “underground” movement and to respond to Blake’s wish for a wide audience, as articulated for instance in his 1793 prospectus, to which I shall return. The move arguably rehabilitates Blake from the accusation of wilful obscurity, instead aligning him with a utopian hope for a kind of public art, made freely available to all-comers in London’s opening streets. The display was taken down (by someone other than Blake Bloc members) by April 10, in response to which the Blakeans created a new one at the same site on April 11. And the exhibition continued: on April 15, Reeves, McDevitt, and Micallef met to exhibit pages from the Entropy press zine of McDevitt’s poetical manifesto (*Leun’Deun: (notre brick)*, London: Entropy Press, 2011), and some work by Micallef.

### Counterculture and DIY

Many London Blakeans, including McDevitt and Reeves, connect their practices with the closely associated phenomena of “counterculture” and “DIY” (do-it-yourself) production. Both phenomena point to the imbrications of post-WWII North American and British print culture, especially from the ’60s onwards. The term “counterculture” is a broad label for the multifarious set of ideas and practices associated with ’60s North American youth culture especially, but also with a transnational reach. The term rose to prominence following Theodore Roszak’s book *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1969), the opening epigraph to which quoted from Blake’s *Milton* (“Rouse up, O Young Men of the New Age!” etc).<sup>50</sup> Both Blake and independent publishing were absolutely central to the shaping of counterculture in Britain and America.<sup>51</sup>

A moment often seen as foundational to American counterculture was the establishment of the *Whole Earth Catalog* by Stewart Brand, a magazine published from 1968-72, with sporadic reappearances well into the ’80s and ’90s. The *Catalog* particularly championed self-sufficiency through the practice of DIY in the context of one’s home, operating under the slogan “access to tools.” The *Catalog* represented a crystallisation of

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<sup>50</sup> Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), opening epigraph.

<sup>51</sup> Linda Freedman has explored Blake’s special significance in American counterculture: see her *William Blake and the Myth of America: From Abolitionists to Counterculture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

many of the epiphenomena associated with '60s hippy and radical student lifestyles. It also underwent a shift in vision from 1970, when Brand decided to make its ethos more communitarian rather than individualist, as had been the case in its early days. The magazine emblematised a far more widespread enthusiasm for independently published material during the period, including the production of radical agit prop on university campuses.

In Britain, self-publication was also being widely adopted to radical ends in the (counter)cultural sphere, for instance in the pamphlets of the British Poetry Revival, a loose intergenerational movement reacting against the conservatism of mainstream British poetry in the period. A few particularly well-known figures associated with this movement in London are Bob Cobbing, Jeff Nuttall, Maggie O'Sullivan, Bill Griffiths, Allen Fisher, J. H. Prynne, Chris Torrance, Brian Catling, and Iain Sinclair. In our interview, Sinclair used the term "counterculture" in relation to his famed meeting with American beat poet Allen Ginsberg in 1967, at a "meeting of the tribes called Congress for a Dialectics of Liberation," at the Roundhouse in Camden Town.<sup>52</sup> Sinclair recalls,

The conversation that went on at this event [...] definitely had a slightly Blakean context and it stimulated an idea of a kind of active countercultural community that needed not only to hold these dialogues but also to actually manifest in the way of producing work. So all of the filming and writing that had been done in a very spasmodic underground way at that time took focus in the early 1970s.<sup>53</sup>

As Sinclair emphasises, from the very beginning of his career—the days of the Poetry Revival in the 1960s-'70s—he was scarcely existing in a vacuum, nor was he alone in his interest in Blake. Luke Walker, for instance, has stressed the centrality of the late poet Michael Horovitz to the history of Blake's reception in British counterculture: following the momentous International Poetry Incarnation event at Royal Albert Hall (1965), Horovitz edited a poetry anthology called *Children of Albion*, and he also set up the "William Blake Klezmatrix Band."<sup>54</sup> From collaborating with Ginsberg on the film named *Ah! Sunflower* (after Blake's poem by that name) in 1967 to co-curating *Albion Island Vortex* at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1974

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<sup>52</sup> Sinclair, interview.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Luke Walker, "Beat Britain: Poetic Vision and Division in Albion's 'Underground,'" in *The Routledge Handbook of International Beat Literature*, ed. A. Robert Lee (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 46, 51-52; Michael Horovitz, *Children of Albion* (Harmondsworth, UK, & Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1969).

with Catling and Bicknell, Sinclair's early career was characterised by an energetic series of collaborations, a pattern that has continued to shape his work to varying degrees. In particular, Sinclair noted that his self-publishing ventures at Albion Press, begun in 1974, participated in a wider small-press scene among poets and small presses of a countercultural nature:

[T]hrough the '70s I think there was a tremendous sense of community among the small poets and publishers—people like Bill Griffiths and Allen Fisher, both of whom drew a lot on Blake, were substantial London poets who were churning out these tiny publications of their own under their own steam in all sorts of ways and distributing them through the network of bookshops.<sup>55</sup>

Sinclair's description of the London poetry and publishing scene in the '70s, and the centrality of Blake in the work of practitioners within that scene, suggest a confluence of ideals: community, self-sufficiency, localism. Crucially, the idea of "churning out" publications "of their own" and "under their own steam" epitomises the importance of DIY-production to these groups' activities.

Many other practitioners have emphasised their connection with the concept of DIY in publishing terms. McCabe talks about how, in principle, the production of "stapled and bound, DIY, zine-type things [...] really basic A4 printed editions: folded, stapled, [...] often experimental work" approaches Blake's self-publishing cottage-industry model, though McCabe notes that these books have "[n]o frills, whereas Blake had many frills."<sup>56</sup> Often practitioners discussed DIY in connection with some notion of "counterculture": New River Press editor Heathcote Ruthven spoke of his early experiences as an editor of the still-active *International Times* magazine, "a kind of countercultural magazine" of the '60s, started by Barry Miles, and describes his work on a 50<sup>th</sup>-anniversary *IT* issue as being "DIY, positive, utopian."<sup>57</sup> He continued, "the idea of the [New River] press was for it to be a kind of mum-and-dad shop, like a DIY venture," evoking a certain sense of continued frustration with the state of British poetry: "it was thought that they [Montgomery and Bellamacina] could try and take poetry out of certain communities that it can fall into, that can become a bit insular or circular."<sup>58</sup> Speaking of Micallef, Entropy Press editor Reeves remarked, "[h]e's very much

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<sup>55</sup> Sinclair, interview.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Heathcote Ruthven, interview with the author, January 23, 2021.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

from a punk rock background—DIY—in fact, if you ever meet him, he’s got pockets full of poems. [...] me and Helen [Elwes] are kind of ironing out his poems so we can scan them.”<sup>59</sup>

In terms of self-publishing conceived as DIY, other ventures have adopted historical figures other than Blake as their heroes. The *Do or DIY* (2012) pocketbook, accompanying an exhibition on self-publishing at Whitechapel Gallery, celebrates the self-publication of Laurence Sterne, Irma Rombauer, Virginia Woolf, and Derek Walcott, with an emphasis on anti-institutionality: “Institutions cannot prevent what they cannot imagine.”<sup>60</sup> Yet the frequency and apparent self-consciousness with which Blake has been invoked remains noteworthy, and much can be gained from taking these invocations as the subject for serious scholarly enquiry. As Morris Eaves has written, Blake’s decision to publish independently was “a landmark in the history of publishing, not because he was the first or last to make that decision, but because he was far more aware than most others of why he was doing it.”<sup>61</sup>

Similarly according Blake special status as a distinctive pioneer of self-publishing, Rachel Lee characterises Blake as a kind of precursor to the “DIY Zinester.”<sup>62</sup> Lee refers to a zine workshop event held at the Buffalo Small Press Book Fair in the US, where she recalls being “surprised to see Blake mentioned in ‘Great Moments in Zine History.’”<sup>63</sup> On reflection, Lee writes, “it makes perfect sense. Through illuminated printing [...] Blake believed he had solved two major problems in eighteenth-century print culture: the separation of text and image, and the difficulty of self-publication,” citing Blake’s 1793 prospectus.<sup>64</sup> Lee also makes the point that Blake and Catherine’s hand-colouring made “the illuminated books *look* handcrafted,” suggesting an affinity between this homespun aesthetic and the modern phenomenon of DIY.<sup>65</sup>

However, it is worth noting the enormous range of hand-coloured prints during the eighteenth century. The qualities that Lee identifies as making handcraftedness visible in Blake and Catherine’s handiwork (“variation in the color palettes between individual copies of a book” and writing that “resembles handwriting, not standardized typography”) can also

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<sup>59</sup> Reeves, interview.

<sup>60</sup> Nick Thurston, Craig Dworkin, and Simon Morris, *Do or DIY* (York: Information as Material, 2012).

<sup>61</sup> Morris Eaves, “What is the ‘History of Publishing?’” *Publishing History*, 2 (1977): 76.

<sup>62</sup> Rachel Lee, “Blake: Illuminated Printer, DIY Zinester,” *Hell’s Printing Press: The Blog of the Blake Archive and Blake Quarterly*, March 24, 2009, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://blog.blakearchive.org/2009/03/24/blake-illuminated-printer-diy-zinester/#comments>.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

be identified in other hand-coloured prints from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>66</sup> For instance, several hand-coloured prints by James Gillray feature both variation between copies and a script that resembles handwriting, such as the two hand-coloured copies of a satirical guillotine scene in the British Museum (figures 107 and 108). The variation in colouring is relatively subtle, but can especially be seen in the background (especially in the upper right-hand corner of the sky) and the rendering of the cloud of blood. Still, as Lee notes, compared with contemporary engraving techniques, Blake's technique of illuminated printing does seem to have particularly afforded "a more fluid line, integrated text and image, and ultimately more creative control over the entire process."<sup>67</sup> But the "DIY," seam-showing, apparently "unfinished" appearance of Blake's work, and its integration of visual and verbal elements, is not completely atypical of hand-coloured prints from the period. In spite of this, Blake's posthumous reputation as a pioneer of DIY print- and book-making has continued to grow, and there is a particular reverence for the technical innovation of his illuminated printing method, which is seen as championing what Lee calls the DIY model of "creative control over the entire process."<sup>68</sup>

Yet many of the recent Blakean publications considered here differ both from Blake's productions on the one hand, and from ultra cheaply produced zines and chapbooks on the other, in their level of both finish and "creative control." Although *The Practical Visionary* by McCabe and Herxheimer still retains a level of handcrafted aesthetic because of their use of cut-up and collage techniques, the finished book is neat, attractive, smooth because digitally printed, and it bears the logo of Arts Council England, who provided the grant to fund the project. As this example suggests, the quasi-genre of DIY and its connection with a notion of self-sufficiency raise some complex questions about the concept of *independence* as it relates both to Blake's work and to the work of contemporary Blakean or Blake-influenced practitioners.

## Independent Blake?

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

In some respects, it is perhaps strange that Blake should occupy such a prominent position in the hearts and minds of independent and self-publishers today. What is so edgy, after all, about harking back to an eighteenth-century figure whose cultural impact during his own time was famously inconsiderable? Self-publishing, of course, has been practiced for aeons—although it is clearly Blake’s combination of political fervour, artistic innovation, and rhetoric of oppositionality that draws special attention.

When it comes to independence, as many Blakean independent publishers freely acknowledge, Blake, though often to his chagrin, was inevitably reliant upon the support of patrons and friends in order to stay afloat financially, and to have the time and means to work on uncommissioned projects in the first place. In material terms, the illuminated books were hugely lavish productions, and as such pretty far removed from the world of cheaply printed zines, pamphlets, and chapbooks, especially since the onset of the digital age—let alone far-reaching, instantaneous, and extremely low-cost digital platforms for distribution like Instagram, blogs, and online magazines.

Some present-day independently published productions do come closer to the extremely locally distributed, more expensive illuminated book. McCabe, for example, notes his work on “very, very limited edition volumes,” which he finds to be “closer to Blake actually than the independent presses,” since in those cases “someone else is in control of typesetting, design, distribution and stuff, whereas with the self-publication model, of course, you do everything.”<sup>69</sup> It is also worth adding, however, that this model of production is also “closer” to Blake insofar as it has a far smaller print-run and tends to be more expensive and locally distributed. For instance, Micallef and Elwes’ limited edition *Birthday Book* is sold at £25 soft bound and £40 hard bound, prices exceeding those of most typical trade books today.

Although Blake’s reality (and that of so many artists of his time and ours) could not match an ideal of independence, that ideal is certainly present in his own rhetoric. In Blake’s prospectus “To the Public” in 1793, he explains the necessity for his innovative approach to making books and self-publishing:

The Labours of the Artist, the Poet, the Musician, have been proverbially attended by poverty and obscurity; this was never the fault of the Public, but was owing to a neglect of means to propagate such works as have wholly

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<sup>69</sup> McCabe, interview.

absorbed the Man of Genius. Even Milton and Shakespeare could not publish their own works.

This difficulty has been obviated by the Author of the following productions now presented to the Public; who has invented a method of Printing both Letter-press and Engraving in a style more ornamental, uniform, and grand, than any before discovered, while it produces works at less than one fourth of the expense.

If a method of Printing which combines the Painter and the Poet is a phenomenon worthy of public attention, the Author is sure of his reward (E 692).

Scholars have long remarked, however, on the fact that Blake's books (with, as McCabe put it, their "many frills") increasingly came to be easily as expensive as and eventually more expensive than other, commercially published books on the market, and were only available to a wealthy few rather than to a wide "public," as Blake seems in the 1793 prospectus to wish. Over the years, G. E. Bentley writes, "the production of the illuminated books became more and more elaborate," and in 1827 Blake records printing a copy of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* "for a Friend at Ten Guineas," which was far beyond the price range of commercial books in the period, and certainly beyond the budget of a labourer.<sup>70</sup> William G. Rowland points out that even in its early days, "The *Songs of Innocence* cost five shillings at a time when the average weekly wage for a laborer was 10 to 12 shillings."<sup>71</sup> Karissa Keir, a contributor to the website *From Pen to Press*, has authored a page on Blake's engraving technique, where she advises aspiring self-publishers that "If you choose to adopt it for your works, you will probably not make much money. However, if meticulous control over the artistic product is important, then self-publishing may be the option for you."<sup>72</sup> There is a recognisable pull in Blake's career between a rhetoric that idealises both self-publication and distribution to a wide "public," and the actual unaffordability of his books, which ensured his reliance upon a select few private patrons. Martin Myrone writes that [i]n the case of Blake, what appears to be the painful triumph of creative freedom, in a

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<sup>70</sup> G. E. Bentley, Jr, *William Blake in the Desolate Market* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 5.

<sup>71</sup> William G. Rowland, *Literature and the Marketplace: Romantic Writers and their Audiences Great Britain and the United States* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 66.

<sup>72</sup> Karissa Keir, "William Blake and Self-publishing," *From Pen to Press: A Guide to Getting your Book on the Shelves in the Romantic Era*," accessed February 18, 2021, <https://romanticrapublishing.wordpress.com/william-blake-and-self-publishing/>.



precariously unregulated open market for cultural goods, also involved the re-privatisation of artistic labour.”<sup>73</sup>

But the narrative of “the painful triumph of creative freedom” seems to be what sticks among creative practitioners today. Even if practitioners acknowledge, as they often do, Blake’s failure in financial or reputational terms, that failure seems to take on the proportions of a heroic struggle—Blake’s very failure becomes, for posterity, almost a mark of legitimacy in itself. This narrative is not unique to creative practitioners: for instance, Blake scholar Stewart Crehan revered Blake as a “heroic worker-intellectual” and speaks admiringly of “the heroic burden Blake felt he was taking upon his shoulders.”<sup>74</sup> However, in the creative sphere this celebration of heroic failure is arguably related to what Kaplan Harris identifies, via Bourdieu, as a “disavowal of economic interest” that is “a basic ritual of the avant-garde”: “For those with a stake in poetic innovation, the only legitimate devotion is to poetry itself.”<sup>75</sup>

There are, of course, similar tensions in the contemporary worlds of art and literary publishing. What is interesting is that Blake’s posthumous reputation as a beacon of idealised independence (dramatic economic “failure”; symbolic poetic “success”) has persisted and become especially connected with independently published pamphlets and the like on a fairly local scale in Britain. Here are some other comments that were made by interviewees on the topic of Blake, independence, and publishing:

It’s not hard to see how if you set up your own publishing operation in the twentieth century, or even perhaps in the nineteenth century, why you would have taken Blake as some kind of role model or exemplar, he’s perfect for it, but they miss the bit where he wasn’t actually very successful in disseminating the things he published.<sup>76</sup>

His achievements paved the way for others to follow in his footsteps, enabling the dissemination of free ideas and philosophies and thought to be made available to society without censure [sic] or corporate goals overriding artistic and literary freedom.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Myrone, Concannon and Myrone, *William Blake*, 124.

<sup>74</sup> Stewart Crehan, *Blake in Context* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1984), 11.

<sup>75</sup> Kaplan Harris, “The Gentrification of the Small Press: CLMP and the DIY Tradition,” in Colby *et al.*, *The Contemporary Small-Press* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 95, 96.

<sup>76</sup> David Suff, interview with the author, January 18, 2021.

<sup>77</sup> Louisa Amelia Albani, interview with the author, February 12, 2021.

Blake continues to offer a wonderful example of what is possible in the realm of independent publishing, and he still serves as a role model for me personally and also for many of the [Swedenborg] Society's editions.<sup>78</sup>

Blake ploughed his own furrow, as does an independent publisher. Neither relies upon patronage or sponsorship; neither is a slave to contemporary attitudes and prevailing fashions; neither cares for passing fads and cultural trivia; neither has been in any way institutionalised.<sup>79</sup>

Blake was his own poet, his own illustrator, his own printer, his own book designer, and so we wanted to follow his early model of DIY publishing.<sup>80</sup>

There are many overlapping and conflicting ideas at play in such conceptions of Blake's "independence": tensions between ideals of independence and wide dissemination, a dream of intellectual freedom, a dislike for various forms of institutionality and corporate straitjacketing. For some commentators, there is an avowed commitment to a Romantic notion of the isolated genius. Sinclair, for example, noted Blake's "double act with Catherine," but nonetheless declared that "[h]e is quite on his own, because he has this sense of having a prophetic identity, in which he's arguing with enormous realities—geographical, cosmological. [...] He's a contemporary, but not of people who are still alive."<sup>81</sup>

For some, the very notion of a Blakean "community" is at odds with such notions of Blake's independence and now-cherished outsider status. Among those practitioners interviewed for this project, several took issue with what they saw as the increasing institutionalisation of Blake's legacy, via government-funded projects as well as a more general sense of rigidifying principles and practices. There emerged a shared conception of outsiderhood as an always-already radical positionality. Sinclair identified

a sense of it being approved and sponsored and branded. You have a new gravestone set up, there are little groups, it's lost its edge of radicalism, although there are certainly individuals out there who are extremely radical and extremely inspired by the most difficult aspects of Blake's character and life.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Stephen McNeilly, interview with the author, February 15, 2021.

<sup>79</sup> Stephen Stuart-Smith, interview with the author, January 21, 2021.

<sup>80</sup> Tamar Yoseloff, "Number 13 Hercules Buildings, Lambeth," June 8, 2012, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://grouse-pigeon-ern6.squarespace.com/blog/number-13-hercules-buildings-lambeth>.

<sup>81</sup> Sinclair, interview.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

Commenting on the Blake Society, Sinclair said,

I do slightly have a sense that a “Blake Society” is a kind of mirror image of something that doesn’t really work. I mean, Blake is outside the society—he connects up with the Ancients and Samuel Palmer and crowd, but he’s not ever a part of anything. He’s a non-belonger.<sup>83</sup>

This Sinclair compared with the John Clare Society (founded in 1981), which he referred to as a group of “people who are enthusiastic about his work and everything, yet a lot of it actually goes against what he is.”<sup>84</sup> Similarly, Herxheimer commented, “I think there’s an inherent contradiction about something like the Blake Society because he was not a society person—and nor am I.”<sup>85</sup> On the topic of Blake displays in large established galleries such as the Tate, Tamar Yoseloff remarked, “now obviously Blake is in the Tate, and I don’t know whether he would be delighted or slightly peeved by that.”<sup>86</sup> Still more vehemently, Max Reeves—a participant in Blake Bloc, a regular attendee of the William Blake Congregation’s events, and also a longstanding Visitor Assistant at Tate Britain—asked, “why are the establishment so keen to colonise Blake? He is *the* archetypal countercultural figure, he’s the archetypal outsider [...]. Blake would despise these people.”<sup>87</sup>

For Reeves, the pairing of established, monarchist, conservative artist Tracy Emin and Blake at a Tate Liverpool exhibition (2016-17) was “very un-okay,” a stance that has also been recently taken by John Higgs.<sup>88</sup> The show was conceived by curator Darren Pih, who worked closely with Emin. The introductory text panel emphasised that Blake’s and Emin’s work had “shared concerns, affirming the Romantic ideal of artistic freedom.” The show thus marked the persistence of Blake’s posthumous reputation as a proponent of individual “artistic freedom,” despite the fact that Emin and Blake occupied very different positions within the institutions of the “art world” of their day and held very incompatible political ideals. Often, by contrast, a narrative of Blakean artistic freedom has been invoked by small-press ventures as a means of positing their own relationship, as Colby *et al.* have put it, unevenly “askance

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Sophie Herxheimer, interview with the author, January 27, 2021.

<sup>86</sup> Tamar Yoseloff, interview with the author, January 29, 2021.

<sup>87</sup> Reeves, interview.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*; John Higgs, *William Blake Now: Why He Matters More Than Ever* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2019), Chapter Six (“On Being Remembered”).

to the mainstream,” whether the presses “see themselves as resisting, as excluded by or as struggling to be successful within the main forces of contemporary capitalism.”<sup>89</sup>

Yet the adoption of Blake as a figurehead for many literary, publishing, and artistic ventures is not solely or even primarily aimed at holding onto a notion of Romantic individualism as the only alternative to “the mainstream” or “the establishment.” In their rhetoric, individualism rubs up against communitarianism. Many point to broadly anti-capitalist notions of taking hold of the means of production, and to various ideals of accessibility, collectivity, democracy, and political activism through cultural production. Editor Ruthven recalls the spirit of optimistic inclusivity that has fuelled New River Press from the beginning: “It was really about trying to be a press of inclusion rather than exclusion”; “[w]e were trying to do it in a more collective sense.”<sup>90</sup> The “about” page on Entropy Press’s website describes the press as “a non-profit collective.”<sup>91</sup> Meanwhile Jill Laudet, one half of the *Wraiths of Golgonooza* collaboration, speaks of harnessing Blake’s political energies in her work:

His dogged persistence in self publishing, and his calls to action reaffirmed my own beliefs in the importance of art to engage with socio-political issues, to ask questions, to be critical, “to get it out there” and to disregard the commercial gallery/the market and its selection.<sup>92</sup>

From this Blake-inspired political energy, Laudet settled on the “mantra” “Resist Reimagine Rebuild,” which forms the basis for her ongoing art-activist projects. Turning to the content of Blake’s illuminated books rather than the manner of their production, meanwhile, Andrea McLean finds that in Blake’s vision, “London” is a place that is potentially available to everyone: “[W]hat is Golgonooza? It’s a city of art, where no good thought is lost, where everything anyone ever does that’s good is there. So when you say those walls *are* London, it’s there for everyone that goes through the gates, you know.”<sup>93</sup> Culture Matters’ concept of the New Jerusalem as “cultural commons” likewise evokes a model of cultural production and consumption as being available to all members of society, a vision that is directly connected

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<sup>89</sup> Colby *et al.*, *Contemporary Small Press*, 12.

<sup>90</sup> Ruthven, interview.

<sup>91</sup> “About,” *Entropy Press*, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://www.entropypress.co.uk/>.

<sup>92</sup> Laudet, interview.

<sup>93</sup> Andrea McLean, interview with the author, January 20, 2021.

with Blake on their homepage. And Blake Bloc's recent Sellotape exhibition seems unmistakably aligned with similar ideals.

Though diverse, there does seem to be some unity-in-diversity among these various Blakeans. A common thread emerges in the adoption of Blake as an exemplar of independent publication, seen through a lens that is by turns collectivist and individualist. Second, in considering these networks of people as strongly and self-consciously situated in particular places, a through-line emerges from Blake's life as a Londoner and his treatment of London in his work, to contemporary Blakean practitioners' frequent fascination with local geography and history.

### Blakean Re-Enchantments: The Afterlives of Golgonooza

From this brief jaunt through Blakean independent publishing in London, it will already be evident that these activities tend to operate at a fairly local level, even taking into account the potentially wider reach of online publishing. While this may give the impression of a coherent community or even coterie of Blakeans preaching to the converted, the situation is not always so insular. Micallef and Elwes run a Facebook page for the William Blake Congregation, with over 800 followers across the globe. During the Coronavirus pandemic, they recently invited members of the group to hold their own celebrations for Blake's "birthday" and post photographs to the page, receiving for instance footage of celebrants singing from mountaintops in Portugal.<sup>94</sup> Within London, the networks are continually evolving and intersecting with one another. As my chronology will have shown, there are often new participants and voices emerging, and each of them engages differently with Blake and in particular with Blake's London.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, I chart some of the ways in which contemporary practitioners both respond directly to Blake's depictions of London and engage with the places associated with Blake's life in London. There is a very strong sense in which their activities effect what might be called a Blakean "re-enchantment" of place, not only in the occultist terms of Sinclair's *Lud Heat* mappings, but also in a very strongly politicised and socially conscious vein. I use "re-enchantment" in the sense of present-day reactions against

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<sup>94</sup> Elwes, interview.

what Max Weber, in his 1917 lecture “Science as Vocation,” famously called the “disenchantment of the world.”<sup>95</sup> This he defined in terms of concurrent processes of secularisation and rationalisation in European modernity. In recent times, the term “re-enchantment” has been adopted in a very wide framework, as exemplified by the 2010 anthology *Towards Re-Enchantment: Place and Its Meanings*, which takes a far-flung approach to “‘re-enchantment,’ whether personal or collective, cultural, ecological or spiritual.”<sup>96</sup> As the essays in *Towards Re-Enchantment* attest, including contributions from Robert Macfarlane, Iain Sinclair, Richard Mabey, and others, it is in such a wide framework that re-enchantment has been approached within British psychogeography and place-writing more broadly. As we have seen, McDevitt explicitly used the term “reenchantment” to describe his “poetopographical” walks as interventions into “the capitalist grid.”<sup>97</sup> But for many others, too, harking back to Blake often provides something like a kernel of hope, or inspiration, amid frightening present-day forces of oppression and alienation in a rapidly changing urban landscape. This is arguably less through a process of nostalgia than through a desire to join with Blake in building Golgonooza, but there is undoubtedly something striking about looking back to Blake’s example in search of models for re-enchantment. According to Alastair Bonnett, nostalgia, though “marginalized within mainstream socialist and communist debate” in fact “became available as a provocative resource for ‘counter-cultural’ interventions” in what he calls the “radical re-enchantments” of British psychogeography in the 1990s.<sup>98</sup> Bonnett writes that “today the shame of nostalgia is fading” and that “radicals [...] are beginning to grapple with the fact that the poetry of the future is no longer enough,” recalling Marx’s credo on the revolutionary potential of “poetry from the future” quoted in the introduction to this thesis.<sup>99</sup> Though Bonnett does not name any such present-day “radicals” in his article, the practices of the London Blakeans indeed seem to channel a faith in Blakean mapping which, if not wholly synonymous with nostalgia, shares its past-tense orientation in looking back to Blake as a proponent of urban re-enchantment in his own time. As I have argued, Blake invites such reception through the future-tense orientation of his

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<sup>95</sup> The lecture, originally delivered at the University of Munich, was later published as Max Weber, “Wissenschaft als Beruf” (Munich and Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1919).

<sup>96</sup> Gareth Evans and Di Robson, *Towards Re-Enchantment: Place and Its Meanings* (London: Artevents, 2010), n. p.

<sup>97</sup> McDevitt, interview.

<sup>98</sup> Bonnett, “Radical Nostalgia in British Psychogeography,” 47.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

visionary mappings: hence, to reawaken this spirit, London Blakeans must paradoxically look both backwards and forwards. From psychogeography to pilgrimage and the politics of place, the ground-level walker's perspective is fundamental to present-day urban mappings in ways that reactivate Blake's own poetic and visual evocations of walking within an endlessly fragmenting metropolis.

Iain Sinclair's avid re-tracings of Blake's biographical and imaginative forays across London geography loom especially large in recent critical studies of Blake's creative reception.<sup>100</sup> And with good reason: Sinclair has maintained an unfaltering interest in Blake's London throughout his long career, the vicissitudes of which are well documented in his own writings, in his numerous appearances in television, film, and journalism, and in the massive hoard of drafts and ephemera now archived as the "Iain Sinclair Papers" at the Harry Ransom Centre in Texas. Many of the practitioners whom I interviewed know Sinclair personally and all were familiar with his work on London and on Blake. They spoke with evident fondness and appreciation for Sinclair. McCabe recalled with amusement that

[s]omeone said to me once—it's a bit of a weird comment, but I think there's something in it—it was Niall McDevitt, the poet and psychogeographer. He said that he thinks Iain Sinclair's got exactly the same bone structure as William Blake.<sup>101</sup>

Sinclair's cult status turned national-treasure status as a "psychogeographer" and almost a reincarnation of Blake in this way is difficult to overestimate. In this study, however, I situate him within wider currents of Blake-related and London-related productions.

Though there are many confluences of these streams, it is my claim that practitioners' impulse to view London through a Blakean lens itself springs from the peculiar mapping that one encounters in Blake's work. Blake gestures repeatedly towards some potential "map" of London, though he holds back from the finished map-product in order to emphasise the activity of mapping itself as an ongoing and potentially very powerful and empowering enterprise. This mapping-in-progress has lent itself to a great many London-based creative responses that take their cue from Blakean coordinates—specific places that Blake mentions in his work, or some of the more seemingly "abstract" terms he uses to adumbrate

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<sup>100</sup> See, e.g., Dent and Whittaker, "Metropolitan Blake"; Whittaker, "'Walking thro' Eternity,'" 279-87.

<sup>101</sup> McCabe, interview.

Golgonooza. They are usually not trying to complete, but rather to continue, such Blakean mapping. McCabe comments explicitly on his sense of the metatextuality of Blake's mapping of London in the illuminated books:

as a writer, a poet, myself, I think what's significant is the way Blake internalises and objectifies London around him. It's such a gift to be inside another poet's working practice and that *is* the entirety of Blake's working practice—it's very meta, it's very live, and very in the process of being worked out even while it's presented as the finished work eventually.<sup>102</sup>

To provide an insight into his own workings-out, McCabe produced a diagram he had sketched as he planned out his project on the "Magnificent Seven" cemeteries in London (figure 109). He explained,

It was literally a doodle one morning, reading Blake's fourfold vision [...]. It says Coda on it but it's not that at all, more of a map to slide underneath my own mapping of the cemeteries. There are a few other maps I draw on in a similar way, for example Booth's poverty maps and the bomb damage maps of WW2. Oh, and the map of underground rivers. I draw on these different layers of history and hidden elements of the city, threading them into my narrative of searching for the poets. Blake is always there, if sometimes a silent witness!<sup>103</sup>

McCabe's use of a base "map" extrapolated from Blake's mappings of Golgonooza is a fascinating insight into one example of the simultaneously literal and figurative way in which Blake's London is brought to bear on contemporary artistic and poetic mappings of the city. Like Sinclair's *Lud Heat* map, it is very abstract, though McCabe's practice is, like Sinclair's, inextricably tied to walking. In the sketch, there is a sense of occult alignment, but also of urban history and flux, of provisionality, and of creative dialogue between various different kinds of mapping throughout history. There is also a desire to locate "hidden" aspects of London's history, which has both occultist and historical revisionist connotations. Many of these ideas are common threads that run through the huge variety of publications, events, and artworks that continue to emanate from London Blakeans. In what follows, I examine a few of these common and frequently entwined threads: psychogeography, pilgrimage, and the politics of space and place. But I also hope to keep in view the sheer diversity and energetic inventiveness of these productions, each of which takes up the "end of a golden

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> McCabe, email correspondence with the author, February 3, 2021.



string” in a novel way, seeking to re-enchant urban space by responding to the re-mapping or continuing impulse that Blake’s texts actively encourage.

## Psychogeography

“Psychogeography”: many artists and writers have laid claim to the term, or have been associated with it by other commentators. Nowadays it is used commonly and quite casually, referring in essence to any activity that somehow involves the relationship between geography and the mind. The term is first recorded in the revolutionary writings of Parisian Lettrist/Situationist Guy Debord during the ’60s, but later theorists have cast their nets further back into the past, for example identifying psychogeographical features in the writing of Daniel Defoe, Thomas De Quincey, and indeed William Blake.<sup>104</sup> Blake’s particular melding of mental and physical aspects of journeying, which I have explored in depth in “The Mental Traveller” and across the late illuminated books, seems to have been particularly generative for those responding to his work in a “psychogeographical” vein. This is a particularly important thematic and conceptual “capability” that Blake’s texts actively initiate: in “The Mental Traveller,” for instance, the relationship between “mental” and corporeal travel troubles a dualistic reading, just as in the *Milton* lyric the mention of “mental fight” jostles with the tropes of pilgrimage and corporeal struggle, and local/personal geographies jostle with far more global and indeed cosmic geographical scales throughout Blake’s mythopoeisis. It is my claim that such tensions, and the self-conscious provisionality of Blake’s geographical evocations, have been operative in stimulating the kinds of psychogeographical continuation undertaken by London Blakeans, seeking to navigate similar territory and indeed to write themselves and their present into it.

The term “psychogeography” has been used by or associated with “visionary” London novelists and film-makers J. G. Ballard, Peter Ackroyd, Stewart Home, Patrick Keiller, and of course Iain Sinclair. It has been suggested that, especially in his early works *Lud Heat* (1975), *Suicide Bridge* (1979), and *White Chappell: Scarlet Tracings* (1987), Sinclair’s psychogeographical practice dimmed the revolutionary energies of the Situationists and had a now-frowned-upon recourse to “earth mysteries” as expounded for instance by Alfred

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<sup>104</sup> E.g., Coverley, *Psychogeography*.

Watkin's theory of ley lines.<sup>105</sup> In a similar vein, Andrew Aidan Dun's slightly later *Vale Royal* (1995) drew on Blake's so-called "golden quatrain" to emphasise the supposed mystical significance of the area around Kings Cross and St. Pancras, imagined as though seen through the eyes of William Blake and Thomas Chatterton. However, this occultism, in Sinclair's case at least, does not render a work automatically apolitical. Throughout his career Sinclair has been an outspoken opponent of Thatcherism, consumerism, and socially damaging, state-sponsored urban redevelopment programmes such as those surrounding the London Olympics. Importantly, he has also remained particularly immersed in Blake's concept of London, at one point dubbing Blake the "Godfather of Psychogeography."<sup>106</sup> I make no attempt to downplay Sinclair's gigantic impact on London writers and artists: his work has no doubt brought many to an awareness of Blake's vertiginous mappings of London and their potential for creative reworking. After all, it was Sinclair who seems to have headed a psychogeographical "turn" in the reception of Blake. He distinguishes pointedly between psychogeographical responses and the '60s enthusiasm for Blake:

That 1960s counterculture found qualities in Blake to which they instinctively responded. They re-invented him in their own image. He was pressed into the charivari of the *International Times* alongside William Burroughs, Wilhelm Reich, and Michael Moorcock's Jerry Cornelius. This was not the topographer Blake. This was "Glad Day" Blake as celebrated by English poets like Michael Horowitz—and beyond that, beyond the confines of Notting Hill, by Allen Ginsberg, who stated repeatedly that he owed his core vision of the voice of the Lambeth poet.<sup>107</sup>

Sinclair diagnoses one of the many fragmentations that has continued to characterise the contemporary reception of Blake. There are many "Blakes," and so often proponents of one "Blake" feel that others are *getting Blake wrong* or not acting in a way that *Blake would have liked*. I myself, like so many other critics, am certainly not innocent of this kind of statement. Interestingly, many practitioners today combine aspects drawn from the spirit both of a '60s "'Glad Day' Blake" and that of Blake-as-topographer. After all, Sinclair and Ginsberg's 1967 film *Ah! Sunflower* itself sprang from Ginsberg's compulsion to visit Primrose Hill, where Blake

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<sup>105</sup> Whittaker, "Walking thro' Eternity."

<sup>106</sup> Cited in Coverley, *Psychogeography*, 32.

<sup>107</sup> Sinclair, *Topographic Sublime*, 9-10.

had supposedly “conversed” with the “Spiritual Sun,” according to Crabb Robinson—surely itself a combination of these two different “Blakes” that Sinclair seems to be polarising.<sup>108</sup>

Practitioners of Blake-influenced “psychogeography” do sometimes explicitly place themselves in dialogue with Sinclair, but they each have their own personal connections to the terrain and their own form of creative practice and production. Certainly, there is an unmistakable confluence between engagement with Blake and with psychogeography. As I have suggested, McDevitt was a key figure in the landscape of British contemporary psychogeography. As well as his literary walks, McDevitt wrote prolifically on Blake’s London, Jerusalem, and contemporary London, and made regular appearances in collaborations with other London Blakeans—the Flat Time House exhibition and events, William Blake Congregation events, Entropy Press and New River Press publications, among many, many others. McDevitt drew omnivorously from British countercultural happenings, present-day political events, historical literature, and above all the changing landscape of London itself. Though often crossing paths with Sinclair, McDevitt’s work was more closely bound to the places associated with Blake’s life than is Sinclair’s form of psychogeography. The Blake walks series visited almost all the sites with direct connections to Blake’s life and work, from Broad(wick) Street to Bunhill Fields. By contrast, Sinclair notes, “I did go round all the addresses associated with Blake. They did not mean that much to me. Essentially, these were now dead places.”<sup>109</sup> On this point, Sinclair differs from the vast majority of practitioners, as revealed in interviews and in the content of their work itself. Rather than such places with links to Blake’s biography, the most significant Blakean spur for Sinclair’s own psychogeographical pedestrianism, as Whittaker has emphasised, has been the passage from *Jerusalem* in which Los takes a walk along London’s East End, which I cited at length in Chapter Three.<sup>110</sup> Sinclair cites it in countless publications, including the recent *Topographic Sublime*. In our interview, he described his discovery of the passage, which

on a kind of banal level describes the actual topography of an actual walk, which of course I immediately had to undertake. It was particularly relevant because I was working in Stratford in East London [...]. And reading this at the

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<sup>108</sup> Bentley, *Blake Records*, 424.

<sup>109</sup> Sinclair, interview.

<sup>110</sup> Whittaker, “Walking thro’ Eternity.”

same time, and I thought this was a sort of coding of the energies of London, which fired up everything I did.<sup>111</sup>

Sinclair's strong psychological reaction to re-enacting the walk of Los and the inspiration that it injected into his work are, however, not worlds apart from the kinds of phenomenologies indicated by other writers in connection with biographical Blakean places—places with a direct Blake heritage. David Suff describes an experience in Bunhill Fields as an almost epiphanic moment in his creative development:

[S]omehow it all seemed like I was kind of in the presence of at the very least a Blakean way of looking at the world. I'm not claiming that there was a ghost speaking to me from the past, it wasn't that kind of experience, but it was something very powerful and it fed into a lot of work.<sup>112</sup>

Sophie Herxheimer, meanwhile, describes her sense of *feeling* Blake's presence in her local area in Lambeth, where she grew up and still resides: "I love that idea that there's a sort of forcefield in which Blake walks past my childhood house, I walk past his childhood house, and round we go."<sup>113</sup> This layering of temporalities, which both Herxheimer and McCabe call "anti-chronology," is rooted in the logic and content of Blake's work; this aspect of contemporary psychogeographical response can be understood as directly afforded or opened up by Blake's texts themselves.

Like McCabe's search for a vision on Peckham Rye in *Cenotaph South*, accounts of personal affective and psychological responses to Blakean places chime with what Yoseloff refers to as a "psychic pull" of places associated with Blake.<sup>114</sup> These recollections are framed in almost spiritual terms, and suggest a curious faith in the notion that Blakean places are in some way enchanted, or that they at least give rise to certain psychological or imaginative experiences. Yet while deeply personal, these psychogeographies also typically entail a strong socio-political consciousness that, channelling Blake, reacts to and seeks to subvert those structures of the built environment that are enforced by the powerful. I shall return to the topic of politics and place shortly, but it is important to bear in mind that few small-press figures who invoke Blake in a psychogeographical framework can be called "apolitical," and

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<sup>111</sup> Sinclair, interview

<sup>112</sup> Suff, interview.

<sup>113</sup> Herxheimer, interview.

<sup>114</sup> Yoseloff, interview.

the majority explicitly adopt broadly leftist, oppositional stances and rhetoric, indicating the continuation of a long tradition whereby Blake has been invoked as a luminary of and for the British political left.<sup>115</sup> Conversely, scholars such as Jason Whittaker and John Higgs have highlighted the still-prominent right-wing adoption of Blake.<sup>116</sup> However, based on the evidence that I have been able to locate, the small-press adoption of Blake (especially along “psychogeographical” lines) has indeed tended to skew overwhelmingly left.

In Albani’s *Mystic Map*, Simon Cole refers to a common conception of Blake as the “original psychogeographer.”<sup>117</sup> In her introduction, Albani’s acknowledgements include “Peter Ackroyd, Iain Sinclair, Henry Eliot, Niall McDevitt & June Singer.”<sup>118</sup> Her book concludes with a quotation from Sinclair’s *Topographic Sublime*: “The golden chain goes on and on, and the words of guidance, the maps we need to follow, are all to be found in the works of the archetypal London writer, William Blake of Lambeth.”<sup>119</sup> Where in the *Topographic Sublime* Sinclair rails against privatisation, Albani’s motivations are also avowedly political: “We’re currently in an era of activism, a necessary response to global events. What can we learn from Blake, his anarchist ideas and his own unique activism in 18<sup>th</sup> century London?”<sup>120</sup> As is also a recurring feature of psychogeographical discourse, Albani is also eager to distinguish Blakean psychogeography from the nineteenth-century type of the *flâneur*:

Whereas the flâneur seems to detach himself from all that is around him and acts purely as an observer, Blake “feels” everything, “feels” the collective anxieties of his age and wants to repair what he sees as a fractured city, in the throes of industrialisation.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> A foundational example of the adoption of Blake as a figure of and for the left is E. P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class*, which is regarded as a classic of British New Left history. See also Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast*. Another important text in this tradition is Erdman’s *Prophet Against Empire*, which McDevitt explicitly cited in our interview as a major influence on his engagement with Blake (March 4, 2021).

<sup>116</sup> Whittaker has focused especially on the conservative reception of “Jerusalem,” the hymn based on Blake’s prefatory lyric to *Milton*: see, e.g., “Blake and the New Jerusalem: Art and English Nationalism in the Twenty-First Century,” *Visual Culture in Britain*, 19, no. 3 (2018): 380-92; the chequered reception of the hymn is also the subject of his recent book *Jerusalem: Blake, Parry, and the Fight for Englishness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022). Higgs also sheds light on the complexity of the picture, outlining some of the ways in which conservatives have also laid claim to Blake over the years (*William Blake Now*, 2019), though he is eager to make clear his own commitment to a leftist view of Blake.

<sup>117</sup> Simon Cole, in Louisa Amelia Albani, *William Blake’s Mystic Map of London* (London: Night Bird Press N2, 2019) (n. p.).

<sup>118</sup> Albani, *Mystic Map* (n. p.).

<sup>119</sup> Sinclair, *Topographic Sublime*, 46.

<sup>120</sup> Albani, *Mystic Map* (n. p.).

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

Albani has described sitting in Bunhill Fields with Cole as they planned their project together.<sup>122</sup> Like many other publications in a Blakean-mapping vein, Albani's *Mystic Map* is indeed, as Whittaker writes, "deeply personal," and this is an inherent aspect of both psychogeography and the reception of Blake that tends to get downplayed or undervalued in scholarship, where, again there is often a concern with who or what is *getting Blake right*.<sup>123</sup>

## Pilgrimage

The almost spiritual fervour that is so often attributed both to places or spaces described in Blake's work, and to places associated with his life, has tended not to be taken seriously by academics. But much here is extremely interesting. These experiences, and the practices that they inform, suggest the rehearsal of a kind of present-day pilgrimage, a re-enchanted geography that practitioners seek to recuperate from the ravages of urban redevelopment and privatisation. While Blake is seen as potentially unlocking access to some more authentic or more inspiring idea of the metropolis, urban topography is seen as unlocking a supposedly unmediated access to Blake himself, through the practice of "literally walk[ing] in Blake's footsteps," as Albani puts it.<sup>124</sup> The latter notion is operative in a longstanding dream of impossibly achieving immediate or unmediated access to Blake's work, a dream, in John Durham Peters' terms, of speaking with angels—as differently rehearsed through digital and multimedial means of simulating immediacy (as in the Blake Archive).<sup>125</sup>

Pilgrimage, of course, is also a central theme in Blake's own work, as George Cumberland seems to have recognised in his poetic annotation to *Europe*. In particular, the lyric "And did those feet" as well as the "golden string" passage, for instance, seem directly to encourage new mappings for pilgrimage routes within the context of increasing modernisation. The activities of the William Blake Congregation appear to literalise this notion; as sometimes-attendeo Andrea McLean explains, "[t]hey celebrate every occasion:

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<sup>122</sup> Albani, interview.

<sup>123</sup> Whittaker, "Review: William Blake's Mystic Map of London," *Zoamorphosis*, July 8, 2019, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://zoamorphosis.com/2019/07/review-william-blakes-mystic-map-of-london/>.

<sup>124</sup> Albani, interview.

<sup>125</sup> John Durham Peters, *Speaking Into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

they go to the church to celebrate when he was baptised, they celebrate his wedding, they really embody and evoke him.”<sup>126</sup> Meanwhile, McLean’s own work offers one instance of a thematic engagement with the notion of pilgrimage as Blake explores it in his work. Her *Mappa Mundi*, based loosely on the famous Herefordshire Cathedral *mappa mundi* and installed near the Maps Room at the British Library (figure 110), includes, she pointed out to me, a very slender “golden string,” in reference to the Blake lyric from *Jerusalem*.<sup>127</sup> The “golden string” also appears more prominently on her map for the Blake Society, made in collaboration with Henry Eliot, where Los is shown winding the string (figure 111).

Pilgrimage has been a strong concern of Sinclair’s work, especially in connection with the painter Renchi Bicknell. The original edition of *Lud Heat* displayed Blake’s first design to the *Pilgrim’s Progress* (*Christian Reading in his Book*) on the frontispiece. Bunhill Fields seems to be one place related to Blake’s biography that does have an important “heat” and impact for Sinclair:

I was always interested in this relation of Blake re-working Bunyan and being connected with Bunyan and then discovering Bunhill Fields, the old plague-pit, and finding Blake and Defoe and Bunyan all sort of talking to each other in this dead triangulation. That place then became the launching spot for most of my walks [...].<sup>128</sup>

The old headstone for William and Catherine in this “dead triangulation” is a regular site for many present-day pilgrims; indeed, there is invariably a vase of flowers beside the stone, perpetually restocked with fresh flowers, while the colossal tombs of Bunyan and Defoe scarcely enjoy such tributes. As I have mentioned, the 1974 exhibition *Albion Island Vortex* and its recent re-staging also treated themes of pilgrimage, focusing on the relationship between Blake and Bunyan. Sinclair recalls,

Renchi [Bicknell] in particular has produced some small-scale Blakean books, including a very nice book about Blake’s work with Bunyan, in which he undertook a massive walking pilgrimage of his own. He’d just taught himself etching so he was using that alongside Blake and Bunyan, alongside his own paintings. It was a totally Blakean contemporary project produced in a book

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<sup>126</sup> McLean, interview.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Sinclair, interview.

which, probably, nobody ever saw. [...] It's a substantially Blakean project, and I think particularly inspired by Gerda Norvig's Book.<sup>129</sup>

While Sinclair describes solitary walks by himself and Bicknell as constituting a "pilgrimage," numerous group walks have and continue to be undertaken in London based around Blakean places—McDevitt's walks are a prime example, and Blake-themed walks have also have been led by McCabe and Henry Eliot, among others.

### The Politics of Space and Place

As Julian Wolfreys puts it, place, for Blake, and in particular the city of London, afforded "the potential to think of the political as taking place."<sup>130</sup> The situatedness of politics, and the complexities of spatial politics, have continued to inflect the practices of London Blakeans to this day, in both the content of publications and the context of public protest and the act of publishing itself.

As I have suggested, the overwhelming character of the London Blakeans appears to cleave to political leftism. I have been able to locate only scattered adoptions of Blakean phraseology and imagery in the work of explicitly right-wing creative practitioners in the UK. In one particularly striking instance, British-born alt-right writer Milo Yiannopoulos self-published (under the alias Milo Andreas Wagner) a book of poetry entitled *Eskimo Papoose* (Manchester: Donkey Punch Press, 2007). In the preface to the work, Yiannopoulos makes a passing reference to Blake, alongside Baudelaire and Lawrence, in a manner that suggests an interest in affecting a similar level of "unfinishedness."<sup>131</sup> The body of the book makes no further mention of or notable allusion to Blake's work, but the evocation of Blake in the work of a notorious figure of the British far-right does point to a splintering within Blake's legacy. Though his appearance in the work of an alt-right figure like Yiannopoulos may be surprising, Blake's legacy has often been associated with canonicity and the establishment, for instance in the patriotic intonement of "Jerusalem" at rugby league matches, a phenomenon that has particularly interested Jason Whittaker.<sup>132</sup> This characterisation of Blake's legacy has also

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*; see Norvig, *Dark Figures*.

<sup>130</sup> Wolfreys, *Writing London*, 34.

<sup>131</sup> Milo Andreas Wagner, "Author's Preface" to *Eskimo Papoose* (Manchester: Donkey Punch Press, 2007).

<sup>132</sup> Whittaker, "Blake and the New Jerusalem"; Whittaker, *Jerusalem*.



appeared in literary evocations of his work. Novelist Isabel Waidner includes Blake's "The Tyger" as one of four poems referred to in the diabolical "Life in the UK test" in her novel *We Are Made of Diamond Stuff*, published in 2019 by London-based independent publisher Peninsula Press.<sup>133</sup> Waidner's move strongly associates Blake's legacy with an elitist, exclusionary British establishment.

Although it is possible that Yiannopoulos' adoption of an alias in *Eskimo Papoose* was intended to mitigate personal risk, this seems unlikely for a figure who has otherwise been unabashedly vocal about his political views. Still, in response to an article in the US-based online journal *The Imaginative Conservative* about "victim privilege" as a form of "new enslavement" that cites Blake twice in support of a strongly conservative argument, one user identified only as "K" commented that "Unfortunately it's become increasingly difficult for people like you, to write against our social justice league society."<sup>134</sup> The comment suggests the risks apprehended by proponents of both political left and right when it comes to independent publishing. Blake himself could hardly have been a stranger to the element of risk. Although we do not know the precise circumstances, it may well have been owing to Blake's or Joseph Johnson's increasing fears of persecution that the projected seven-book *The French Revolution* never materialised, with only the first book being set in type under Johnson's imprint but apparently never published. In his self-publishing, too, Blake was necessarily going up against risk in both political and financial terms. According to Mark Crosby, faced with the Pitt government's intimidating legislative measures to suppress seditious writings, "Blake was careful to police his radicalism during this period [i.e., the 1790s], weaving his political views into the dense mythology of his poetry and art or confining it to private manuscript annotations."<sup>135</sup> If this was the case, Blake's caution was surely justified: Joseph Johnson was later (in 1798) tried and imprisoned for seditious libel after publishing Gilbert Wakefield's *A Reply to Some parts of the Bishop of Landaff's Address to the People of Great Britain*, and Blake himself was charged (but eventually acquitted) with

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<sup>133</sup> Isabel Waidner, *We Are Made of Diamond Stuff* (London: Peninsula Press, 2019).

<sup>134</sup> "K," comment made on June 22, 2020, on an article by Joseph Mussomeli, "Victim Privilege, Cultural Appropriation, & the New Enslavement," *The Imaginative Conservative*, February 9, 2018, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2018/02/victim-privilege-cultural-appropriation-new-enslavement-joseph-mussomeli.html>.

<sup>135</sup> Mark Crosby, "'A Fabricated Perjury': The [Mis]Trial of William Blake," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 72, no. 1 (2009): 30.

uttering seditious expressions in the notorious 1803 trial.<sup>136</sup> Although Blake's trial did not relate directly to his printed works, the event attests to the repressive legal climate in Britain following the French Revolution, the wider effects of which on literature and, relatedly, on publishing in Romantic-era Britain have been influentially explored by John Bugg.<sup>137</sup>

Independent and self-publishing today is similarly accompanied by financial, legal, and reputational risk, insofar as practitioners are not consistently protected by institutional backing and so are personally and directly responsible for their own financial success and for the political views expressed in their publications. It will be worth examining some of the political stakes that are explicitly brought to bear in London Blakeans' publications, in order to understand both the freedom and concomitant risk involved in this kind of production today.

To return, then, to the London Blakeans that I have located, the majority of their concerns are recognisably aligned with left-wing politics. Particular preoccupations of these practitioners are the closely related issues of urban redevelopment, privatisation, and consequent alienation and social exclusion that are so often witnessed and documented in Britain's capital. Sinclair's *Topographic Sublime*, like much of his other work, is strident on these issues, arguing against the encroachments of government surveillance and control of physical spaces. Many writers and artists make reference to Blake's "London" from the *Songs of Experience* as an archetypal portrait of the alienation caused by the state-endorsed commercialisation of the urban landscape. Both founders of Hercules Editions were deeply interested in documenting what Yoseloff calls "provisional areas of London—places where gentrification hasn't quite taken hold yet."<sup>138</sup> They began as a multimedia double-act: MacDonald had been photographing dilapidated shopfronts across London for years, and Yoseloff decided to write poems to accompany some of these photographs. The result was their first Hercules Editions publication, entitled *Formerly* (2012), which was accompanied by a separate folding map entitled "Off the Map," showing the locations where the photographs had been taken. Here, too, there is a clear sense of politically motivated revisionism in the

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<sup>136</sup> On Johnson's trial, see Helen Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing, and Dissent: Joseph Johnson and the Cause of Liberty* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 155-71; on Blake's trial, see Crosby, "A Fabricated Perjury."

<sup>137</sup> John Bugg, *Five Long Winters: The Trials of British Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

<sup>138</sup> Yoseloff, interview.

phrase “off the map,” and in the pair’s emphasis on “hidden histories” within London.<sup>139</sup> It is not difficult to see why observers of urban afflictions turn to Blake’s frequent attempts in the illuminated books to obsessively record placenames and landmarks even as the city’s appearance embodies and enforces the social ills against which he rails.

Numerous figures that we have encountered participate actively in public protests, flying Blakean flags to agitate for various causes. James Murray-White records the attendance of Micallef and Elwes at a recent Extinction Rebellion protest, where they were spotted brandishing Blakean signs.<sup>140</sup> Members of the Blake Bloc regularly take to the streets in protests brandishing a Blakean banner (figures 112 and 113). An Entropy Press publication entitled *New Jerusalem* from the *Papakura Post Office* series contains photographs of protestors against Liberal Democrat Nick Clegg’s proposed cuts to the Arts and increased university tuition fees in 2010. The zine is packed with Blakean material provided by McDevitt and Aidan Dun, part of which muses over whether it is “Blakean” to be a royalist, an anarchist, a utopian, and so on. Further afield, Paul Chan, a member of the New York group calling themselves “Friends of William Blake,” created a map to direct street protestors during the Republican National Convention in 2004, adopting as the project’s “trinity of ‘patron saints’” Charles Fourier, Kathy Acker, and William Blake (figure 114).<sup>141</sup>

Some of these invocations may be connected with the anecdote told in Gilchrist’s *Life* of Blake, in which Blake witnessed the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots of 1780, although it seems that the adoption of Blake as a protest-figure relates more to ideas about the politics expressed in his work. The activist action that such printed material documents and promotes arguably harnesses and actually acts upon the affect of the “critical thinker’s enthusiasm” that Stephen Goldsmith has identified in the marxist-leaning Blake scholar’s efforts to “substantiate his or her agency in the world” following an affective current in Blake’s own work that “characterizes criticism as a mode of action.”<sup>142</sup> Interestingly, while Goldsmith identifies a particular excitement or enthusiasm fired up by the act of reading Blake, he stops

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<sup>139</sup> Yoseloff, “Number 13 Hercules Buildings, Lambeth.”

<sup>140</sup> James Murray-White, “Blake in the Midst of Rebellion!” *Finding Blake: Reimagining William Blake for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, April 19, 2019, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://findingblake.org.uk/blake-in-the-midst-of-rebellion/>.

<sup>141</sup> Jeffrey Kastner, “Manhattan Project: Jeffrey Kastner on Friends of William Blake,” *Artforum International*, 43, no. 1 (2004): 216. See also Freedman, *Myth of America*, 245-50.

<sup>142</sup> Stephen Goldsmith, *Blake’s Agitation: Criticism & The Emotions* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 2.

short of examining the ways in which this readerly response has fed into other practices or “modes of action”—like protest and activist publishing—which see themselves as political. These practices are extremely striking, not least when set against Blake’s biographical “consistent pattern of nonparticipation,” as far as the historical evidence suggests.<sup>143</sup>

Back in London, Max Reeves’ anarchist activism relates to his independent publishing activities, which grew out of making agit prop material during his student days in Auckland. It also relates to his connection with Freedom Books, the legendary anarchist bookshop and publisher on Angel Alley off Whitechapel High Street. Micalef and Reeves collaborated on an exhibition called “William Blake – Visionary Artist,” held at the gallery upstairs at Freedom Books in September 2012.<sup>144</sup> Blake’s connection to Peckham was a central theme of the show, featuring in artworks by John Riordon and a poem by John Crow with crochet by Katy Kaos. The 2012 *Papakura Post-Office* zine entitled “Mind-Forg’d Manacles” was produced on the occasion of the exhibition, featuring reproductions of some of the artworks, including cover art by Matthew Couper (figure 115). Micalef describes a sculpture of his exhibited in the gallery, called “The Blood of Enitharmon,” which was destroyed in a fire-bombing incident at Freedom Books in 2013. The author of the Spitalfields Life blog, writing under the alias “the gentle author,” reported on the fire-bomb attack.<sup>145</sup> When the writer visited, Reeves produced a charred copy of Peter Marshall’s *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist* (first published by Freedom Press in 1988) (figure 116), declaring: “This is a copy of William Blake burnt by fascists.”<sup>146</sup> The significance of the Freedom Press publication to Blake’s posthumous political reputation has also been noted by Michael Ferber.<sup>147</sup>

Relatedly, Blake’s sociopolitical consciousness, and its situatedness within London streets, has been channelled by charitable organisations and activities in London. New River Press’s use of Blake’s design to “The Chimney Sweeper” on the cover of their pamphlet *Poetry Against Homelessness*, produced in collaboration with Crisis UK, is worth recalling (figure 100). Meanwhile, a charity called Mental Fight Club, begun by Sarah Wheeler and named after Ben Okri’s Blakean poem by that name, hosts events and gallery shows in a space called the

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<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>144</sup> Micalef, interview.

<sup>145</sup> “the gentle author,” “Fire Attack at The Freedom Press,” *Spitalfields Life*, February 8, 2013, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://spitalfieldslife.com/2013/02/08/fire-attack-at-the-freedom-press/>.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Michael Ferber, “Peter Marshall, *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist*. London: Freedom Press, 1988” (review article), *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 24, no. 1 (1988): 262.

Dragon Café in the crypt of a church in Borough, aiming to counteract urban alienation by providing social support for the mentally ill.<sup>148</sup> McLean describes an event at the Dragon Café in which numerous attendees engaged with Blake's design showing the Daughters of Albion fibrously connected to the earth (figure 5). McLean connected this response to the importance of "touching the Earth" within an urban context, in which "we're quite isolated, in our own bubbles."<sup>149</sup>

The golden string goes on and on indeed. I have scarcely been able to do justice here to the wide array of London Blakeans. Nonetheless, this study has sought to survey some of the unities within the diversity of Blakean independent publishing in London: namely, a strong emphasis on some ideal of "independence," a self-conscious tendency towards small or local forms of production, and a concomitant interest in mapping the local London landscape in ways that draw Blake's life and work into dialogue with present-day urban life. It is valuable to compare the embodied, affective nature of many of these mappings with a critical tendency in Blake scholarship to pursue diagrammatic completion of the mapping that Blake initiates.

There is evidently much work to be done to investigate the wider place of Blake within artistic networks both in London and across the globe. No doubt there are many exciting ventures underway, and on the horizon. Blake's presence in the streets of his home city, at least, has certainly shown no sign of dwindling. Both the plurality of London Blakeans' responses, and their capacity to remediate Blakean mapping along the lines of open-ended continuation, can in turn encourage us to recognise the radical openness of Blake's cartographic imagination—an instructive blueprint for reading Blakean creative enterprise at large. But the fractures and tensions within Blakean small-press activities also repeat many of the challenges that Blake himself faced in seeking to be at once independent *and* artistically and politically influential: though it proliferates and continues to expand into the digital realm, small-press and self-publishing today is far from risk-free. One wonders, perhaps not altogether idly, how Blake would have fared in London's small-press scene today. Certainly, small-press posterity seems bent on winning for Blake the kind of "public attention" that he so longed for in 1793, despite self-consciously aligning itself with just the kind of localism that

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<sup>148</sup> See their page on "Life, Art & Vision of William Blake," accessed February 22, 2021, <http://mentalfightclub.com/william-blake/>.

<sup>149</sup> McLean (interview, January 20, 2021).

ensured Blake's own relative obscurity during his lifetime. What is clear is that, at street level, Blake's London legacy looks about as Golgonoozan as can be: the city of art is continually under construction, new maps continually being drawn and re-drawn by generation after generation of "builders in hope" (*Jerusalem* 12: 43, E 156).

## Conclusion. The Future of Blakean Mapping

And as all of us on earth are united in thought, for it is impossible to think without images of somewhat on earth—So it is impossible to know God or heavenly things without conjunction with those who know God & heavenly things (E 600).

In a marginal annotation to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man* (1788), Blake insists upon the importance, first, of "images of somewhat on earth," and, second, of "conjunction" with the minds of others in attaining knowledge of "God & heavenly things." The quotation evokes some key coordinates of Blake's visionary mapping, which I have sketched throughout this thesis: a groundedness in actual earthly places and an imaginary that is intricately and inescapably *networked* in nature, both combined with an asymptotic reaching for spiritual vision. *It is impossible to think without images of somewhat on earth*: so Blake's cartographic imagination powerfully asserts its earthliness, all the while unsettling the spatio-temporal boundaries of earthliness as we know it. Yet for all his radical strangeness and criticality, Blake energetically participated in the culture of his day, as I have shown to be the case through the lens of cartographic visual culture. "Images of somewhat on earth" and networks of "conjunction" have acted as through-lines woven through the study of Blake's cartographic networks in Chapter One, the closer readings of his art and poetry in Chapters Two and Three, and, finally, the survey of the legacy of Blakean mapping among the London-Blakean networks traced in Chapter Four.

Blakean mapping is an inherently future-tense phenomenon. Blake not only thematises the perpetual futurity of utopia in his figurations of Golgonooza; he also makes his work itself the site for ongoing continuation, a metatextual type for Golgonooza, a map in progress (or, better, in process). As the activities of the London Blakeans show, Blake's repeated insistence on the *incapability* of his visionary mappings to be finite or stable opens up a rich *capability* for readerly continuation through the generation of new responses and reactions to his work, including direct engagements with his cartographic tropes, his "images of somewhat on earth."

This future-tense orientation also leads me to the matter of further scholarly enquiry into Blakean mapping, for which I believe there is much potential. One obvious, though far

from straightforward, avenue would be in the realm of digital mapping, whether concerning the territory of Blake's life, work, or both. Adam Komisaruk seems to have made initial strides in the direction of a map (or what he terms a "model") of Blake's mythology, though the projected "Blake Model" has not materialised.<sup>1</sup> While there may be a greater potential to accommodate complex dimensionality in digital form compared with, say, the static "Mental Traveller" diagrams, a project of this kind would face many conceptual challenges. Any attempt at a digital map of Blake's work would need, as Komisaruk himself points out, to grapple with Blake's own sense of "the provisional, the transitional nature of all representation," seeking to act as "a tool, a supplement rather than a supplantation" of Blake's texts.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond the peculiarities of Blake's texts alone, this study has treated mapping as a networked set of practices, in ways that can hopefully enrich further studies of mapping within the artistic and literary networks of eighteenth-century London and beyond. This kind of work can help to complicate any unitary sense of Enlightenment-era mapping solely as an abstracting, scientific pursuit, instead highlighting the competing, contested cosmologies that abounded during the eighteenth century, and which continue to have currency and resonance up to the present day.

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Komisaruk, "Introducing the Blake Model," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 38, no. 3 (2004/5): 92-102.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.



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# Visionary Mapping: Cartography in William Blake's Networks, Poetry, Visual Art, and Reception

Two Volumes

## **Volume 2: Illustrations**

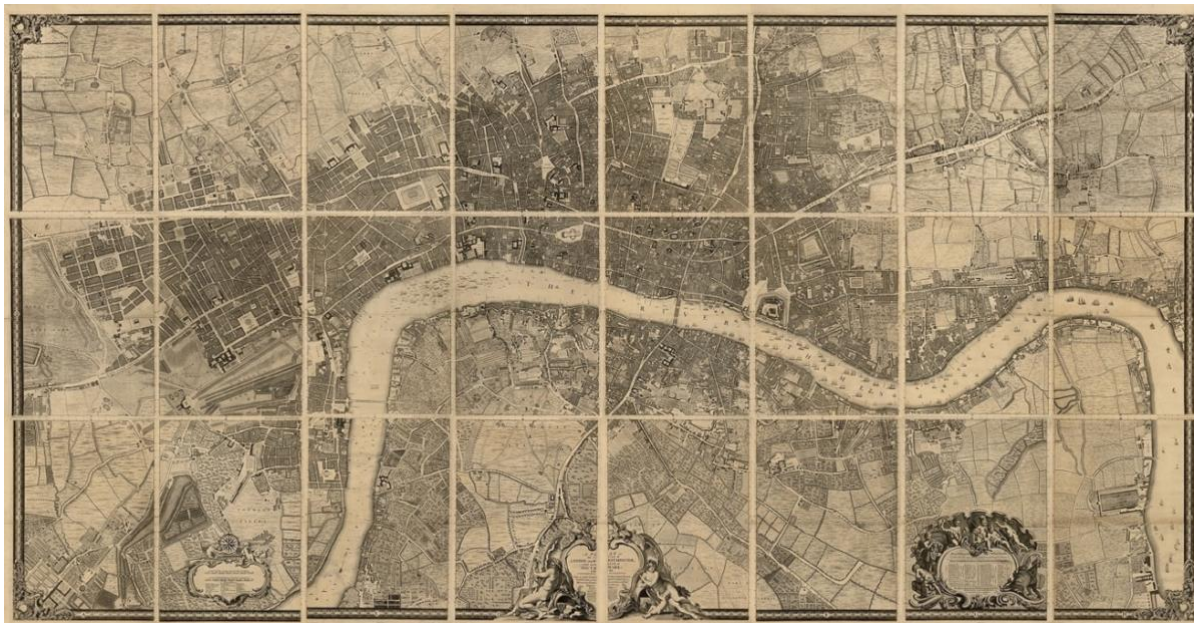
Caroline Anjali Ritchie

PhD

University of York

English and Related Literature

July 2023



**Figure 1.** John Rocque, *A plan of the cities of London and Westminster, and borough of Southwark, with the contiguous buildings* (London: John Pine & John Tinney, 1746) (engraving, 203 x 385 cm. on 24 sheets 77 x 57 cm). Washington, Library of Congress, G5754.L7 1746 .R6.





**Figure 2.** Richard Horwood, *PLAN of the Cities of LONDON and WESTMINSTER the Borough of SOUTHWARK and PARTS adjoining Shewing every HOUSE.* By R. Horwood (London: R. Horwood, 1792-99) (engraving, 1 map on 32 sheets; sheets 55 x 50 cm + 2 index leaves). London, British Library, Maps.Crace.V.

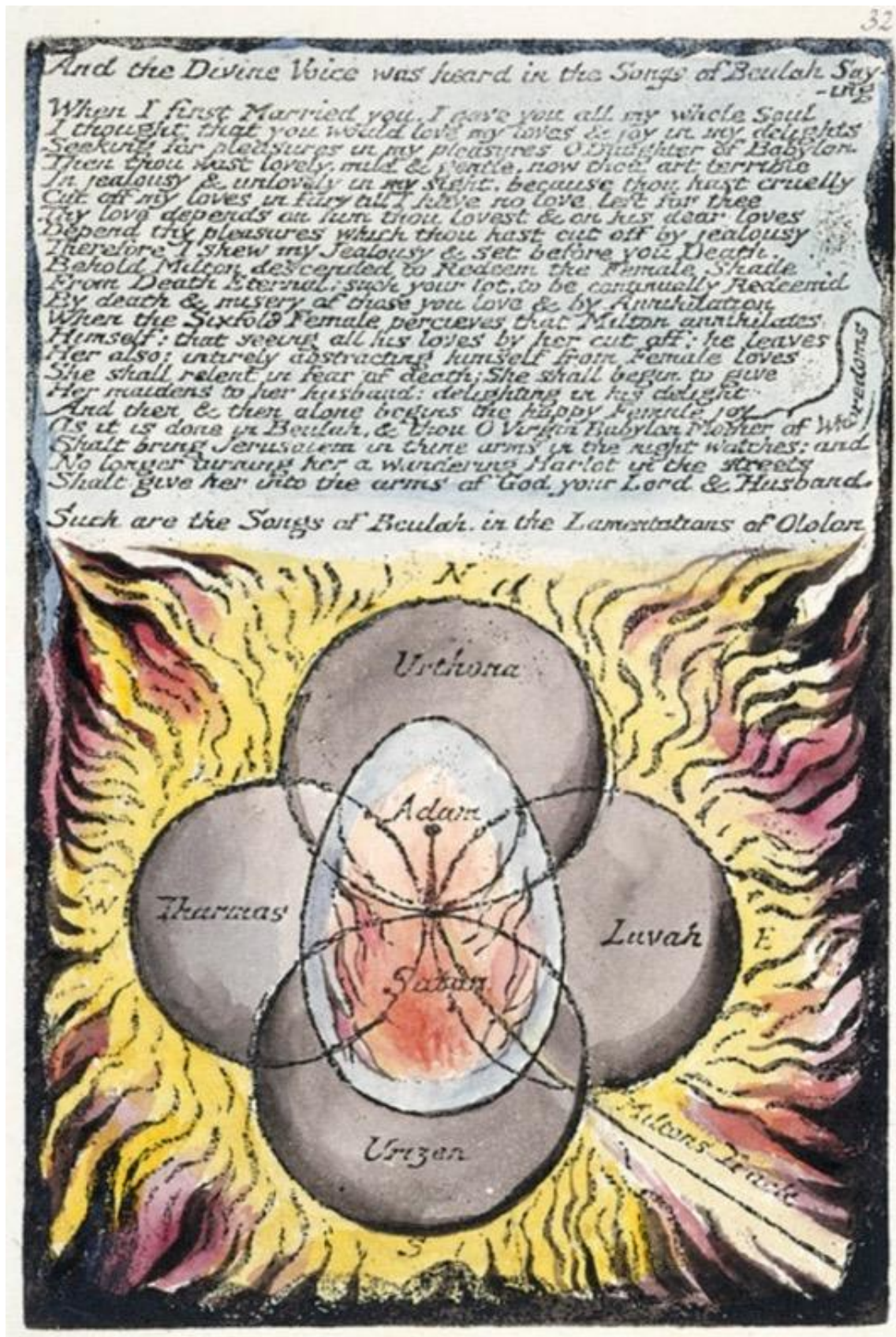


Figure 3. William Blake, *Milton* (Copy A), plate 32, c. 1804-11 (relief and white-line etching, hand coloured, 16.9 x 11.4 cm). London, British Museum, 1859,0625.1-45.





Figure 4. William Blake, *Jerusalem* (Copy E), plate 54, c. 1821, (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 21.2 x 14.9 cm). New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, B1992.8.1(54).





Figure 5. William Blake, *Jerusalem* (Copy E), plate 57, c. 1821, (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 21 x 14.9 cm). New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, B1992.8.1(57).



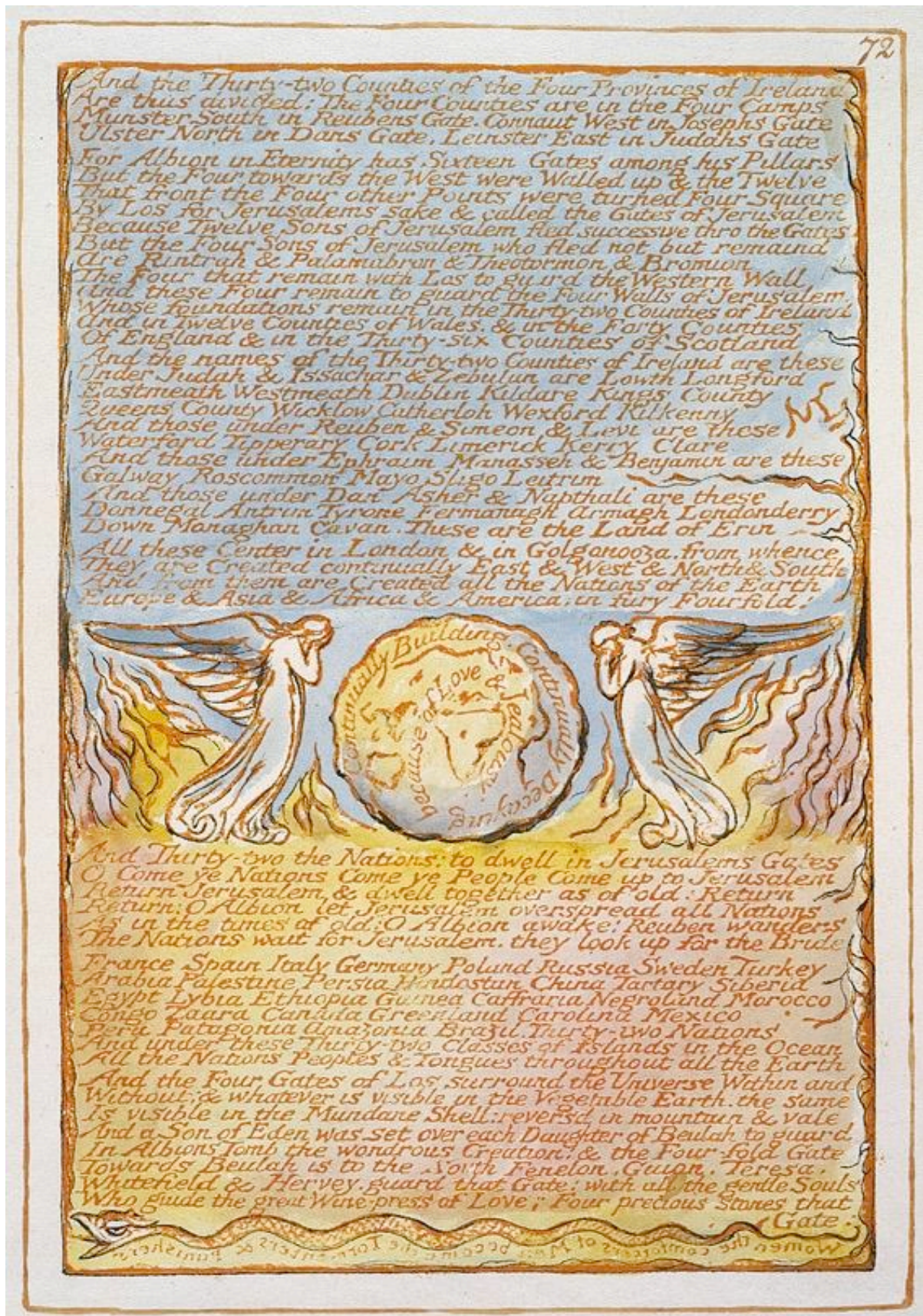
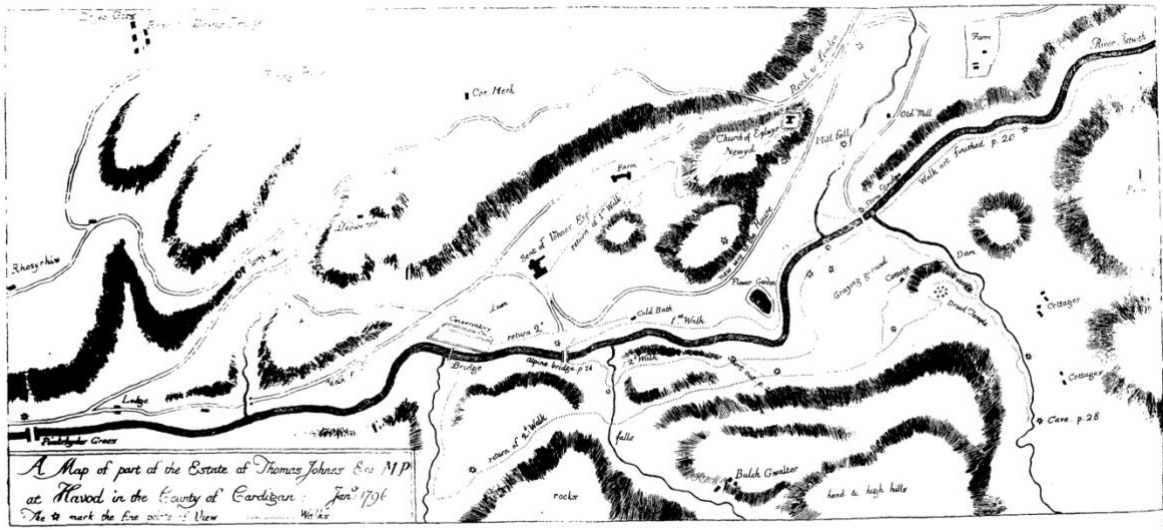


Figure 6. William Blake, *Jerusalem* (Copy E), plate 72, c. 1821, (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 22.5 x 15 cm). New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, B1992.8.1(72).



**Figure 7.** William Blake after George Cumberland, *An Attempt to Describe Hafod*, 1796 (engraved folding map). From George Cumberland, *An attempt to describe Hafod, and the neighbouring scenes about the bridge over Funack, commonly called the Devil's Bridge, in the county of Cardigan* (London: W. Wilson, 1796). London, British Library, 287.b.43.





**Figure 8.** William Blake, *A Corrected and Revised Map of the Country of Allestone*, 1806 (engraving). Published in Benjamin Heath Malkin, *A Father's Memoirs of his Child* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1806). University of California Libraries, SRLF\_UCLA:LAGE-2267808.



**Figure 9.** Robert Cromeck after William Blake, Frontispiece to Malkin's *A Father's Memoirs of his Child*, 1806 (engraving). From Benjamin Heath Malkin, *A Father's Memoirs of his Child* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1806). University of California Libraries, SRLF\_UCLA:LAGE-2267808.





**Figure 10.** William Blake, *Jerusalem* (Copy E), plate 100, c. 1821 (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 14.8 x 22.4 cm). New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, B1992.8.1(1-100).





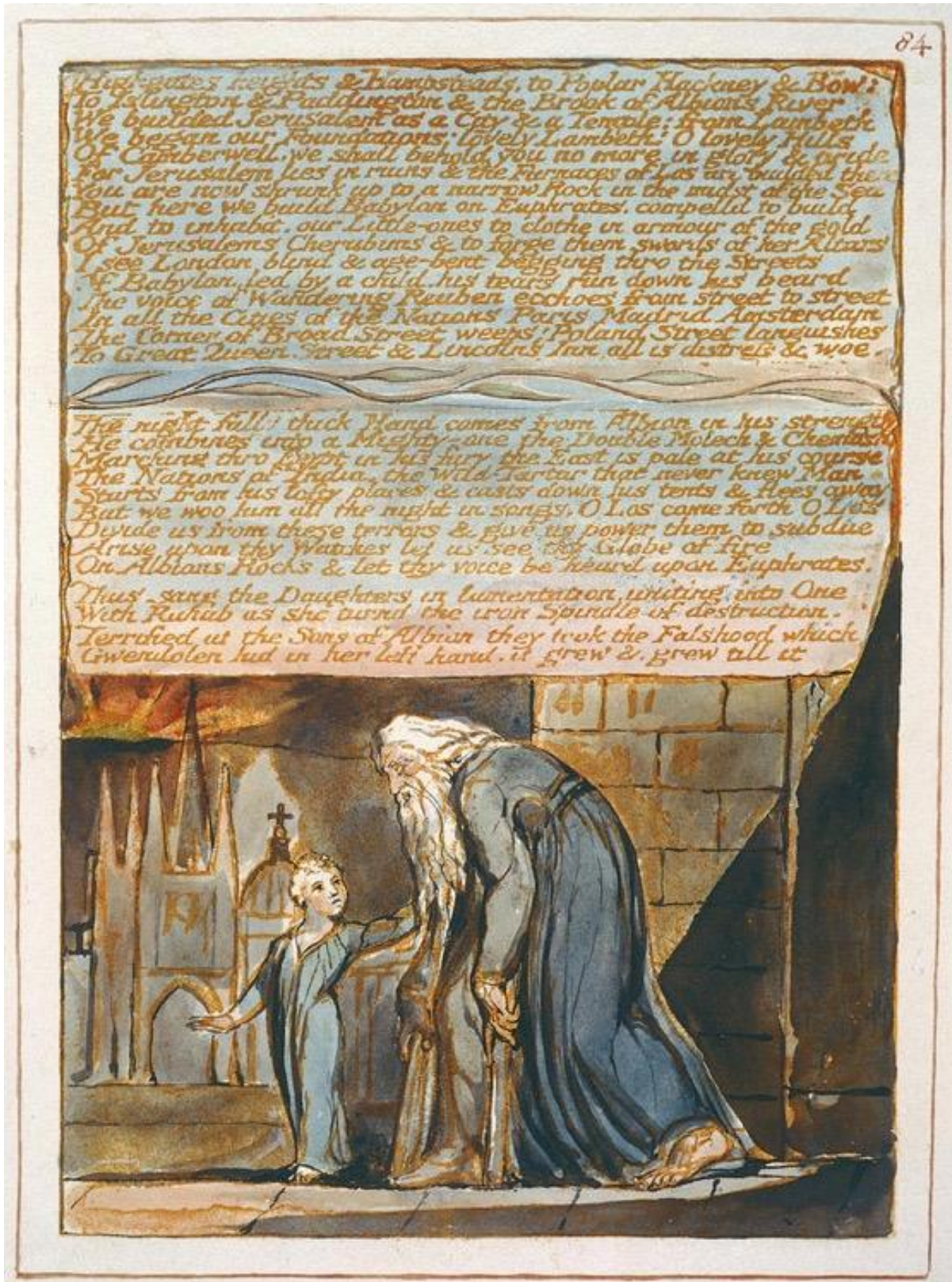


Figure 12. William Blake, *Jerusalem* (Copy E), plate 84, c. 1821 (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 21.1 x 15 cm). New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, B1992.8.1(1-100).





**Figure 13.** William Blake, frontispiece to *The Song of Los* (Copy A), 1795 (relief etching with colour printing and hand colouring, 23.4 x 17.3 cm). London, British Museum, 1856,0209.409-16.





**Figure 14.** William Blake, [Joseph of Arimathea Among the Rocks of Albion], circa 1773 (etching and engraving, 22.9 x 11.9 cm). Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, P.391-1985.





**Figure 15.** Gerard van der Gucht after William Stukeley, *A British Druid*, 1740 (engraving), from Stukeley, *Stonehenge: a temple restor'd to the British druids* (London: printed for W. Innys and R. Manby, at the West End of St. Paul's, 1740), plate 1. London, British Library, 435.i.18.





**Figure 16.** William Blake, *Joseph of Arimathea Among the Rocks of Albion*, circa 1820-25 (etching and engraving, 27.8 x 19.5 cm). Collection Robert N. Essick (acquired 1976).



**Figure 17.** Map showing location of the shops of Joseph Johnson, Carington Bowles, and Peter and John Dollond. Base map: Richard Horwood, *PLAN of the Cities of LONDON and WESTMINSTER the Borough of SOUTHWARK, and PARTS adjoining Shewing every HOUSE* (London: R. Horwood), 1792-99 (see Figure 2).





**Figure 18.** John Raphael Smith, *Spectators at a Print-Shop in St. Paul's Church Yard*, 1774 (hand-coloured mezzotint, 35 x 24.9 cm). London, British Museum, 1935,0522.1.16.





**Figure 19.** After Robert Dighton, *A Real Scene in St Paul's Church Yard, on a Windy Day*, 1782-84 (hand-coloured mezzotint, 35 x 35 cm). London, British Museum, 1935,0522.1.30.





**Figure 20.** After Robert Dighton, *Keep Within Compass*, 1784-86 (hand-coloured mezzotint, 35.2 x 25 cm). London, British Museum, BMSat 6907.





Figure 21. After Robert Dighton, *Keep Within Compass*, 1785 (hand-coloured mezzotint, 35 x 24.9 cm). London, British Museum, BMSat 6903.





**Figure 22.** William Blake, *The Ancient of Days*, from *Europe a Prophecy* (Copy K), frontispiece, 1821 (relief and white-line etching with extensive hand colouring, 23.4 x 16.9 cm). Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, P.127-1950.



**Figure 23.** William Blake, *Newton*, c. 1795-1805 (colour print, ink and watercolour on paper, paper: 54.5 x 76 cm; print: 46 x 60 cm). London, Tate Britain, N05058.



**Figure 24.** After John Aikin, *England and Wales*, 1795 (engraving). From John Aikin, *England delineated or, a geographical description of every county in England and Wales* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1795). London, British Library, 291.d.13.



## FRONTISPIECE.



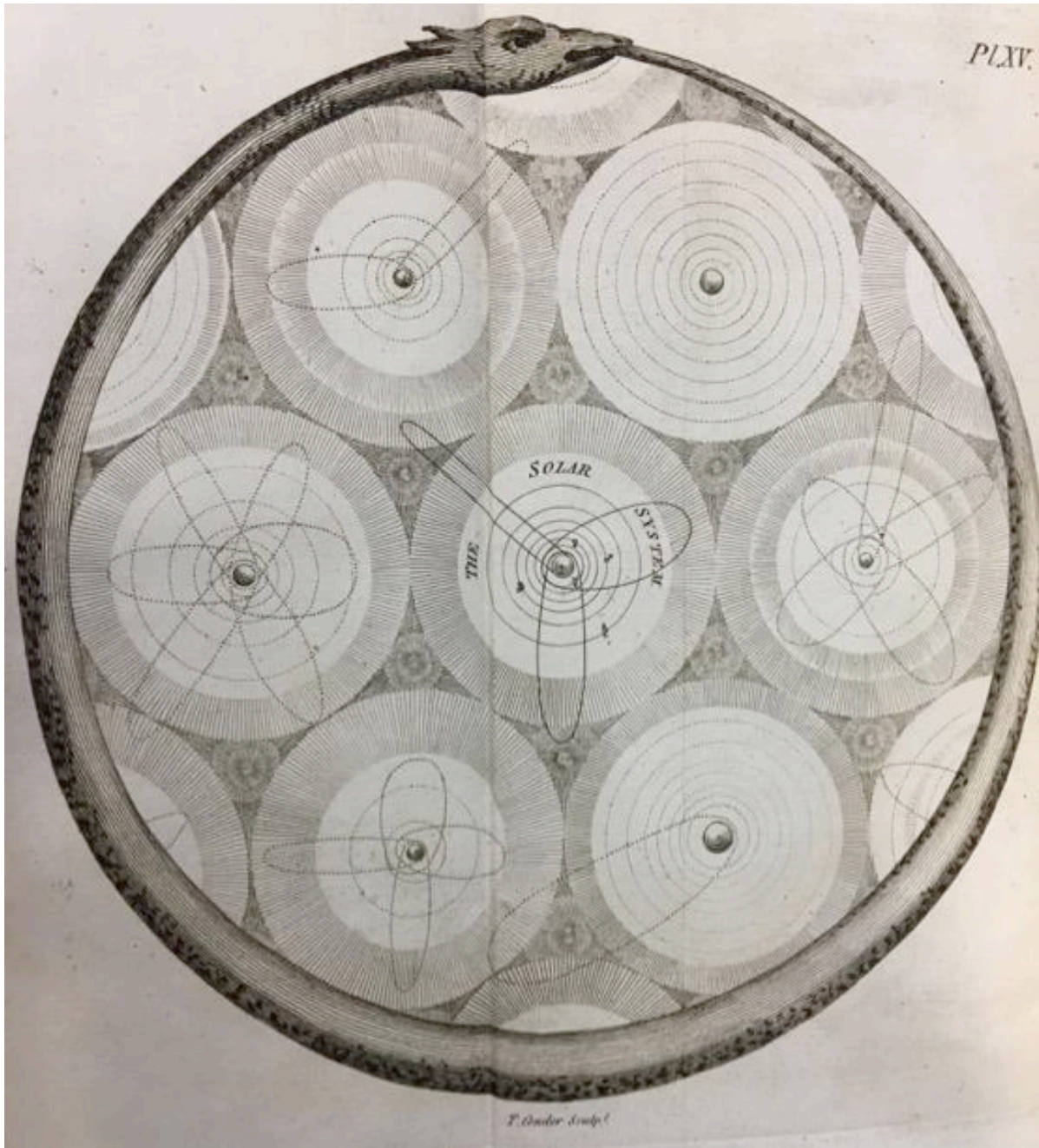
*London Published as the Act directs 17 May 1786 by J. Johnson in S.<sup>t</sup> Pauls Church Yard*

**Figure 25.** John Keyse Sherwin after Henry Fuseli, frontispiece to Bonnycastle's *Astronomy*, 1786 (engraving). From John Bonnycastle, *An introduction to Astronomy* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1786). London, British Library, Digital Store 531.i.9.





**Figure 26.** William Blake after Thomas Stothard, title-page vignette for Bonnycastle's *Mensuration*, 1782 (engraving). From John Bonnycastle, *An introduction to mensuration* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1782). Princeton, Princeton University Library, Ex 8169.197 1782. From Robert N. Essick, *William Blake's Commercial Book Illustrations: A Catalogue and Study of the Plates Engraved by Blake after Designs by Other Artists*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

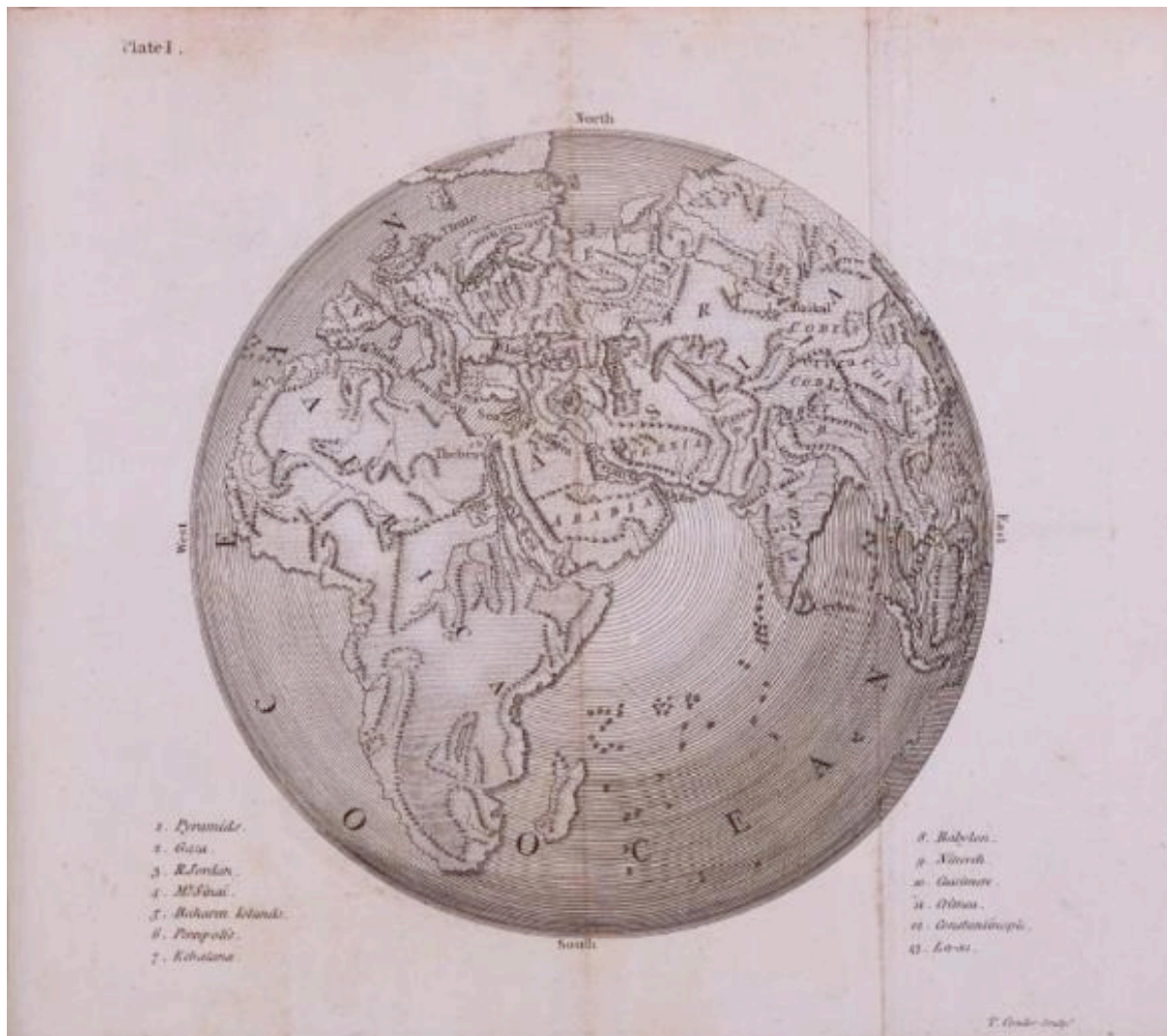


**Figure 27.** Thomas Conder, chart of the fixed stars from Bonnycastle's *Astronomy*, 1786 (engraving). From John Bonnycastle, *An introduction to Astronomy* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1786). London, British Library, Digital Store 531.i.9. Photograph by the author.



**Figure 28.** William Blake, *Night Thoughts*, Night the Third, object 79, c. 1795-97 (pen and ink and watercolour over pencil, 42 x 32.5 cm). London, British Museum, 1929,0713.1-270.





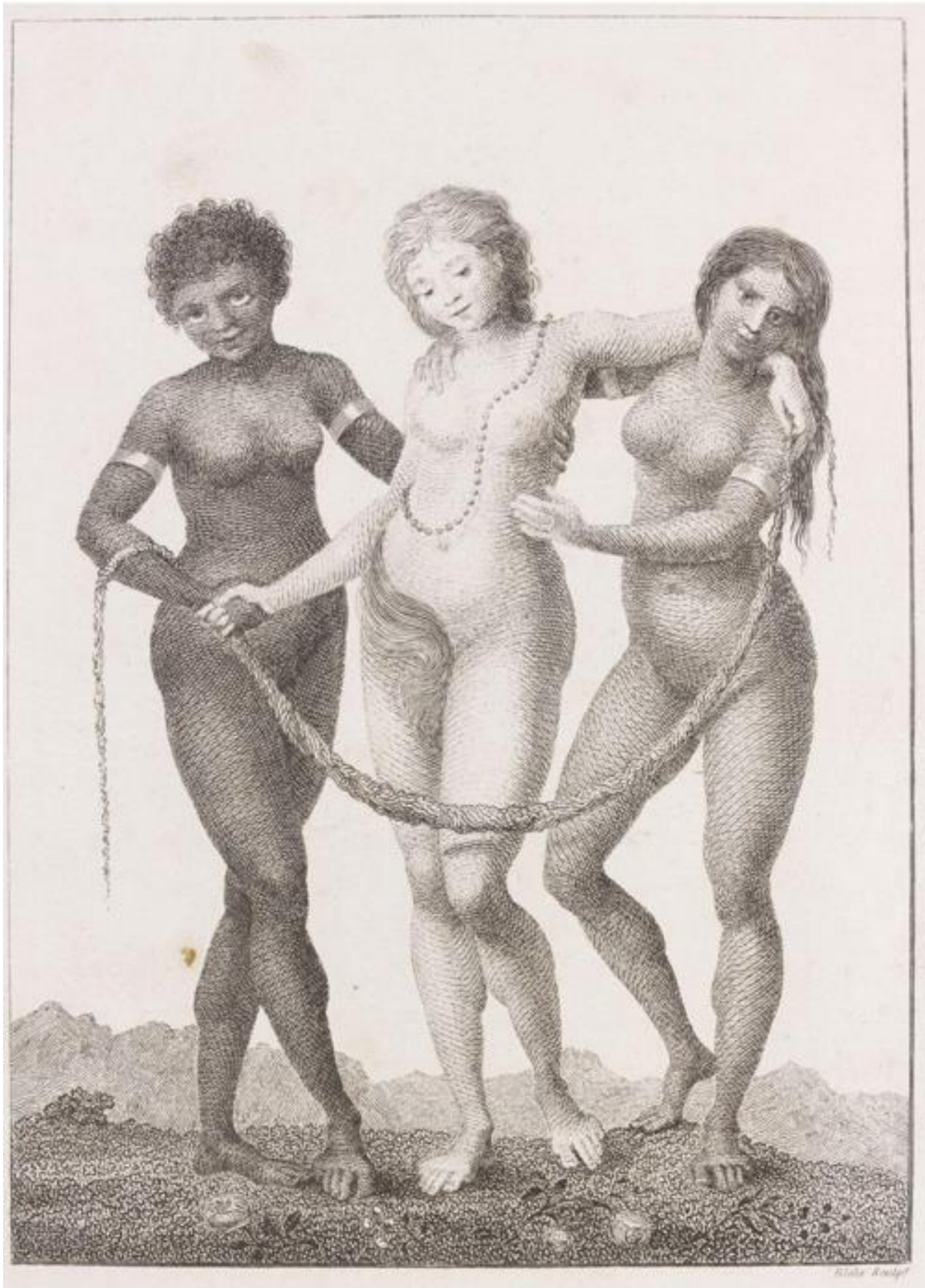
**Figure 29.** Thomas Conder, terrestrial hemisphere map, 1792 (engraving). From Constantin-François Volney, *The ruins: or a survey of the revolutions of empires* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), Plate I. London, British Library, Digital Store RB.23.a.34831.



**Figure 30.** Thomas Conder, *A View of the Astrological Heavens of the Ancients, to explain the Mysteries of the Persian, Jewish, & Christian Religions*, 1792 (engraving). From Constantin-François Volney, *The ruins: or a survey of the revolutions of empires* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), Plate II. London, British Library, Digital Store RB.23.a.34831.







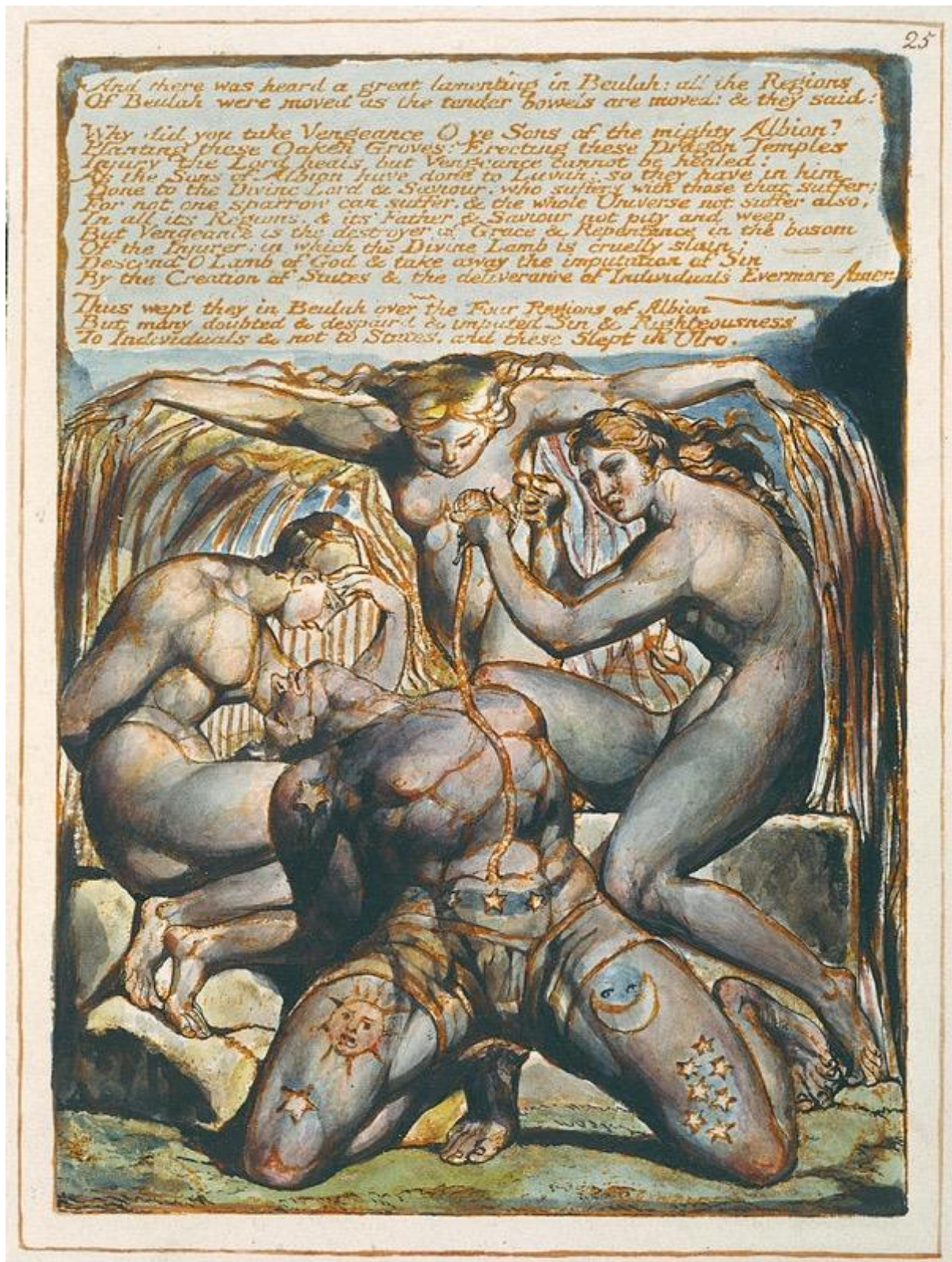
**Figure 32.** William Blake, *Europe Supported by Africa and America*, 1796 (engraving, 19.4 x 14.1 cm). London, Victoria and Albert Museum, E.1215F-1886.





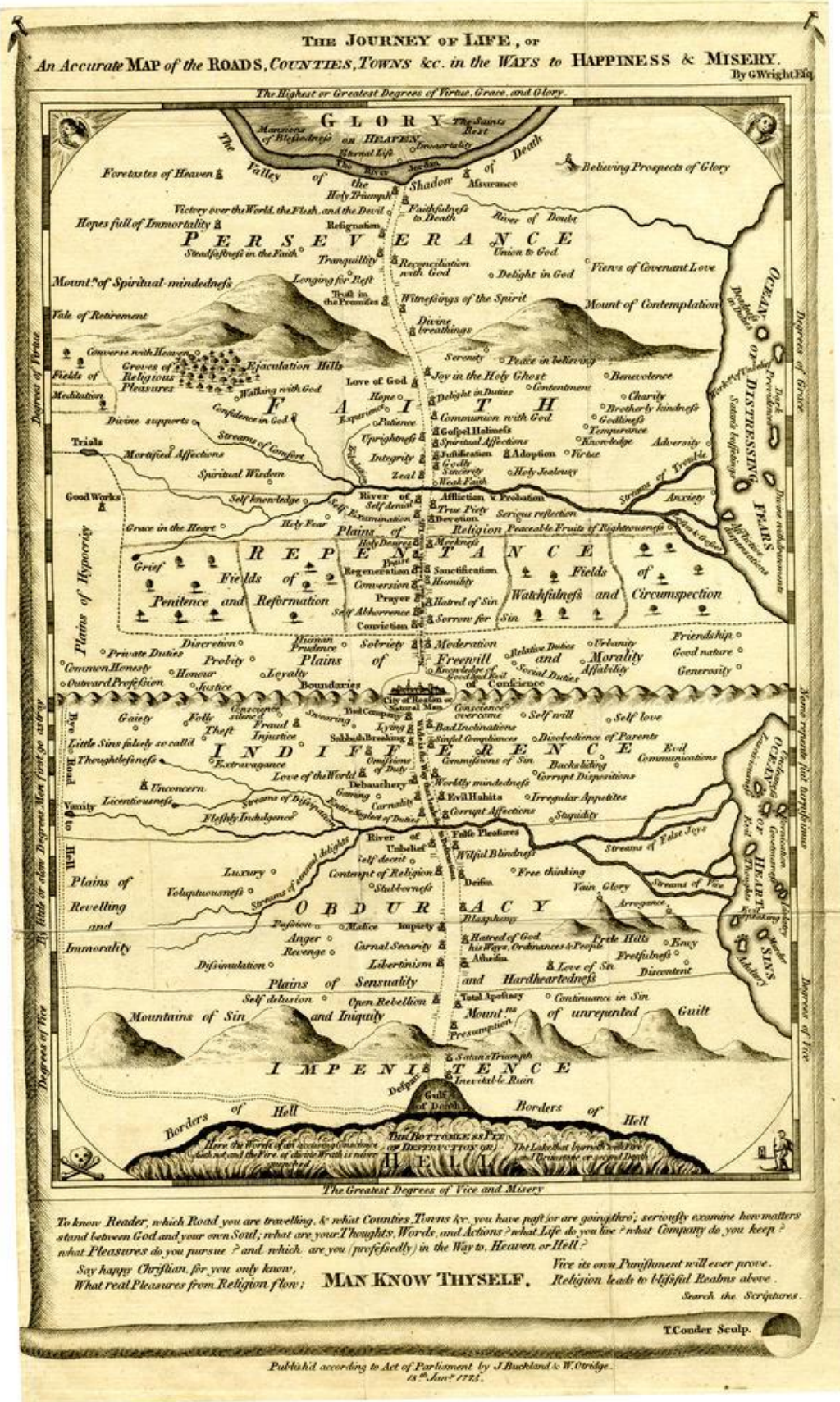
Figure 33. William Blake, *Jerusalem* (Copy E), plate 92, c. 1821 (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 21.1 x 15 cm). New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, B1992.8.1(1-100).





**Figure 34.** William Blake, *Jerusalem* (Copy E), plate 25, c. 1821 (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 21.1 x 15 cm). New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, B1992.8.1(1-100).





To know Reader, which Road you are travelling, & what Counties Towns &c. you have past or are going thro'; seriously examine how matters stand between God and your own Soul; what are your Thoughts, Words, and Actions? what Life do you live? what Company do you keep? what Pleasures do you pursue? and which are you perfectly in the Way to, Heaven or Hell?

Say happy Christian, for you only know,  
 What real Pleasures from Religion flow; **MAN KNOW THYSELF.** Vice its own Punishment will ever prove.  
 Religion leads to blissful Realms above.  
 Search the Scriptures.

T. Conder Sculp.

Published according to Act of Parliament by J. Baskland & W. Orledge. 15<sup>th</sup> Jan<sup>y</sup> 1755.

Figure 35. Thomas Conder, *The Journey of Life*, 1775 (etching, 32 x 19.3 cm). London, British Museum, BM 1875,0109.192.



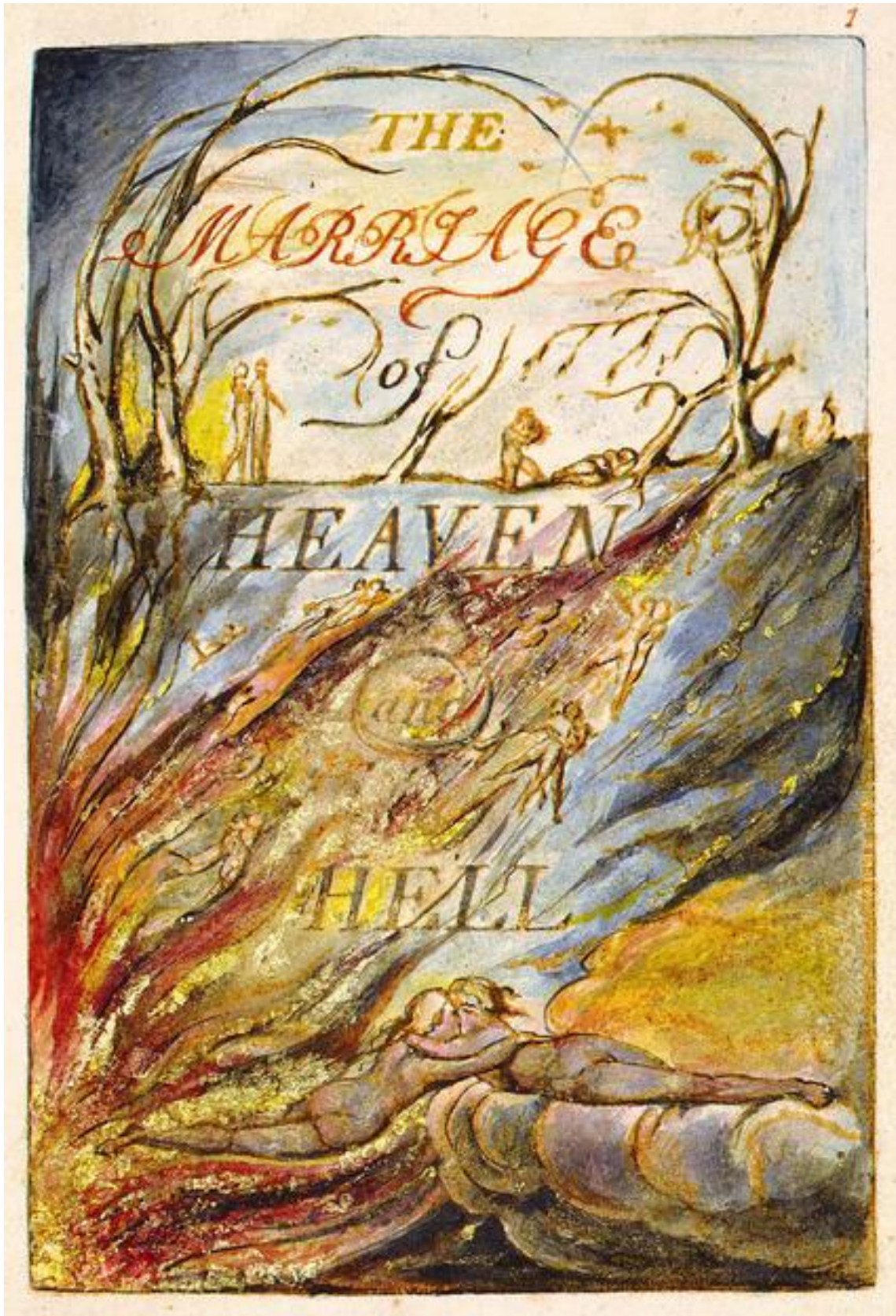


**Figure 36.** Thomas Conder, *A plan of the road from the city of destruction to the celestial city adapted to the Pilgrims Progress*. From John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (London: Printed for H. Trapp and A. Hogg, 1778) (engraving). London, British Library, Digital Store 1609/2471.



**Figure 37.** Artist unknown, *The Tree of Life*, published by Bowles & Carver, 1770-1800 (hand-coloured engraving, 35.3 x 24.9 cm). London, British Museum, BM 1935,0522.3.51.

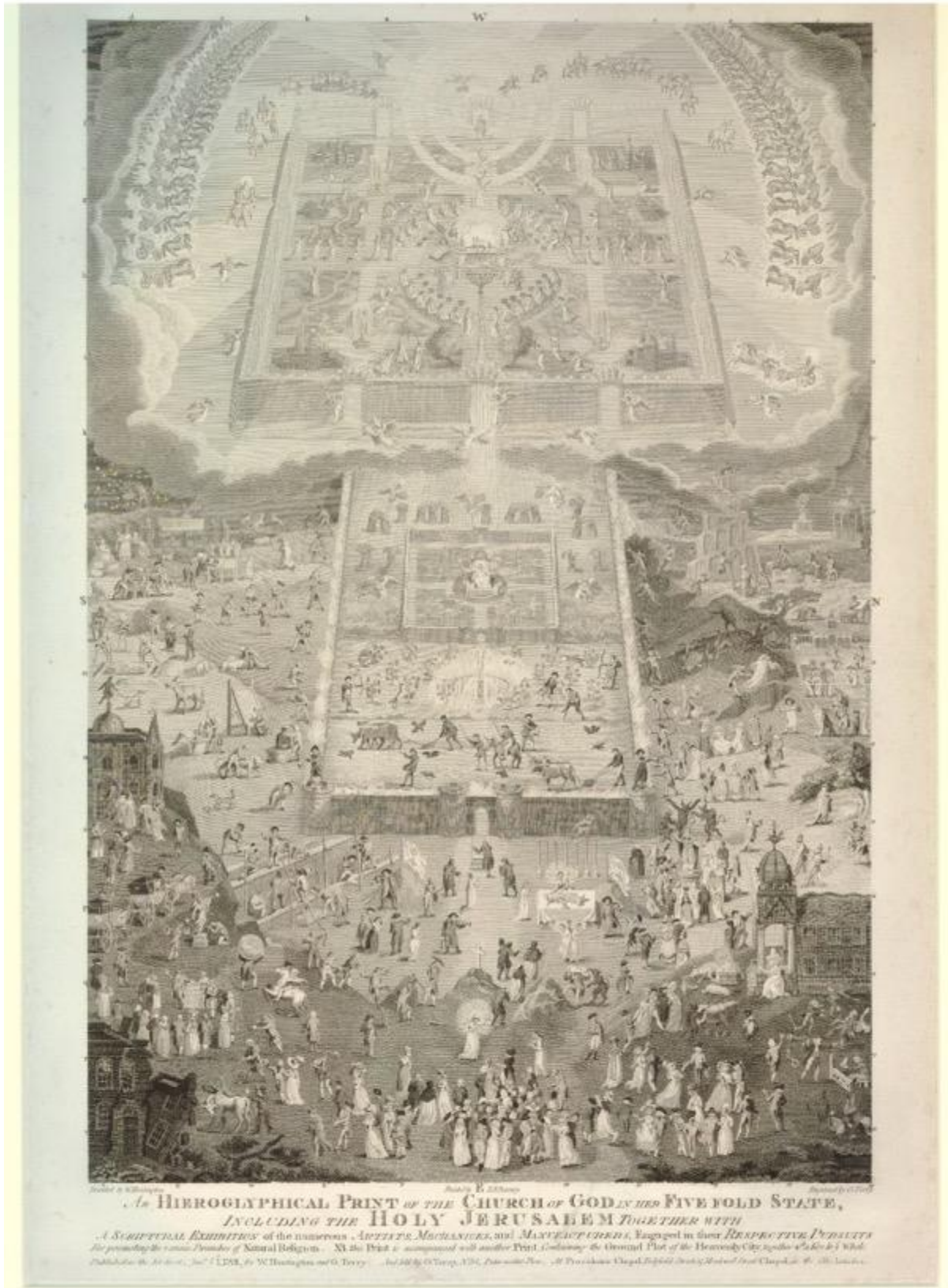




**Figure 38.** William Blake, title-page for *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (Copy H), 1790 (relief and white-line etching with extensive hand colouring, plates ranging between 16.6 x 11 cm and 13.6 x 9.8 cm). Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, P.123—1950.







**Figure 40.** Garnet Terry after William Huntington and Edward Francis Burney, *An Hieroglyphical Print of the Church of God in her Five-fold State*, 1791 (etching, 55.7 x 38.2 cm). London, British Museum, 1849,0512.848.

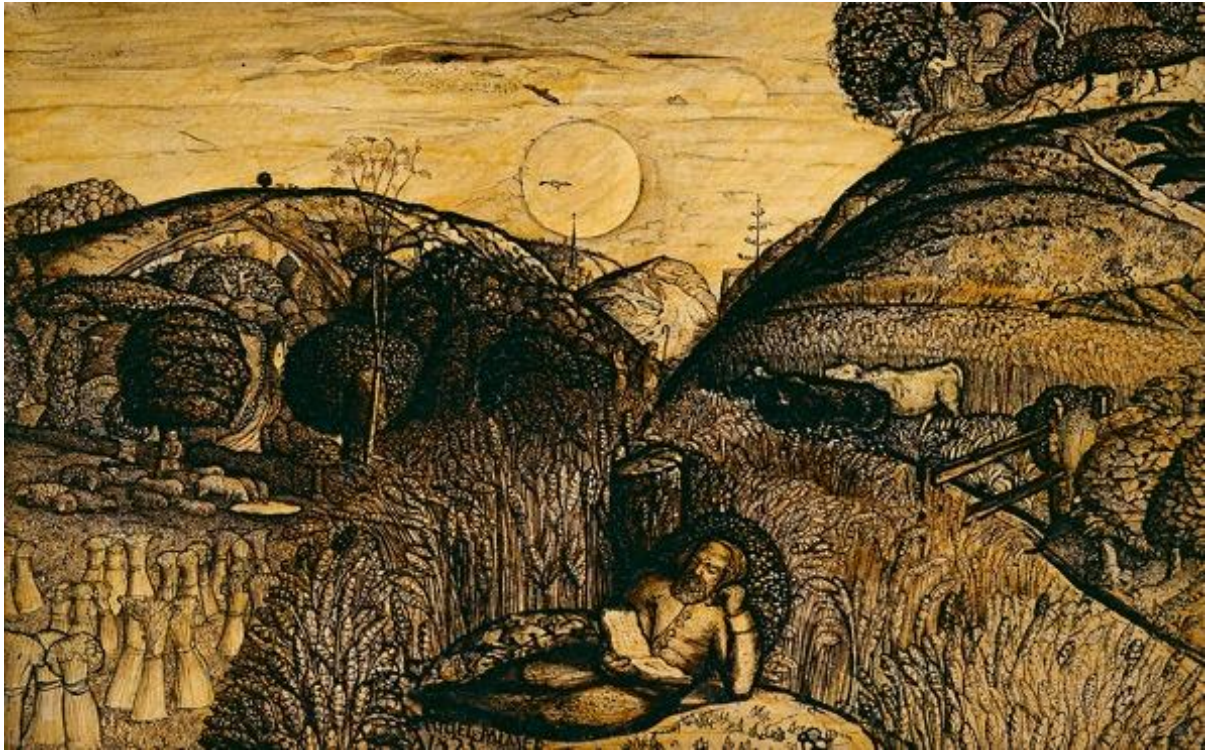


**Figure 41.** Anonymous after Emanuel Swedenborg, *Curious description respecting the situation of the Lord's New Church in Africa*, transcribed from the Latin manuscripts of Emanuel Swedenborg, and which have not yet been published, 1790 (engraving). From *The New Jerusalem Magazine* (London: London Universal Society for Promotion of the New Church, 1790), 186. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Per. 1467 e.87.





**Figure 42.** William Blake, *The Man Sweeping the Interpreter's Parlour*, c. 1822 (white-line etching, possibly with some white-line engraving, 17 x 10.3 cm). Collection of Robert N. Essick



**Figure 43.** Samuel Palmer, *The Valley Thick with Corn*, 1825 (pen and dark brown ink with brush in sepia mixed with gum, 18.2 x 27.5 cm). Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, WA1941.103.

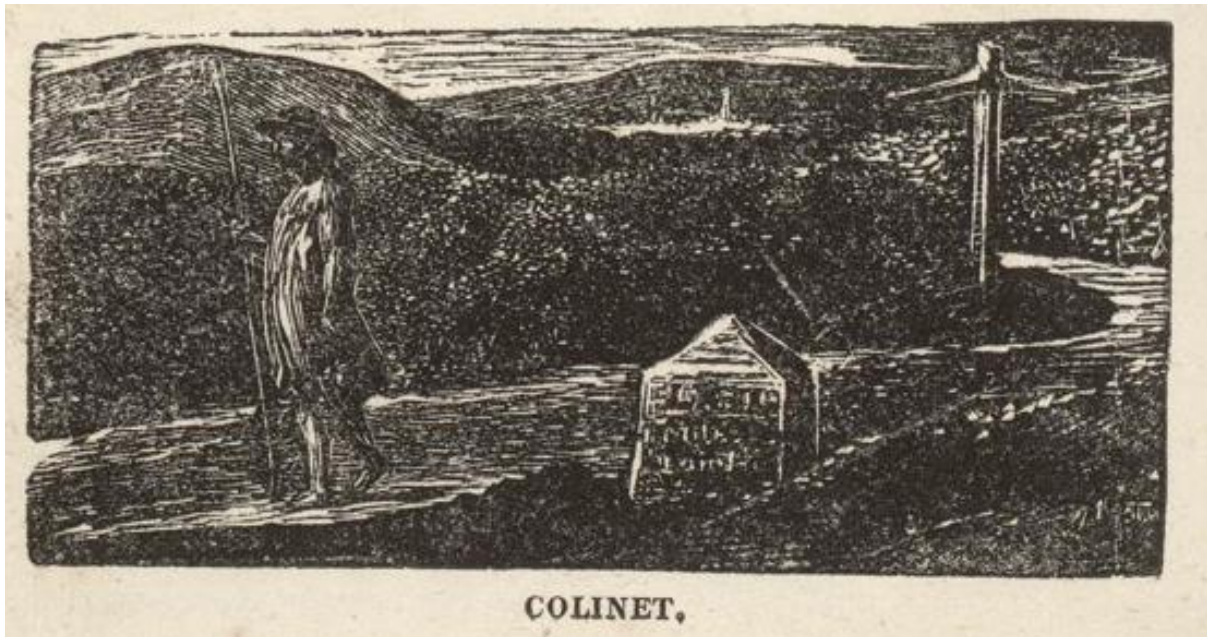




**Figure 44.** William Blake, *John Bunyan Dreams a Dream or The Dreamer Dreams a Dream*, design for *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 1824-7 (graphite, ink, and watercolour on paper, 13.4 x 17.9 cm). Private collection. Formerly in the Frick Collection, New York.



**Figure 45.** Samuel Palmer, *Christian Descending into the Valley of Humiliation*, from *"The Pilgrim's Progress"*, 1848 (watercolour, 51.9 x 71.4 cm). Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, WA1929.35.

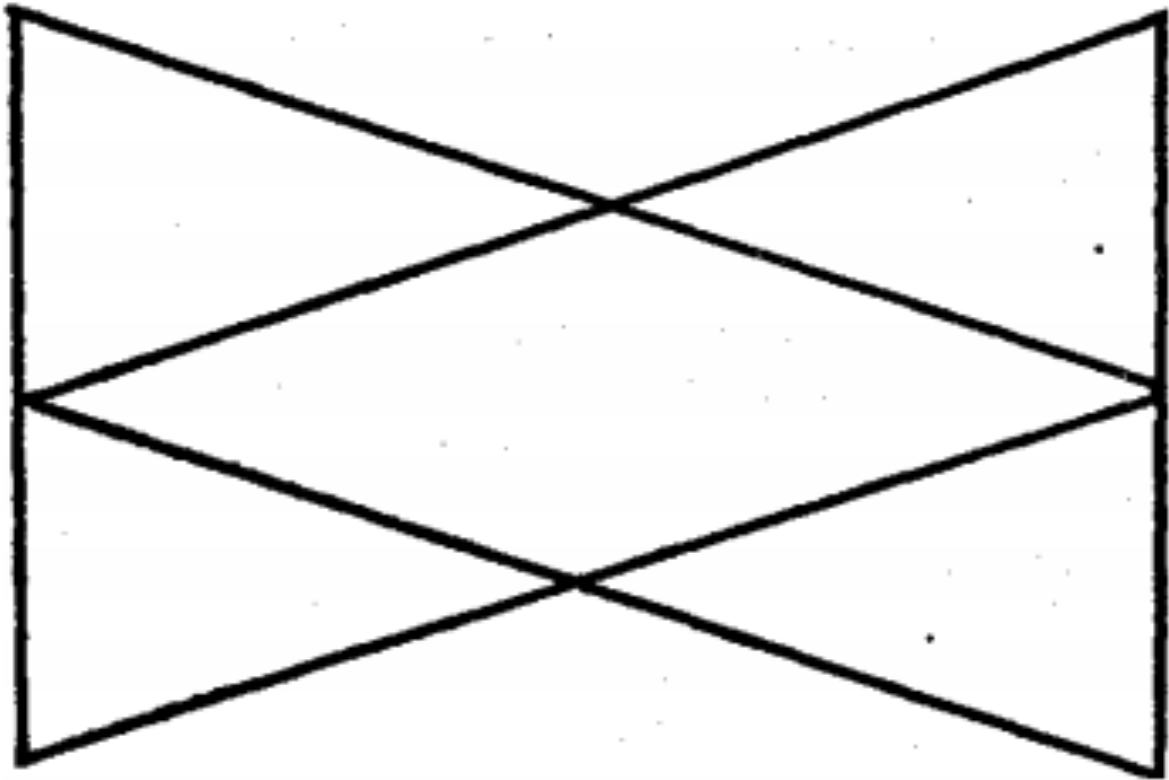


**Figure 46.** William Blake, *Colinet's Fond Desire Strange Lands to Know*, detail of design for Thornton's *Pastorals of Virgil*, 1821 (relief etching, whole sheet: 16.2 x 7.4 cm). Huntington Library, 137046.

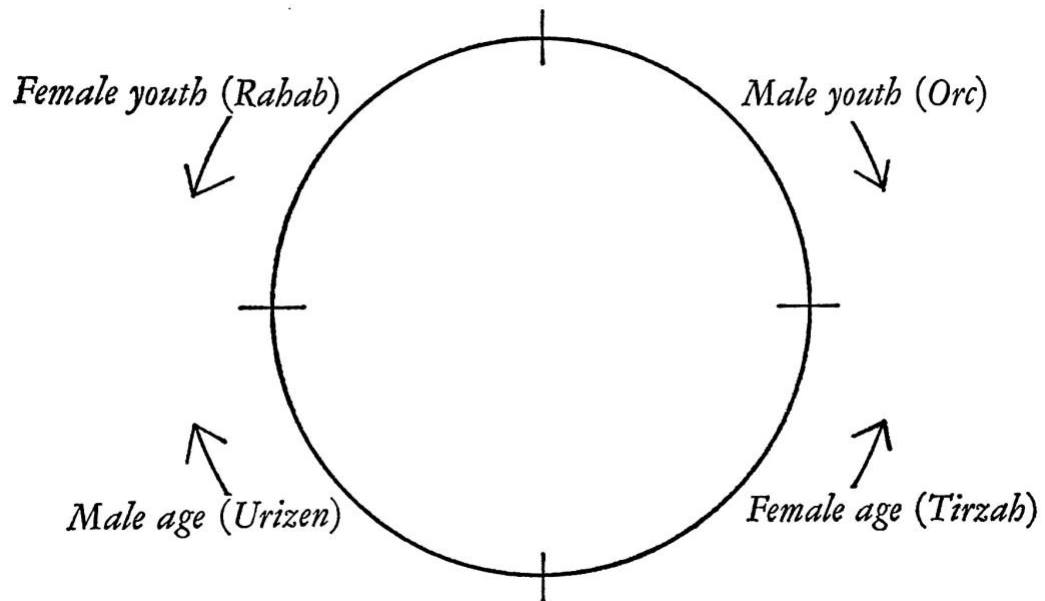




**Figure 47.** Edward Calvert after William Blake, *A Young Shepherd on a Journey*, 1799-1883 (drawing, 13.7 cm x 30.4 cm). London, British Museum, BM 1890,0415.411.

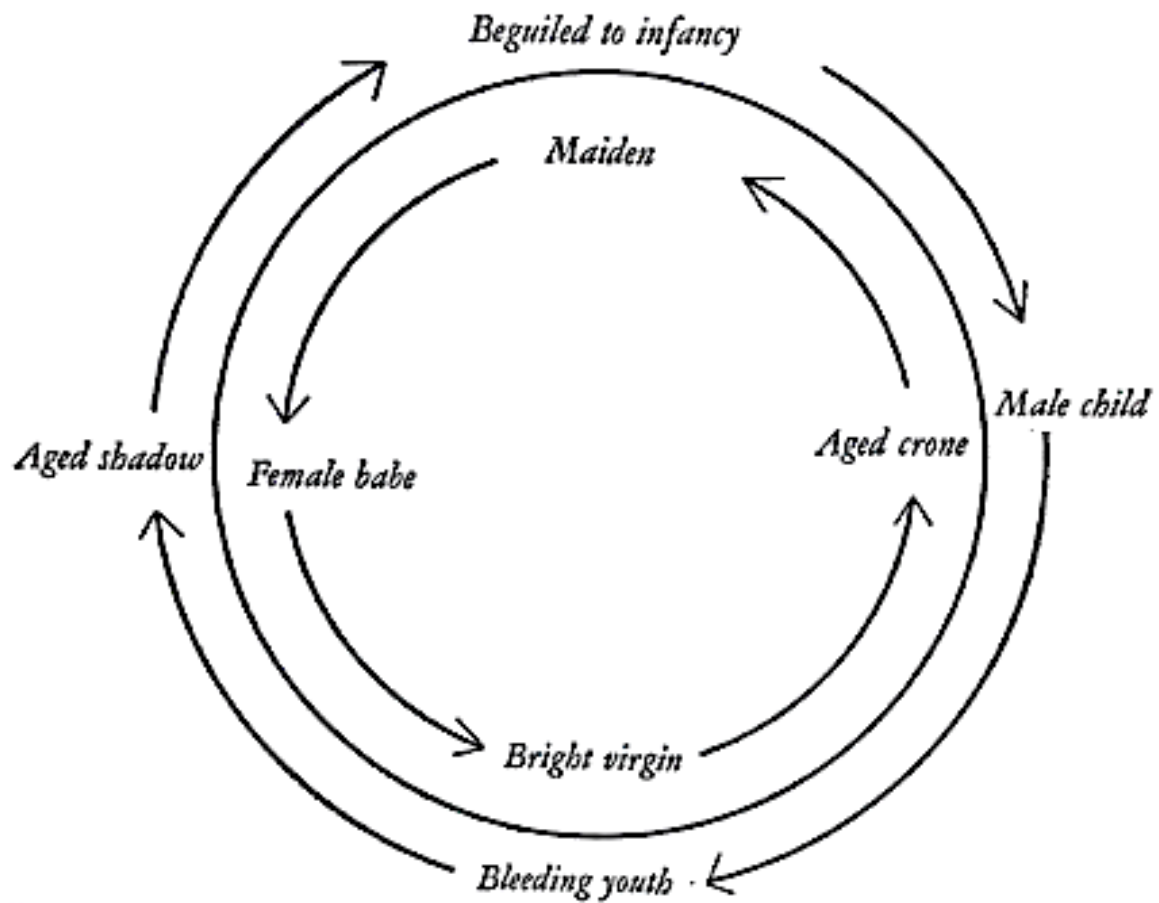


**Figure 48.** W. B. Yeats, diagrams of the intersecting double gyres, 1925. From W. B. Yeats, *A Critical Edition of Yeats's A Vision (1925)*, ed. George Mills Harper and Walter Kelly Hood (London: MacMillan, 1978), 180.

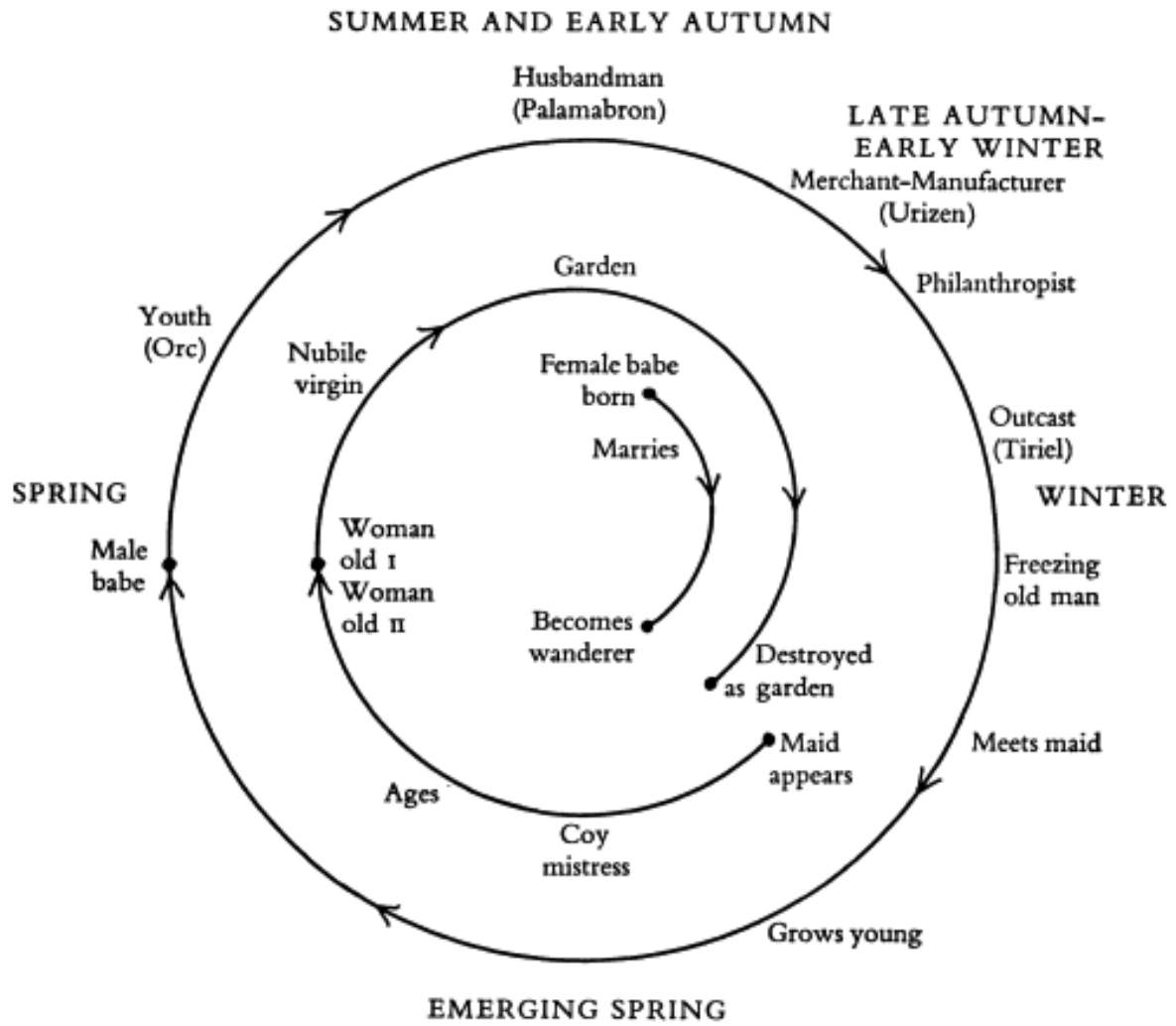


**Figure 49.** Hazard Adams, diagram of the cycles of the male and female babes, 1963. From Hazard Adams, *William Blake: A Reading of the Shorter Poems* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), 82.





**Figure 50.** Hazard Adams, diagram of the cycles of the male and female babes in "The Mental Traveller," 1963. From Hazard Adams, *William Blake: A Reading of the Shorter Poems* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), 98.



**Figure 51.** Martin K. Nurmi, diagram of "The Mental Traveller," 1964. From Martin K. Nurmi, "Joy, Love, and Innocence in Blake's 'The Mental Traveller,'" *Studies in Romanticism*, 3, no. 2 (1964), 117.

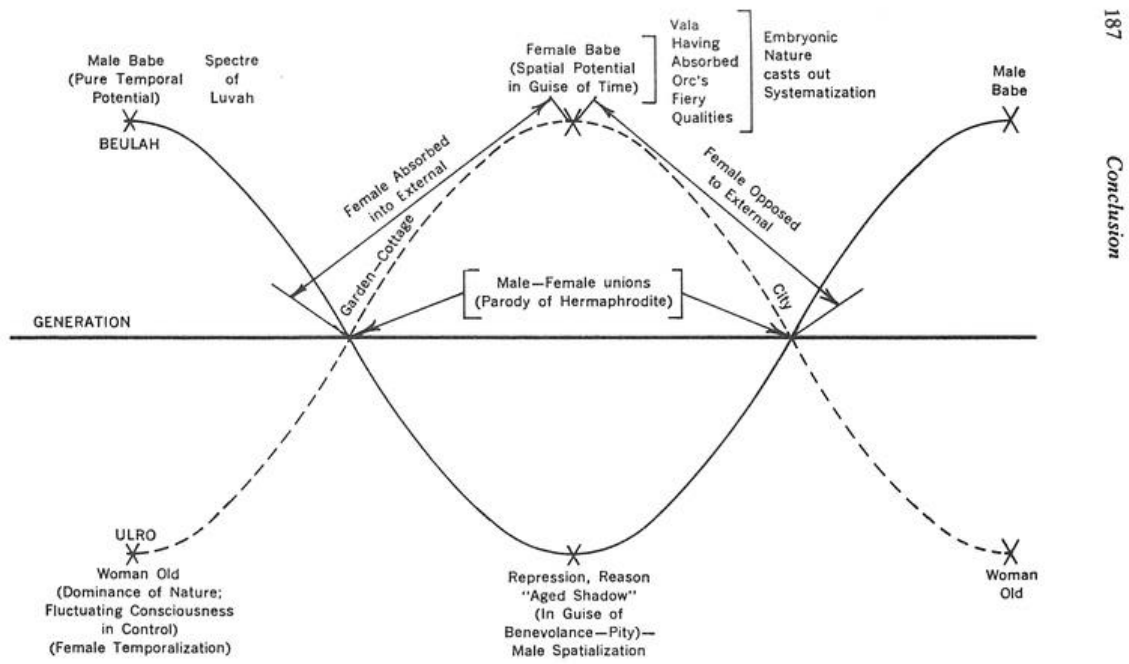
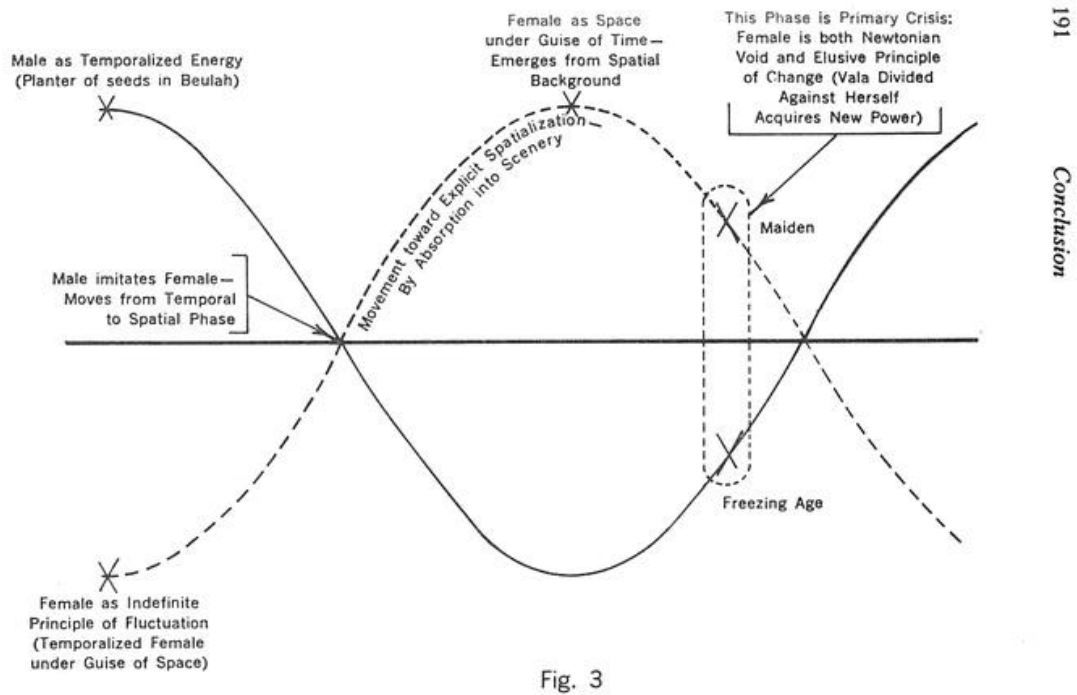


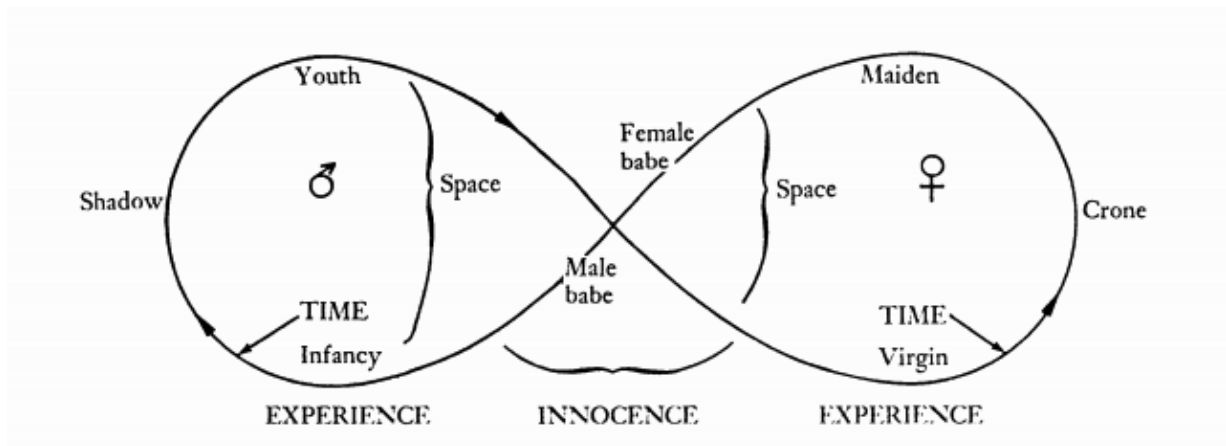
Fig. 2

**Figure 52.** Donald Ault, diagram of "The Mental Traveller," 1974. From Donald Ault, *Visionary Physics: Blake's Response to Newton* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 187.

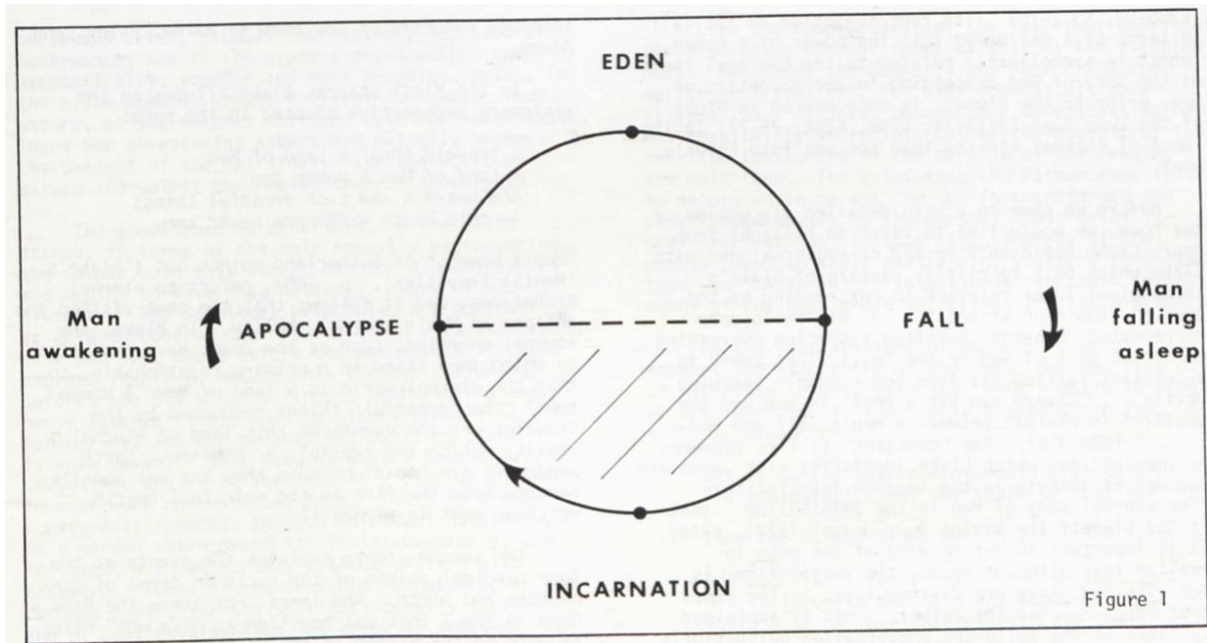
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Conclusion



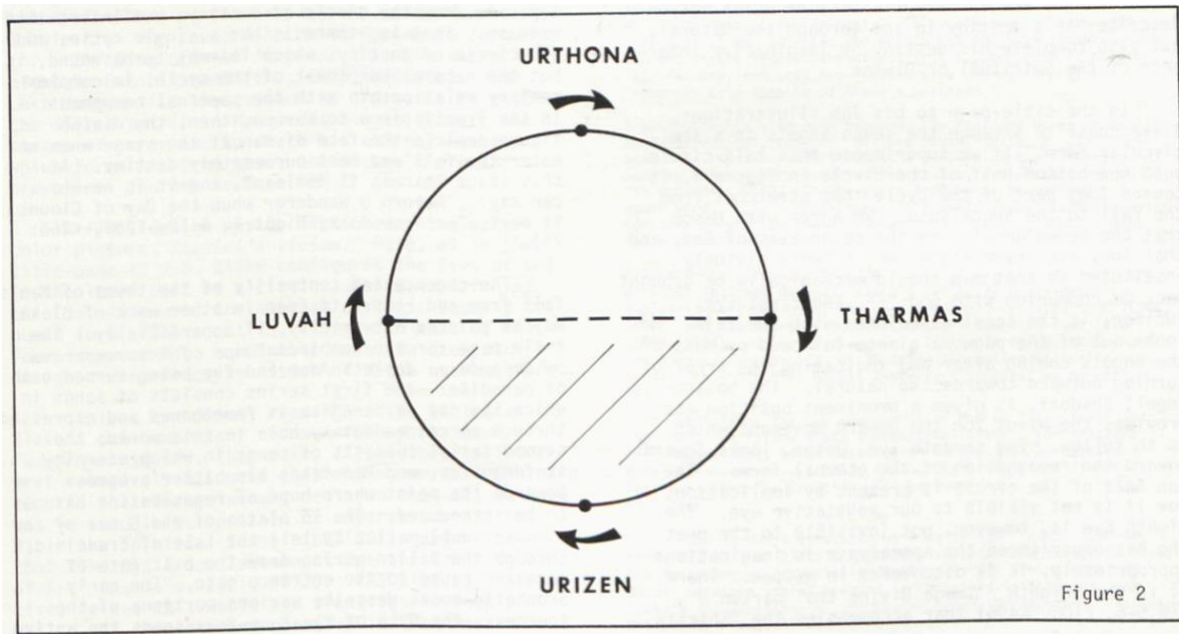
**Figure 53.** Donald Ault, diagram of “The Mental Traveller,” 1974. From Donald Ault, *Visionary Physics: Blake’s Response to Newton* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 191.



**Figure 54.** James B. Twitchell, diagram of “The Mental Traveller,” 1975. From James B. Twitchell, “‘The Mental Traveller,’ Infinity and the ‘Arlington Court Picture,’” *Criticism*, 17, no. 1 (1975), 4.

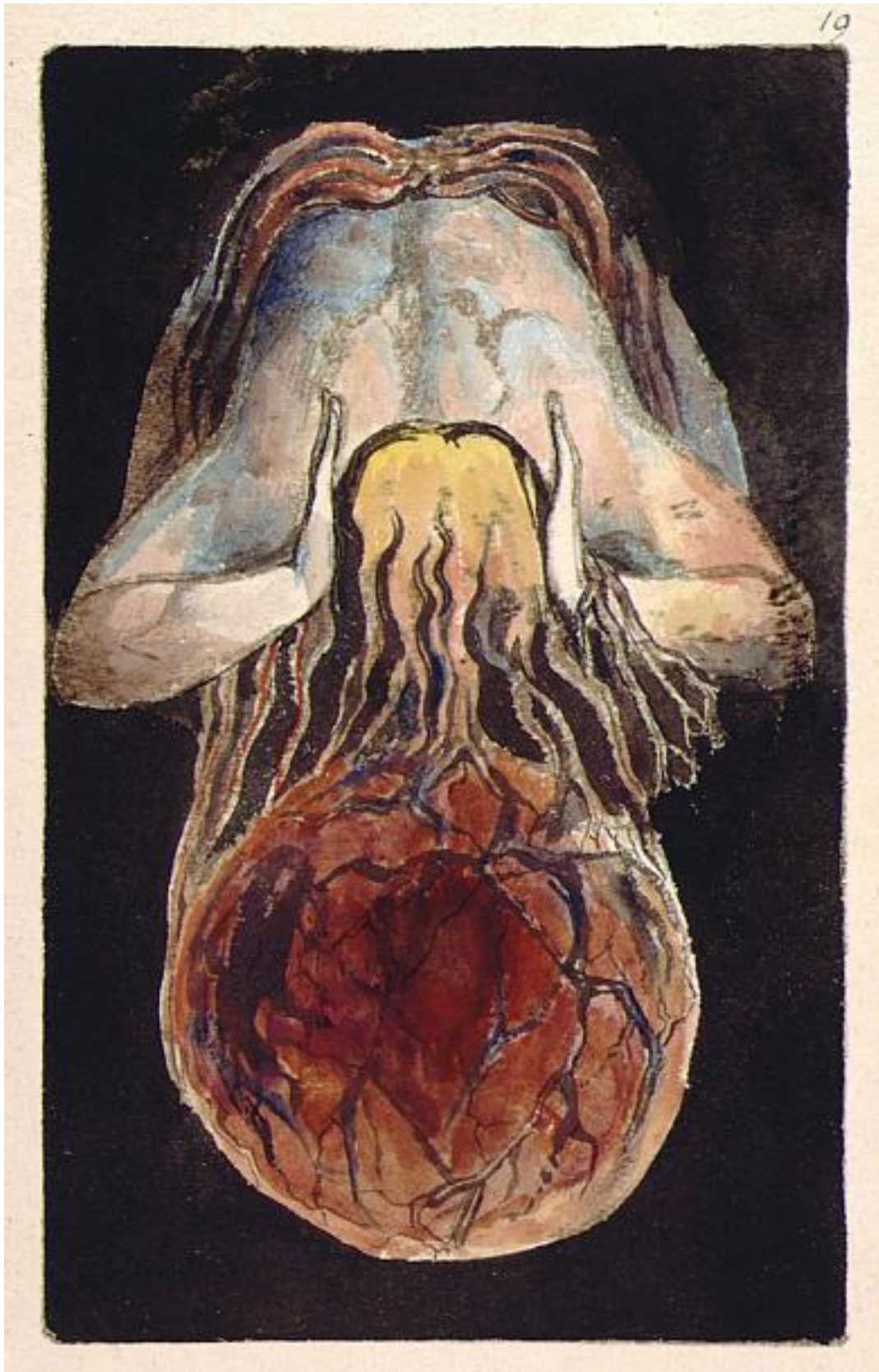


**Figure 55.** Izak Bouwer and Paul McNally, diagram of "The Mental Traveller," 1978-9. From Izak Bouwer and Paul McNally, "The Mental Traveller': Man's Eternal Journey," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 12, no. 3 (1978-9), 185.



**Figure 56.** Izak Bouwer and Paul McNally, diagram of the alternation of the Zoas, 1978-9.. From Izak Bouwer and Paul McNally, "The Mental Traveller': Man's Eternal Journey," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 12, no. 3 (1978-9), 189.





**Figure 57.** William Blake, *Vegetating in Fibres of Blood* from *The [First] Book of Urizen* (Copy B), plate 19, 1794-5 (relief etching with hand colouring, 14.8 x 9.1 cm). New York, Morgan Library and Museum, PML 63139.



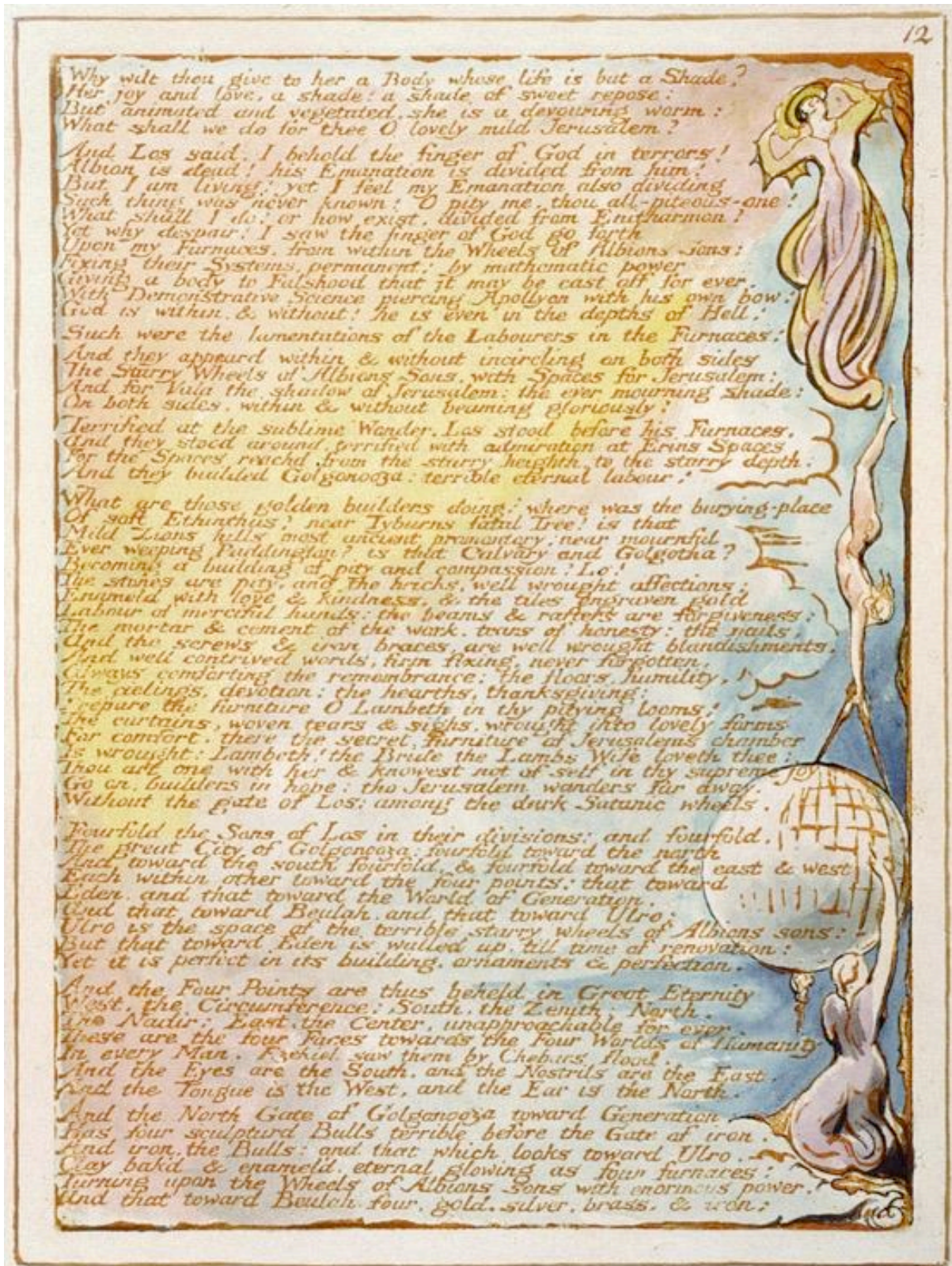
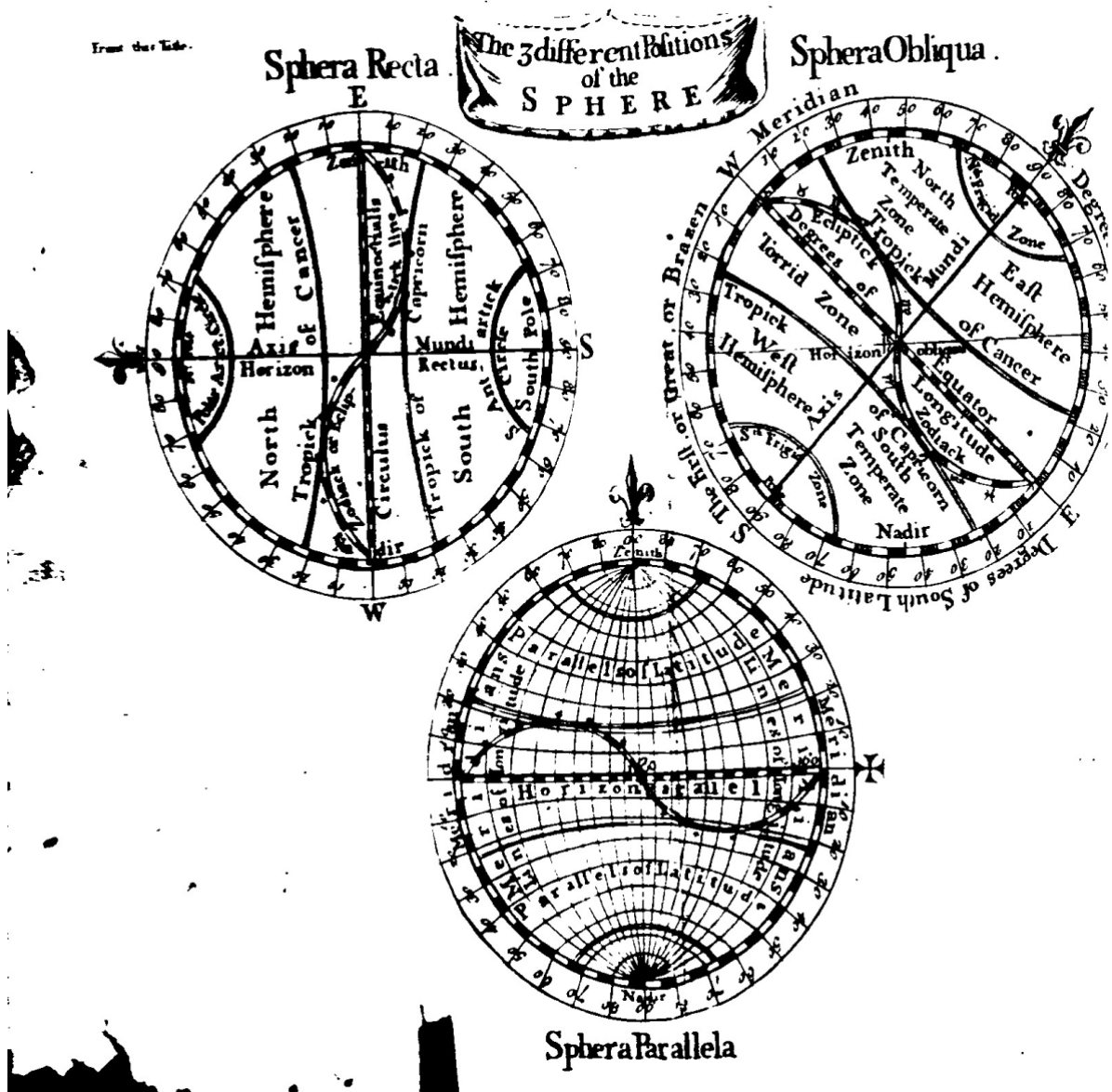


Figure 58. William Blake, *Jerusalem* (Copy E), plate 12, c. 1821 (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 22.5 x 16.4 cm). New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, B1992.8.1(12).

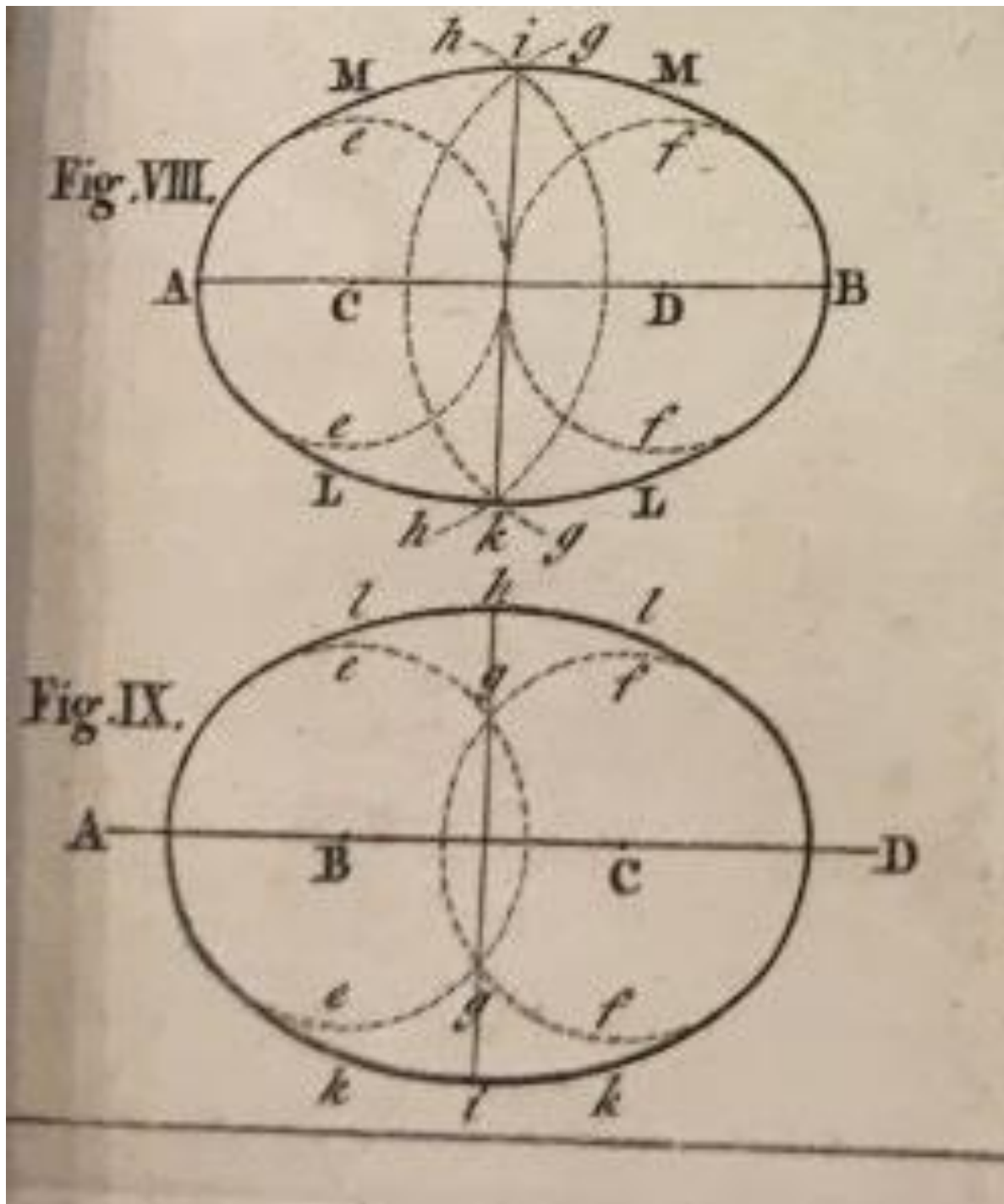


**Figure 59.** Anonymous, *The 3 Different Positions of the Sphere* (engraving), 1783. From Nicolas Lenglet Dufresnoy, *Geography for Children*, 14th edn (London: Joseph Johnson, 1783). Cambridge, Massachusetts, Gutman Library, Harvard University, EducT 20247 83.

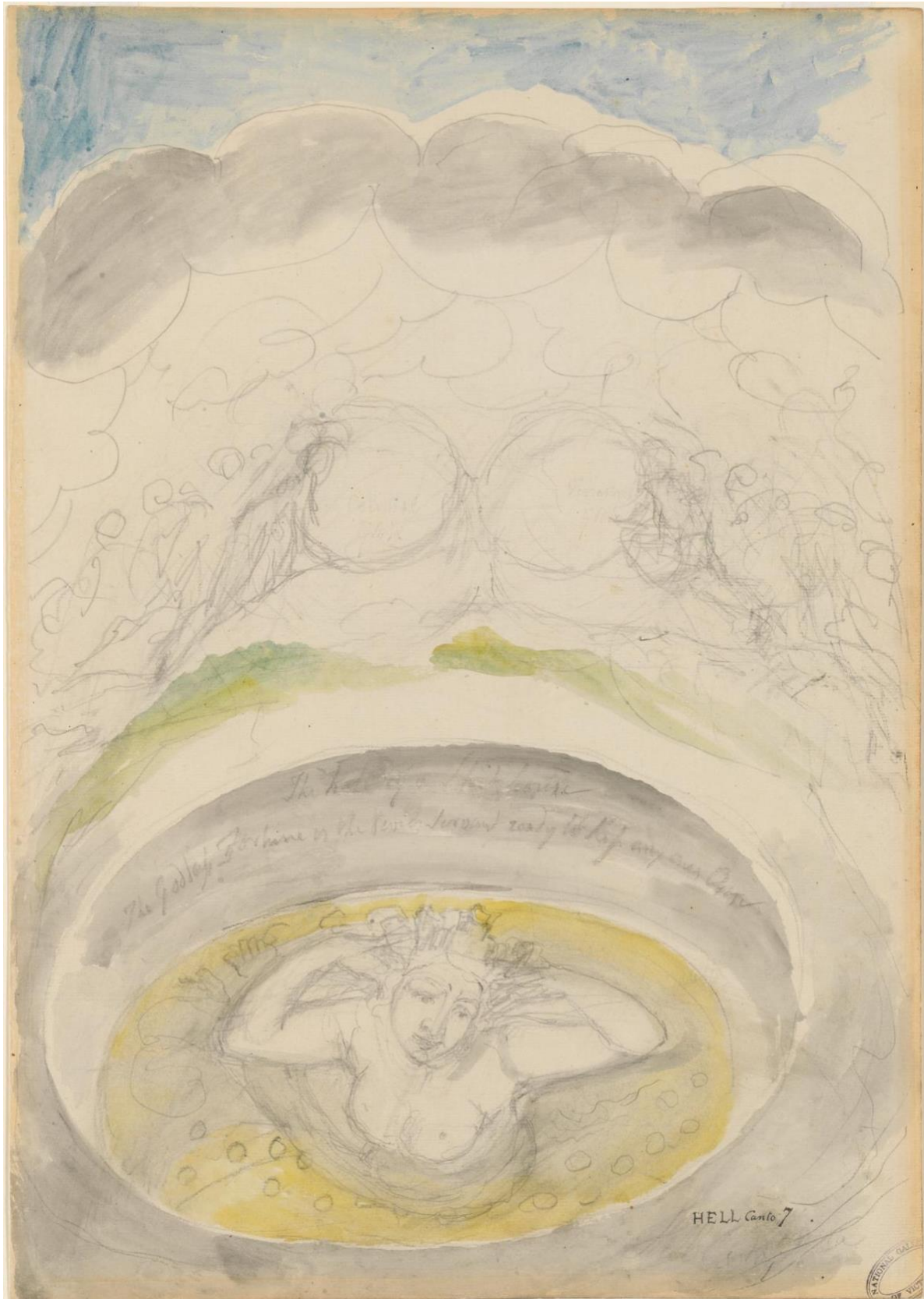




**Figure 60.** Hall after Gwyn, frontispiece to Joseph Collyer and Daniel Fenning's *A new system of Geography* (London: Printed for J. Payne and sold by J. Johnson, 1770). Toronto, University of Toronto, AAE-2031.

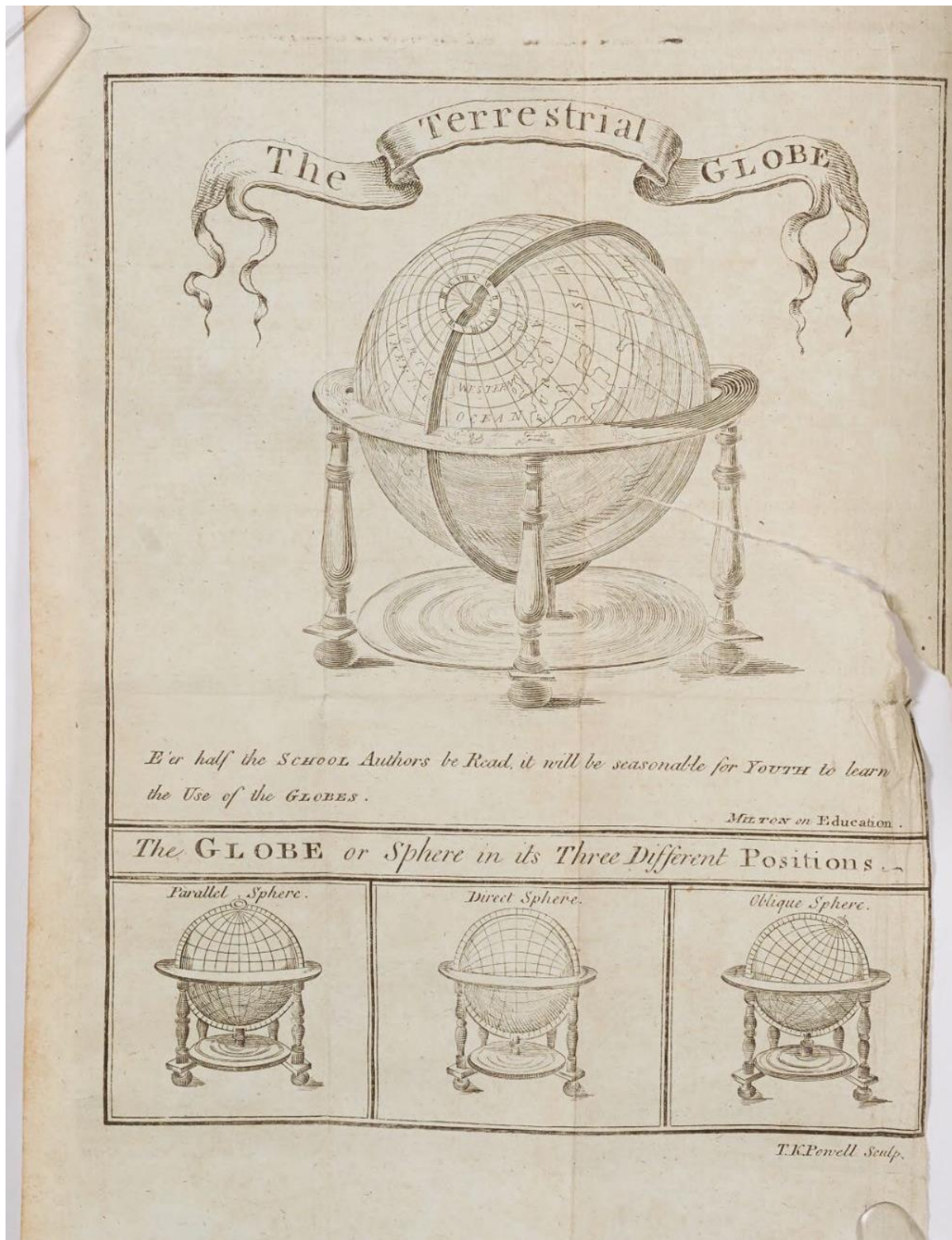


**Figure 61.** Anonymous, two perspective plates (engraving), 1768. From Carington Bowles, *The artists assistant in drawing* etc. (London: Printed for T. Kitchin, Printseller, [1768]). London, British Library, 1651/1692.



**Figure 62.** William Blake, *The Goddess of Fortune*, 1824-27 (pen and ink and water colours over pencil, approx. 27 x 525.5 cm). Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, 993-3.





**Figure 63.** T. K. Powell, *The Terrestrial Globe*, 1798 (engraving). From Daniel Fenning, *A new and easy guide to the use of the globes*, 7th edn (London: J. Johnson, etc, 1798). London, British Library, Digital Store 1509/4541.



**Figure 64.** T. K. Powell, *The Coelestial Globe and Sphere*, 1798 (engraving). From Daniel Fenning, *A new and easy guide to the use of the globes*, 7th edn (London: J. Johnson, etc, 1798). London, British Library, Digital Store 1509/4541.





**Figure 65.** Henry Fuseli, *The Mighty Mother sails through the air*, 1787 (etching, 31 x 23.6 cm). London, British Museum, 1863,0509.6.





**Figure 66.** Albrecht Dürer, *The Small Fortune*, 1495 (engraving, 11.1 x 6.4 cm). London, British Museum, E,2.127.





**Figure 67.** Albrecht Dürer, *Nemesis, or the Large Fortune*, 1502 (engraving, 33.1 x 2.3 cm). London, British Museum, 1895,0915.346.



**Figure 68.** Thomas Gainsborough, *The Cottage Door*, circa 1778 (oil on canvas, 122.6 x 149.2 cm). Cincinnati, Cincinnati Art Museum, 1948.173.





**Figure 69.** John Raphael Smith after William Redmore Bigg RA, 1784, *School Boys giving Charity to a Blind Man* (mezzotint, 45.8 x 55.5 cm). London, British Museum, 1877,0609.1703.



**Figure 70.** William Redmore Bigg RA, 1814, *Cottagers* (oil on canvas, 76.9 x 92.2 x 1.8 cm). London, Royal Academy of Arts, 03/582.





**Figure 71.** William Blake after Thomas Stothard, engraving for Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* for *Novelist's Magazine* (London: Harris & Co., 1782) (etching; proof before lettering, 11.6 x 7.1 cm). London, British Museum, 1849,0512.388.



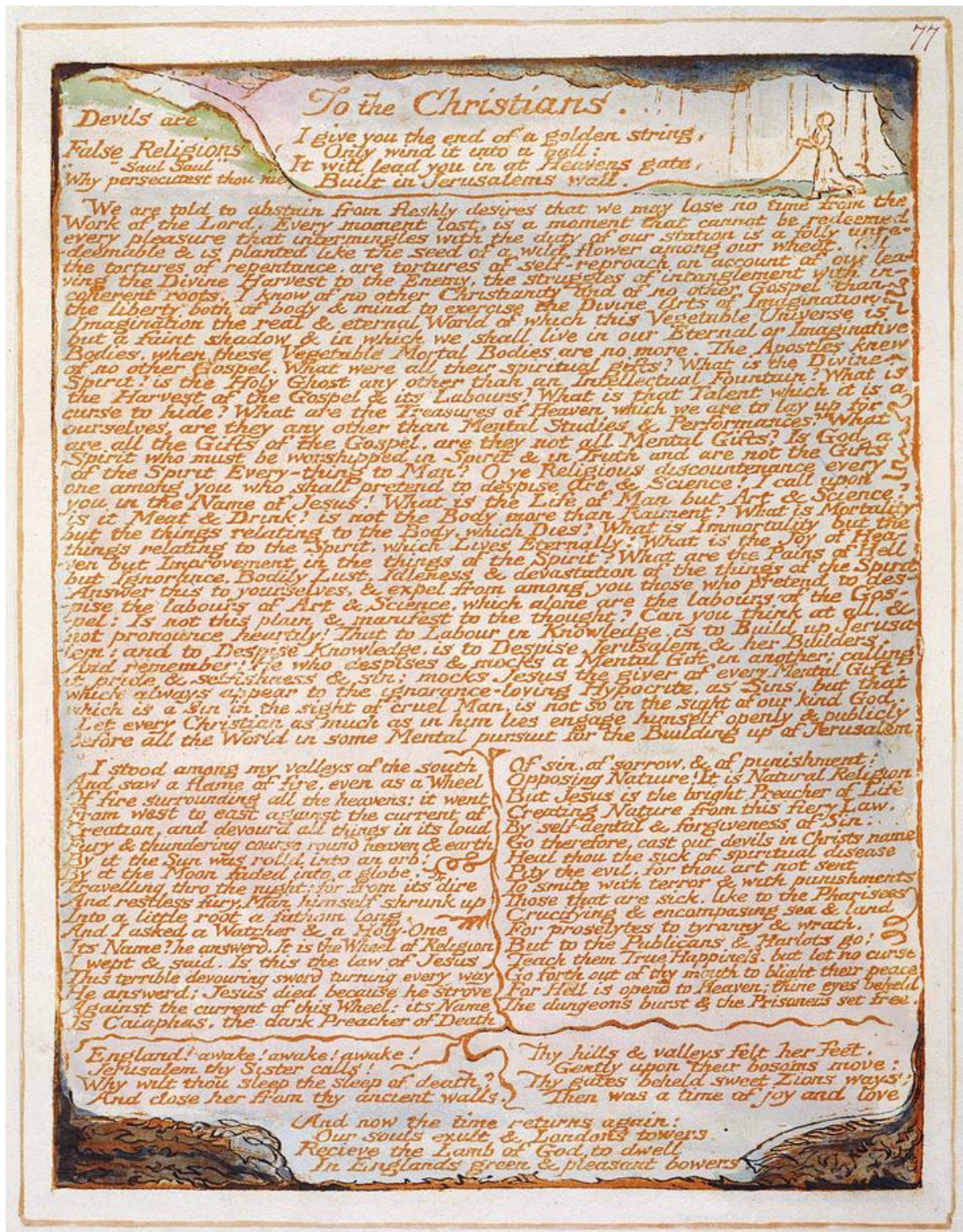
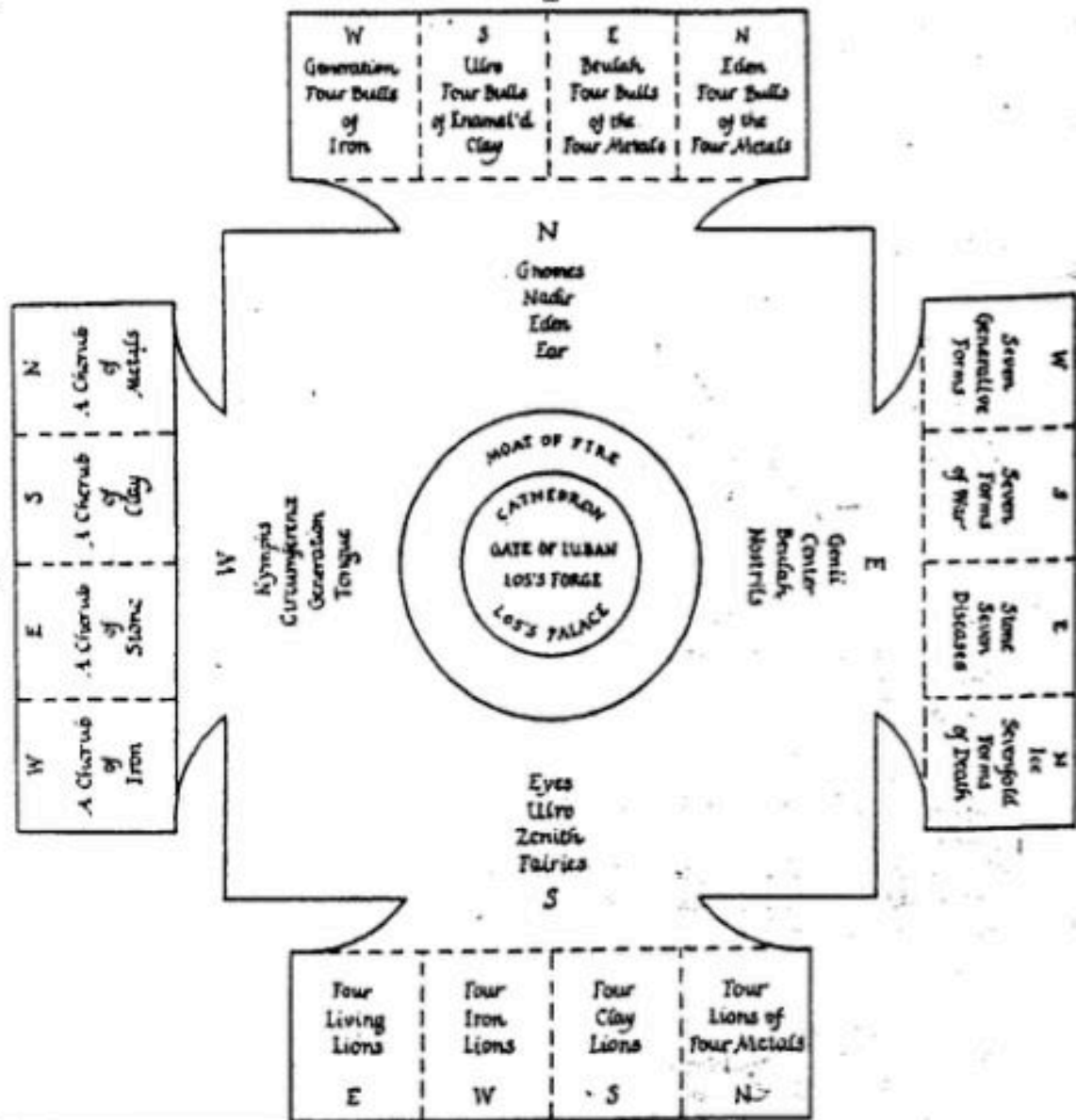
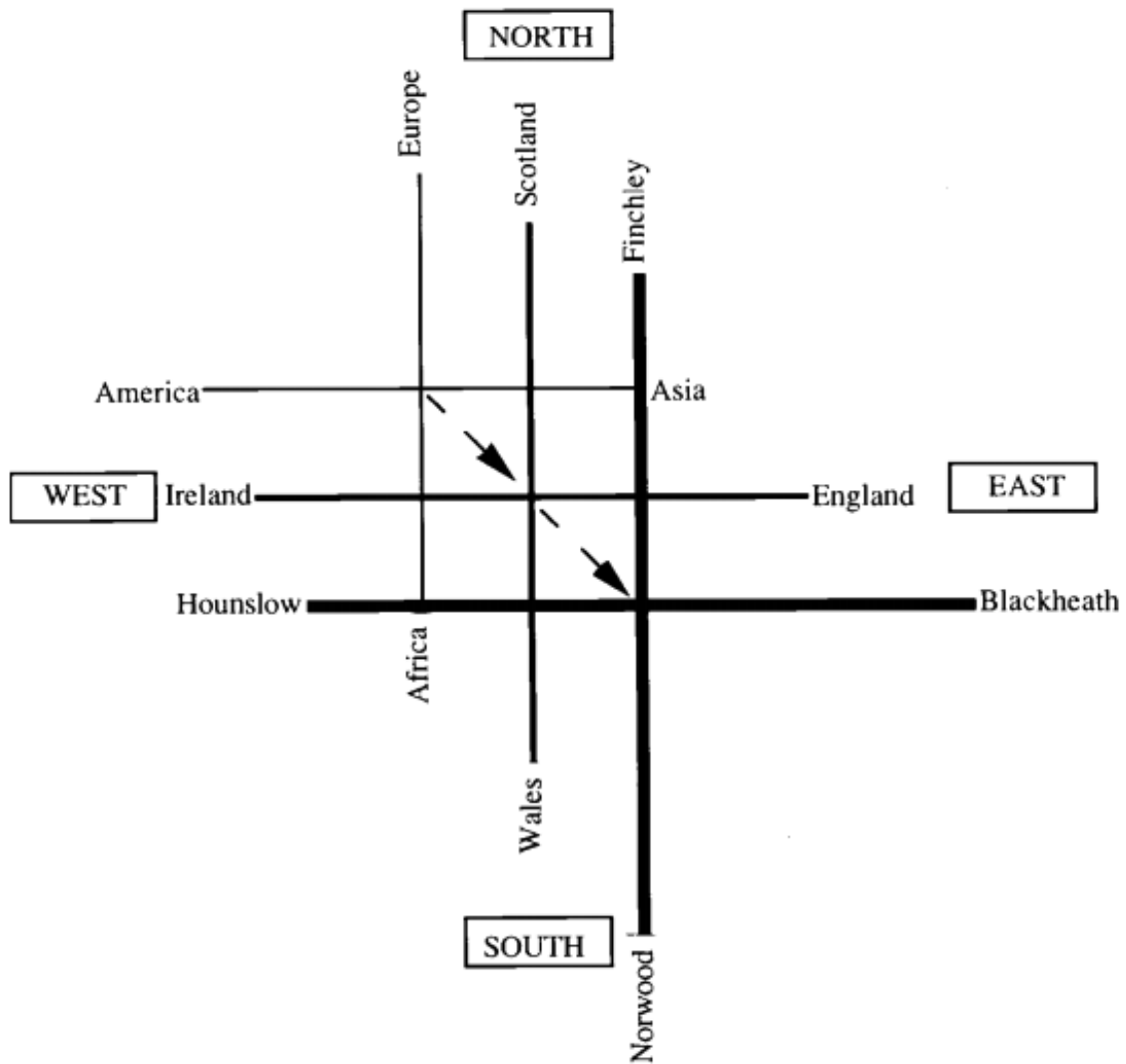


Figure 72. William Blake, *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (Copy E), plate 77, c. 1821 (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 22.1 x 17 cm). New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, B1992.8.1 (1-100).

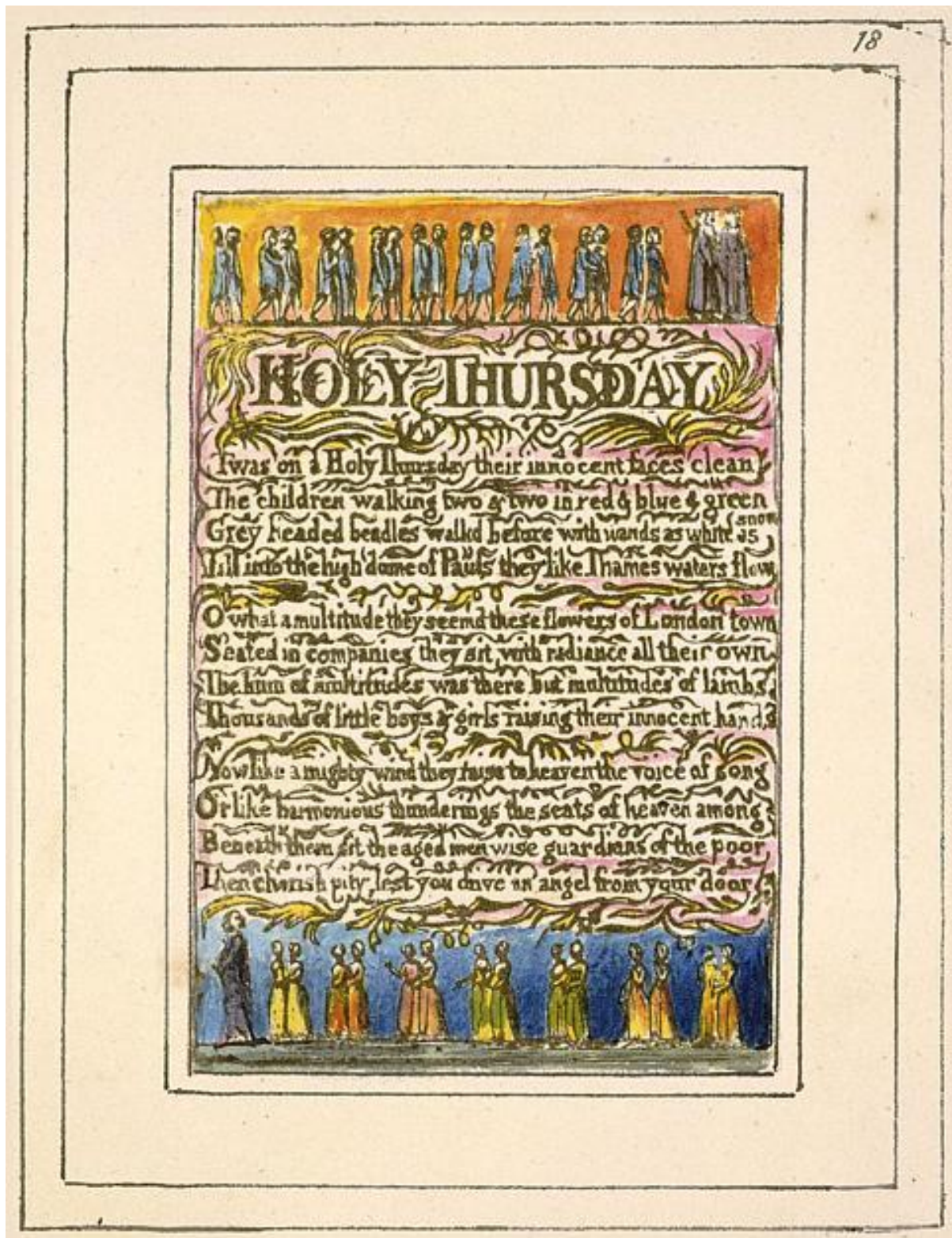


**Figure 73.** S. Foster Damon, map of Golgonooza. From S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*, rev. ed. (Hanover and London: Brown UP/UP of New England, 1988), 163.



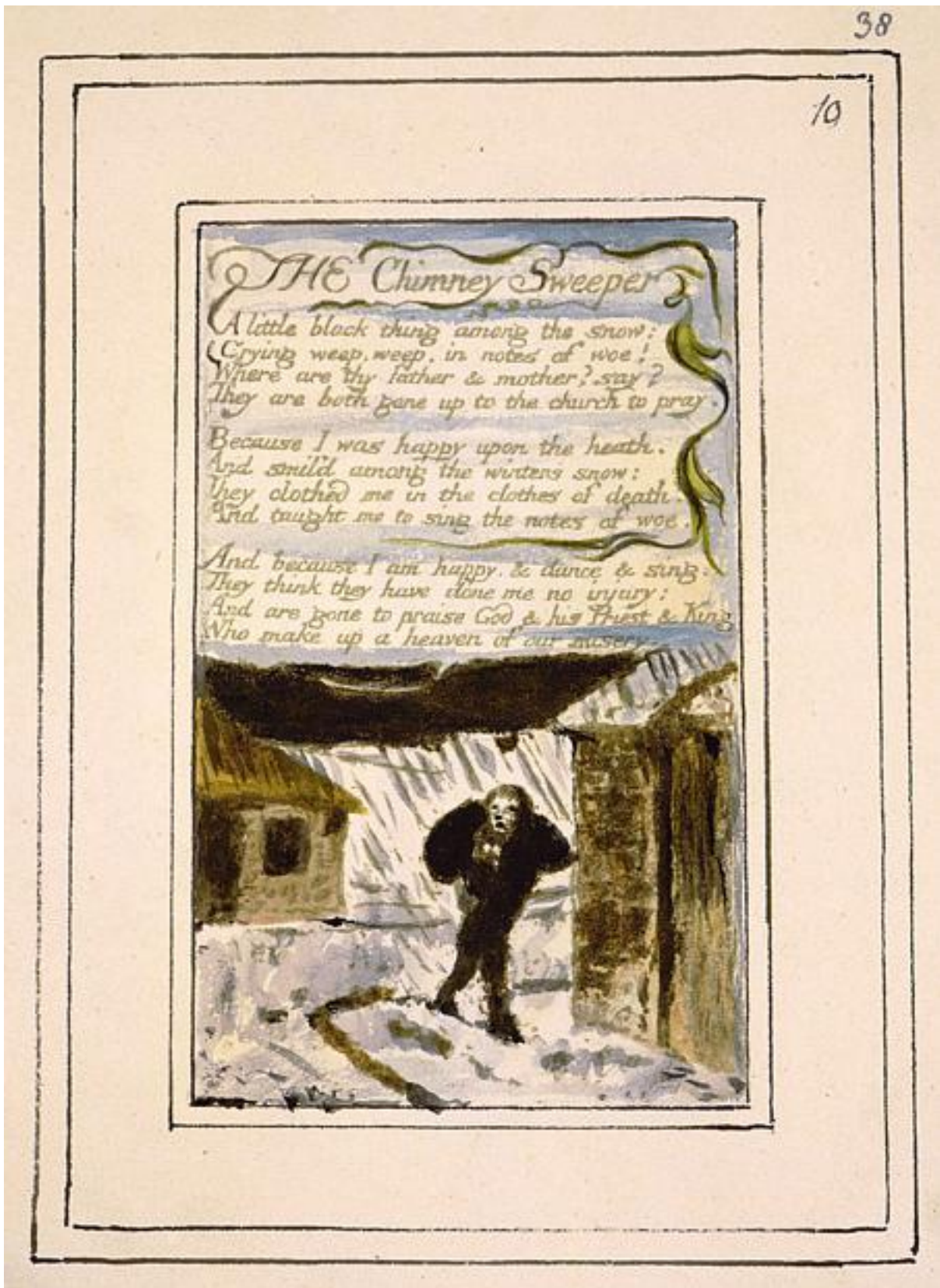


**Figure 74.** Saree Makdisi, diagram linking the “Spiritual Fourfold London” with global geography. From Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 168.



**Figure 75.** William Blake, "Holy Thursday," from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (Copy AA), plate 18, 1789 (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 11.4 x 7.7 cm). Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, P.124—1950.





**Figure 76.** William Blake, "The Chimney Sweeper," from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (Copy AA), plate 38, 1794 (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 11.0 x 6.8 cm). Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, P.124—1950.





**Figure 77.** William Blake, "The Chimney Sweeper," from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (Copy AA), plate 11, 1789 (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 11.0 x 6.8 cm). Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, P.124—1950.



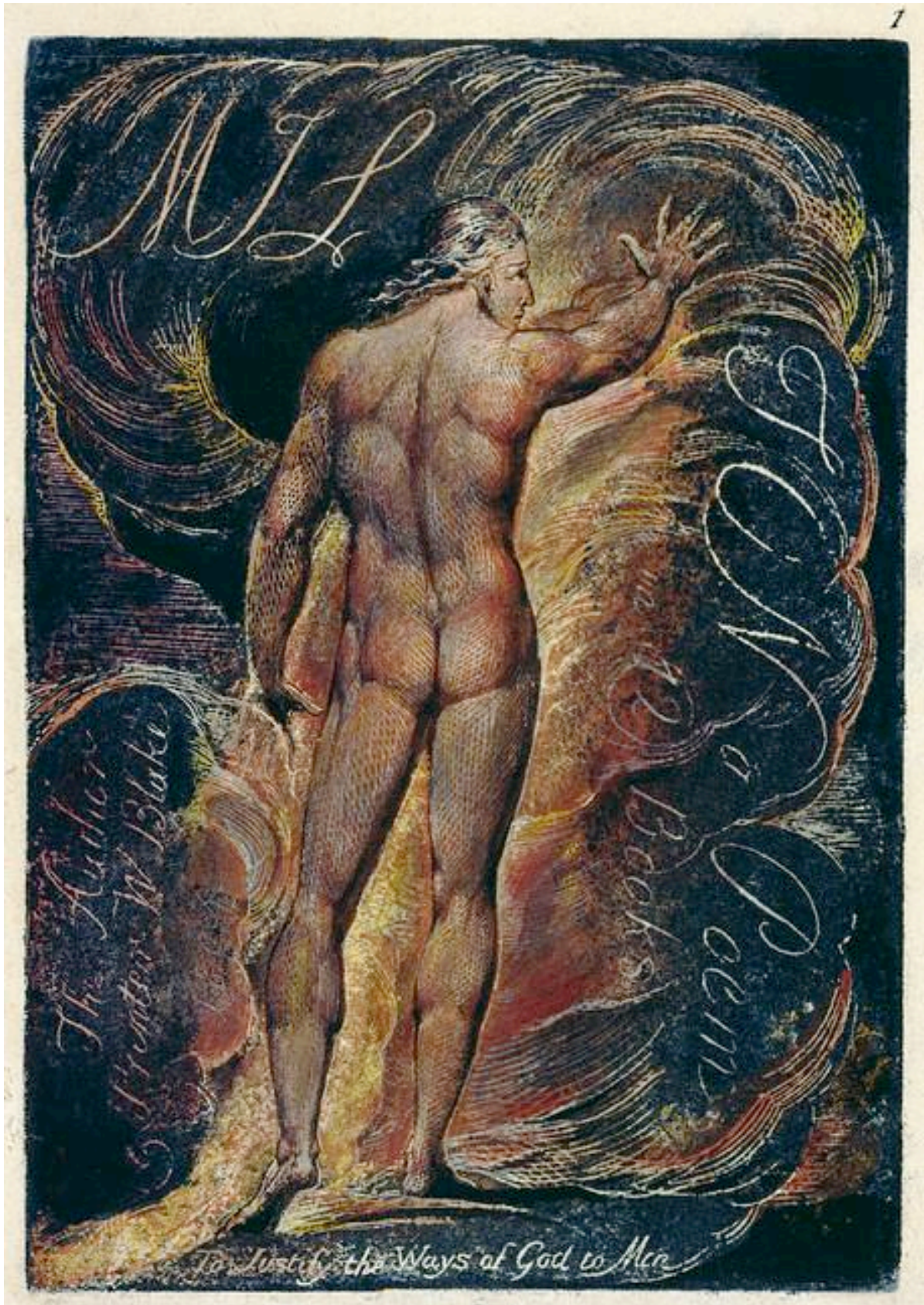
**Figure 77.1.** Detail of Figure 77.





Figure 78. William Blake, "London," from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (Copy AA), plate 49, 1794 (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 11.1 x 6.9 cm). Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, P.124—1950.





**Figure 79.** William Blake, title-page of *Milton a Poem in 2 Books* (Copy D), c. 1804-11 (relief and white-line etching, hand coloured, 16 x 11.2 cm). Washington, Library of Congress, PR4144.M6 1815.





**Figure 80.** William Blake, *Milton a Poem in 2 Books* (Copy D), plate 32 [29], c. 1804-11 (relief and white-line etching, hand coloured, 16 x 11.2 cm). Washington, Library of Congress, PR4144.M6 1815.



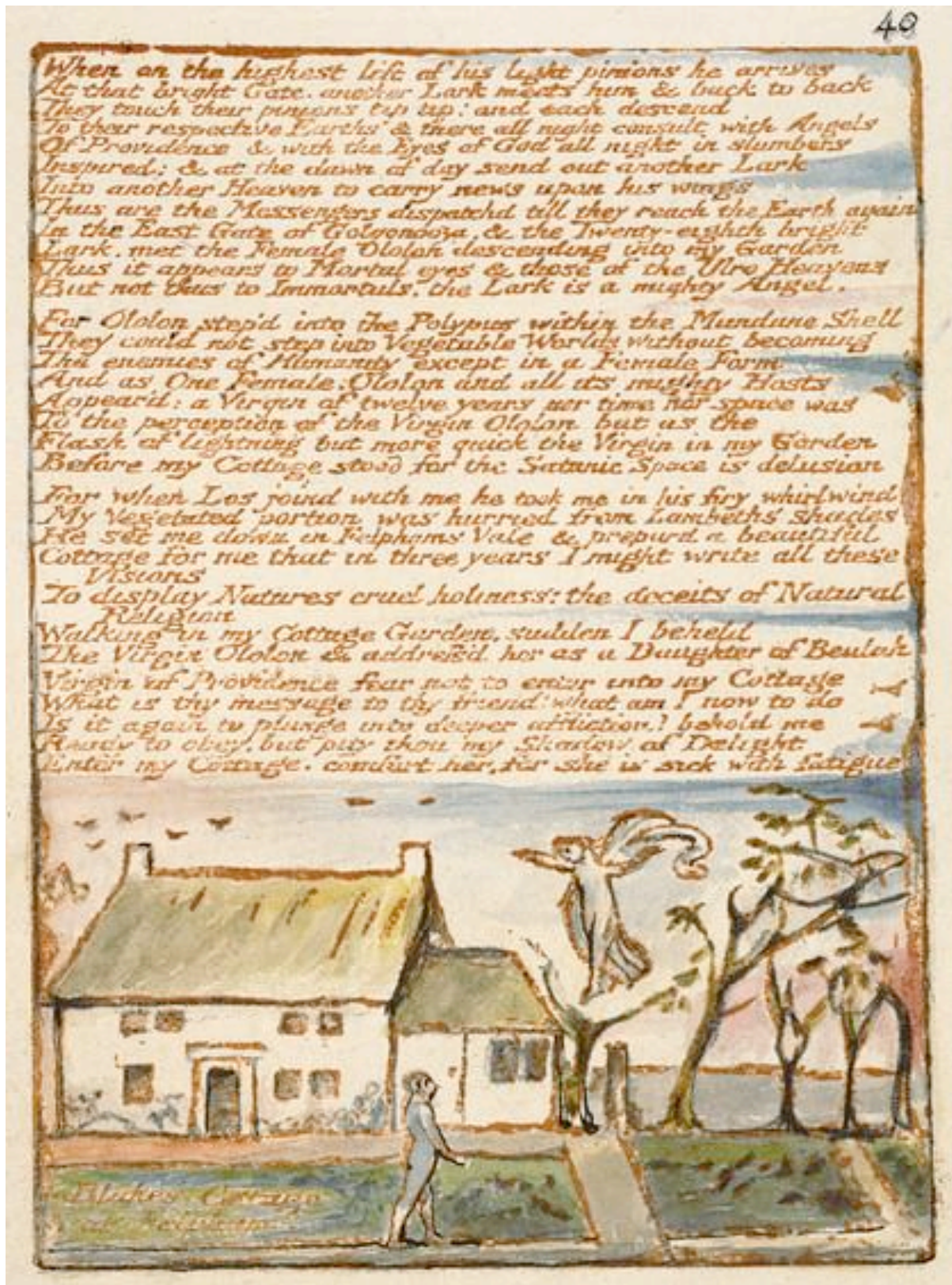


Figure 81. William Blake, *Milton a Poem in 2 Books* (Copy D), plate 40 [36], c. 1804-11 (relief and white-line etching, hand coloured, 14.1 x 10.2 cm). Washington, Library of Congress, PR4144.M6 1815.



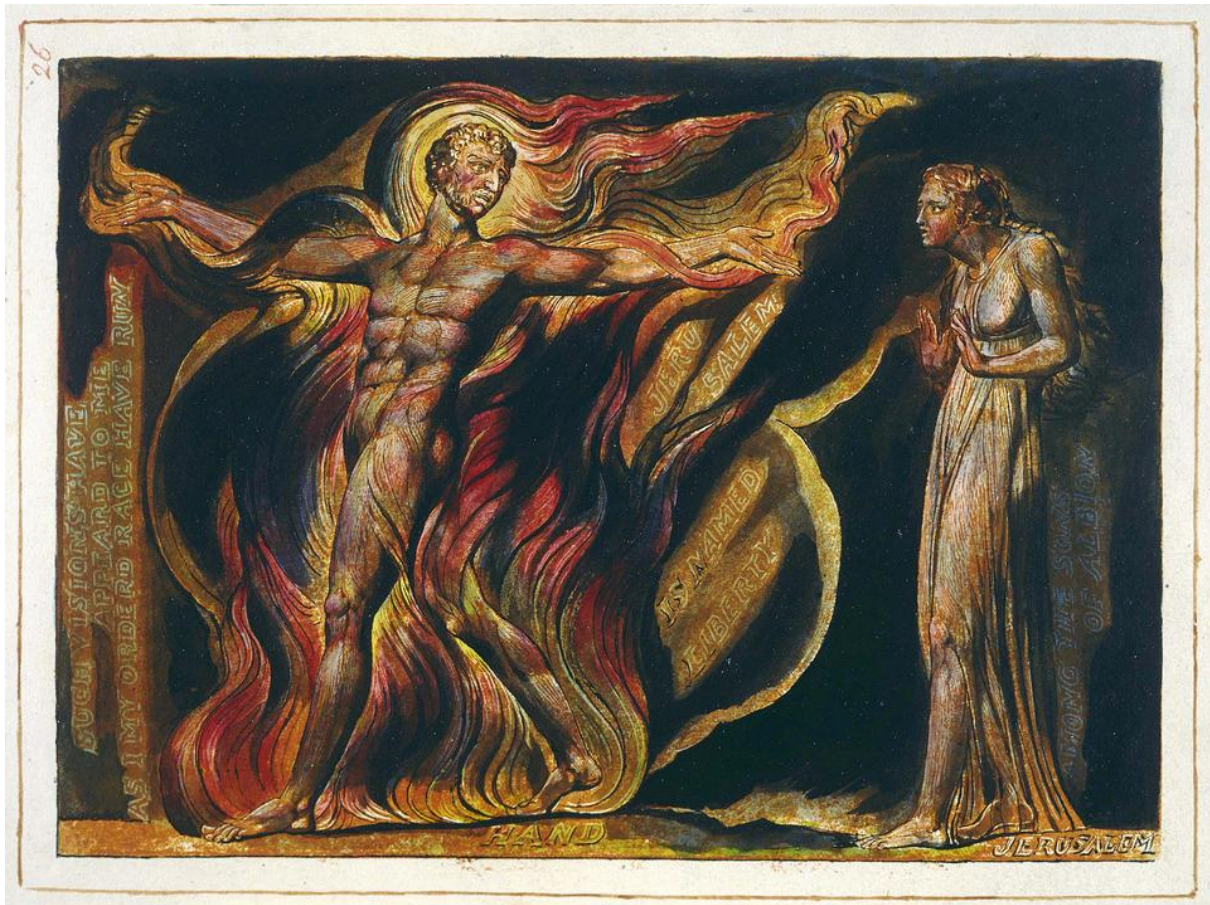


**Figure 82.** William Blake, frontispiece to *Jerusalem* (Copy E), c. 1821 (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 22.3 x 16.2 cm). New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, B1992.8.1(1-100).





**Figure 83.** William Blake, *Friendship*, 1805 (pen and ink and watercolour over traces of pencil, 23.8 x 17.6 cm). London, Collection of Alan Parker.



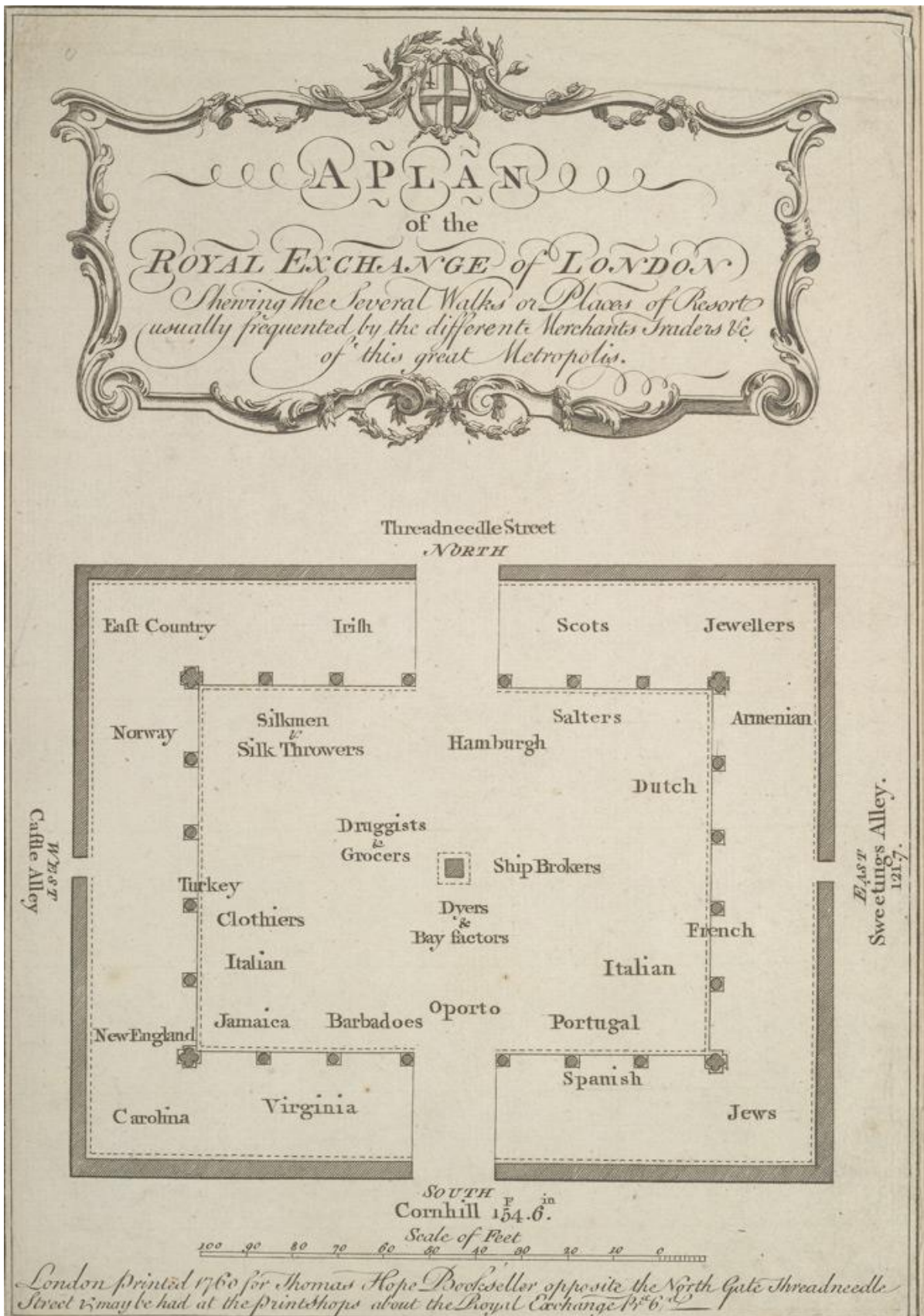
**Figure 84.** William Blake, *Jerusalem* (Copy E), plate 26, c. 1821 (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 21.1 x 15 cm). New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, B1992.8.1(1-100).





**Figure 85.** William Blake, *Jerusalem* (Copy E), plate 32, c. 1821 (relief and white-line etching with hand colouring, 22.3 x 16.3 cm). New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, B1992.8.1(1-100).





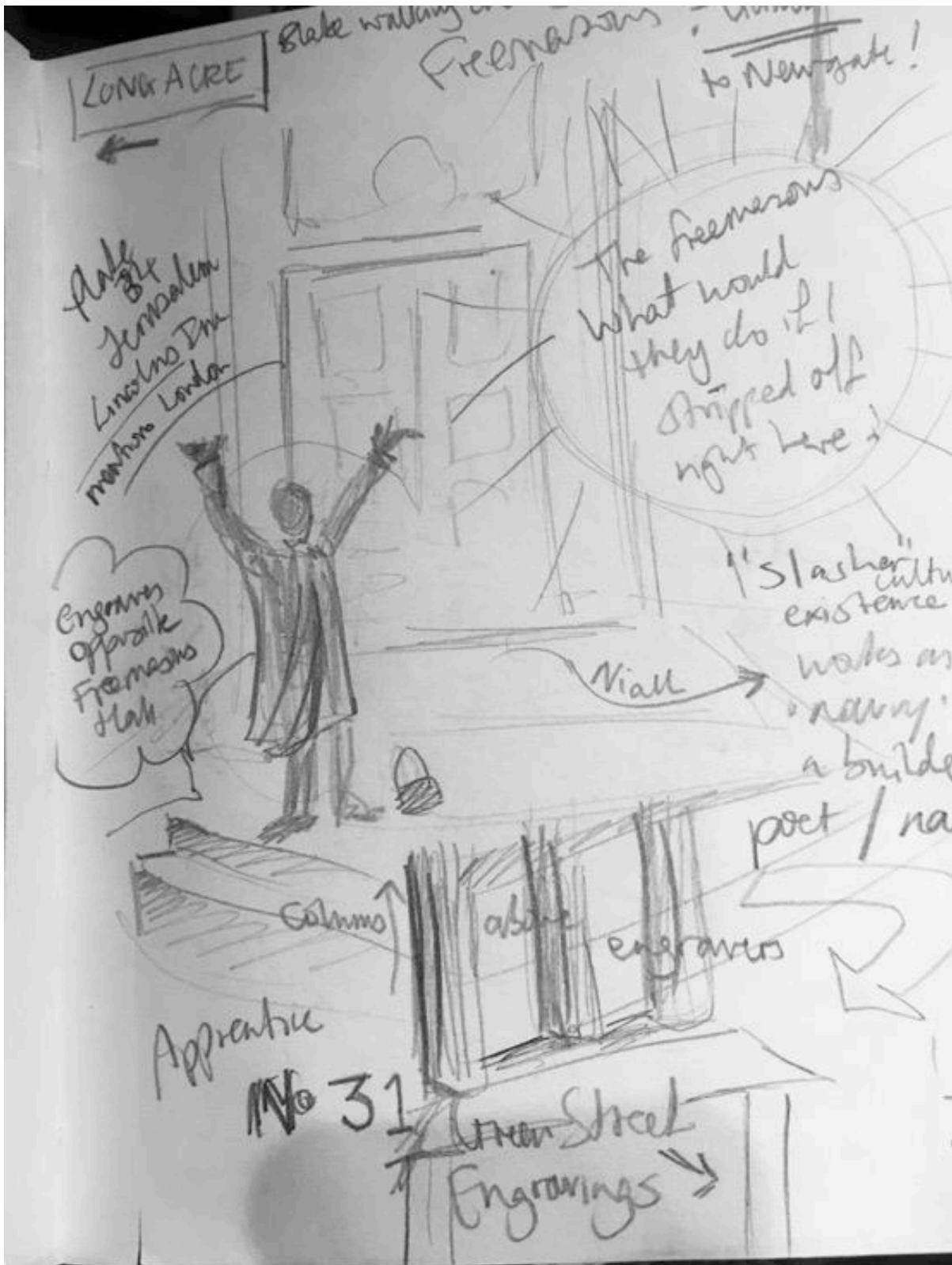
**Figure 86.** Thomas Hope, *A Plan of the Royal Exchange of London*, 1760 (engraving, 26.7 x 19.1 mm). London, British Library, Maps.Crace VIII.





**Figure 87.** Sketch by an attendee of Niall McDevitt's 2019 Blake walks. Photograph provided by Heathcote Ruthven, New River Press.





**Figure 89.** Sketch by an attendee of Niall McDevitt's 2019 Blake walks. Photograph provided by Heathcote Ruthven, New River Press.

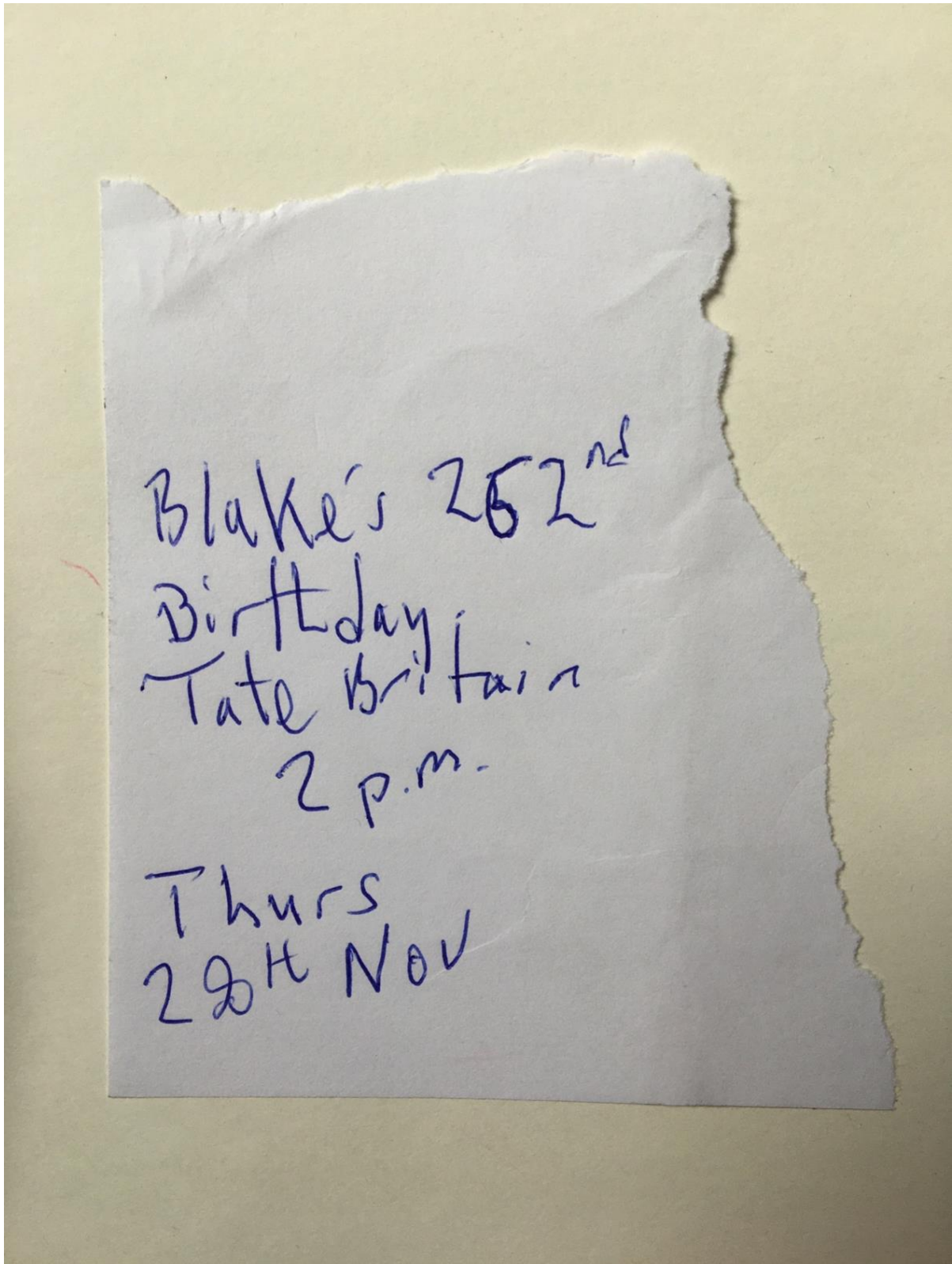


Figure 90. Stephen Micallef, invitation to "Blake's 262<sup>nd</sup> Birthday," November 2019.





**Figure 91.** William Blake, *Europe a Prophecy* (Copy D), plate 3, 1794 (relief and white-line etching with color printing and hand coloring, 23.6 x 17.1 cm). London, British Museum, 1859,0625.72-81.

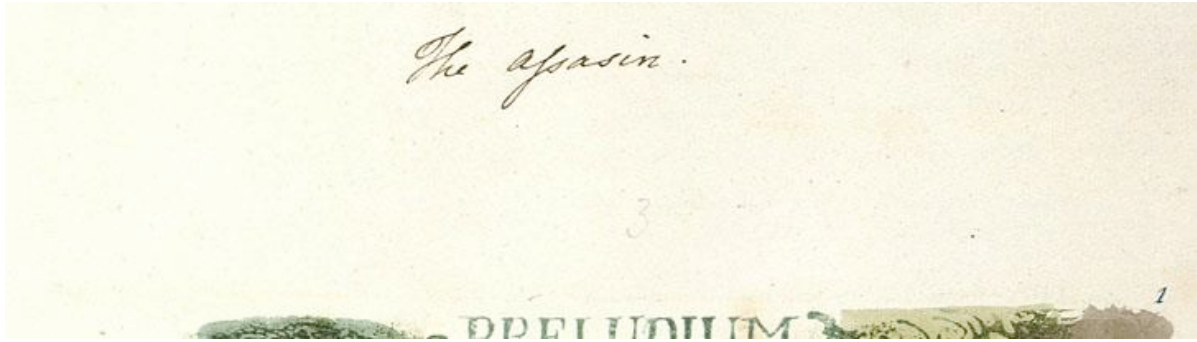


The Pilgrim, by Ann Radcliff.

Slow o'er the Apennines with bleeding feet,  
 A Patient Pilgrim wound his lonely way,  
 To seek the lady of Lovetto's seat,  
 With all the little wealth his zeal could pay.  
 From Mountain tops cold died the evening ray,  
 And stretcht in twilight o'ert the vale below,  
 And now the last last purple streaks of day  
 Along the melancholy West fade slow.  
 High o'er his head the restless Bines complain,  
 As on their summits rolls the breeze of night,  
 Beneath the ~~house~~ stream slides the rocks in vain,  
 The Pilgrim pauses on the dizzy height,  
 Then to the vale his cautious steps he prest,  
 For there a Hermit's Crag was dimly seen  
 Cresting the rock, and there his limbs might rest,  
 (Cheer'd on the good man's cave by faggot shears)  
 On leafy beds, nor guide his sleep molest,  
 Unhappy Luke! he trusts a treacherous clue!  
 Behind the cliff the lurking robber stood,  
 His friendly Moon his giant shadow threw  
 Athwart the road, to save the Pilgrim's blood;  
 On as he went a vesper hymn he sang,  
 The Hymn that mightily soothe'd him to repose;  
 Pierce on his harmless prey the Knave's sprang,  
 The Pilgrim bleeds to death, his eyelids close,  
 Yet his meek spirit knew no vengeful care,  
 But dying for his Murd'ner breath'd a sainted prayr!

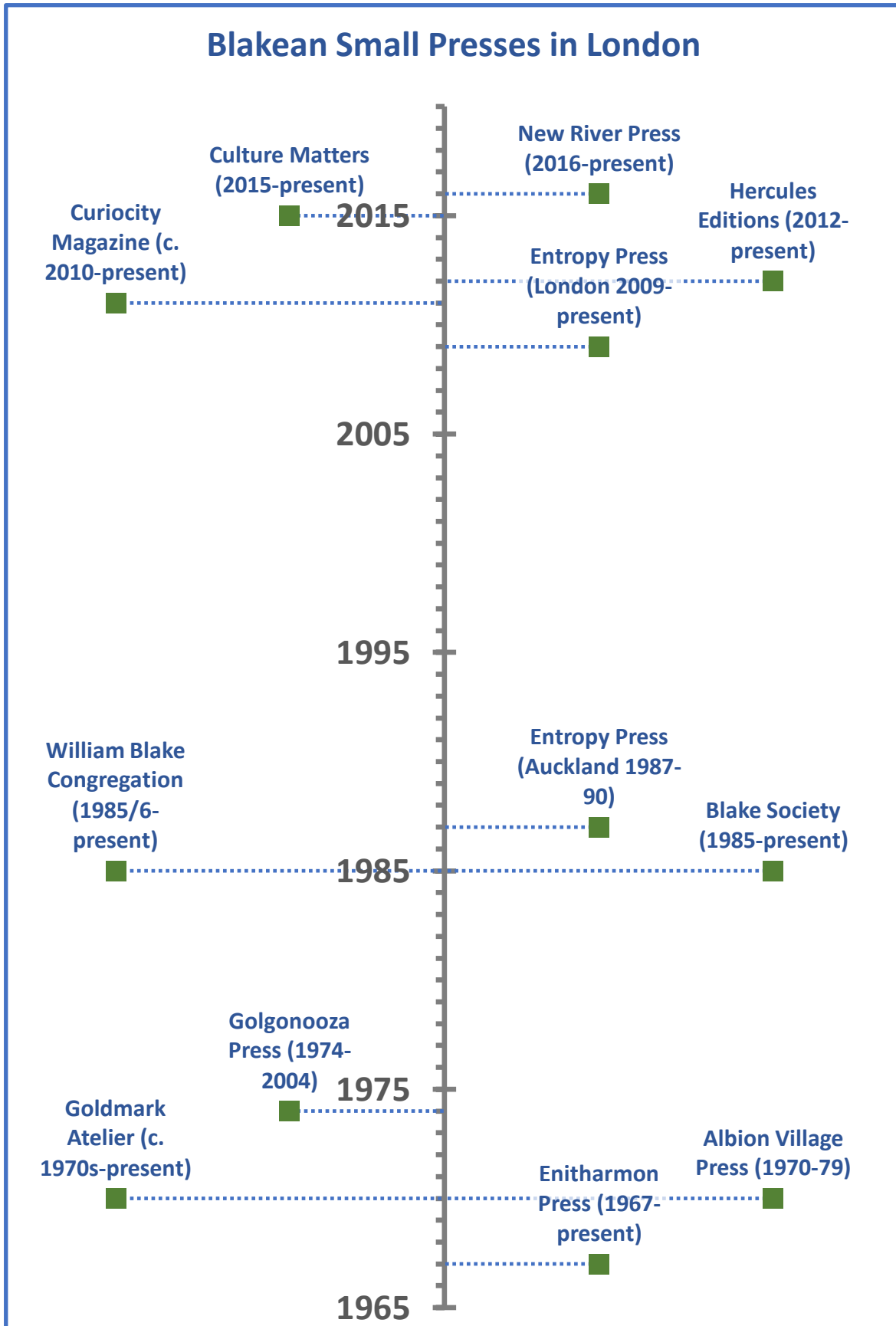


Figure 92. [George Cumberland], handwritten copy of Anne Radcliffe's "The Pilgrim," to verso of *Europe a Prophecy* (Copy D), plate 2.

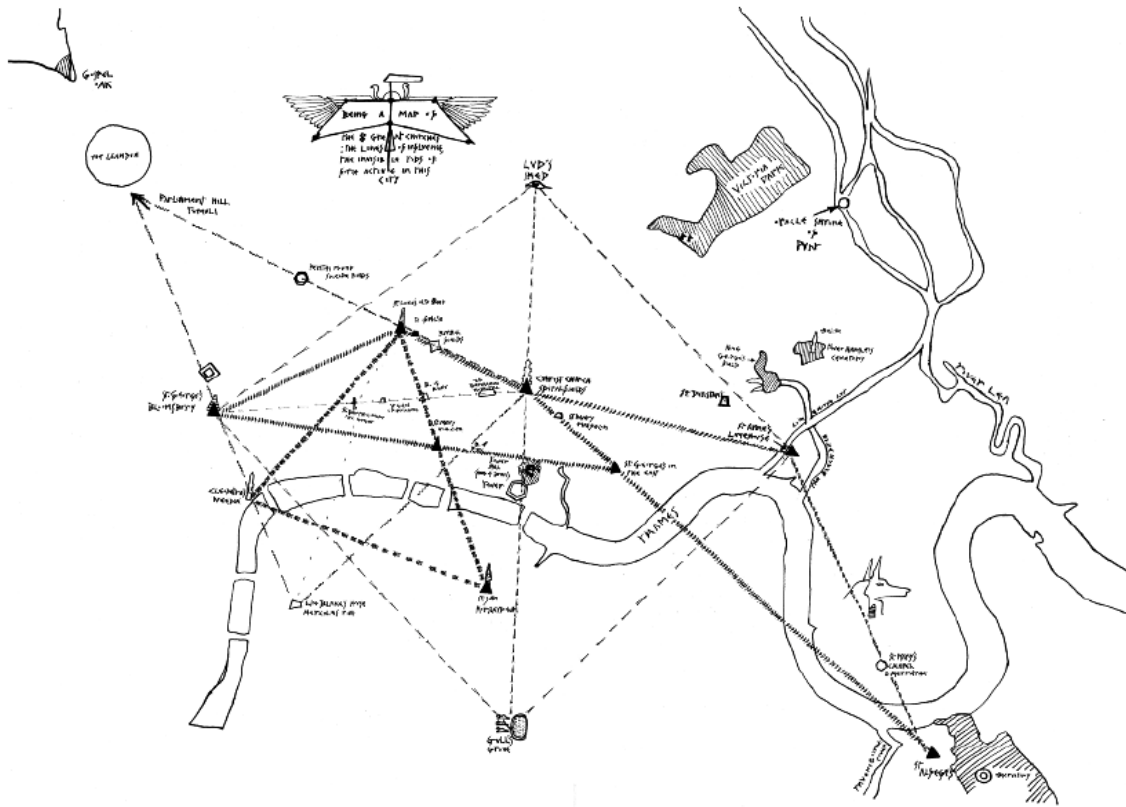


**Figure 93.** [George Cumberland], pen note in upper margin of *Europe a Prophecy* (Copy D), plate 3.

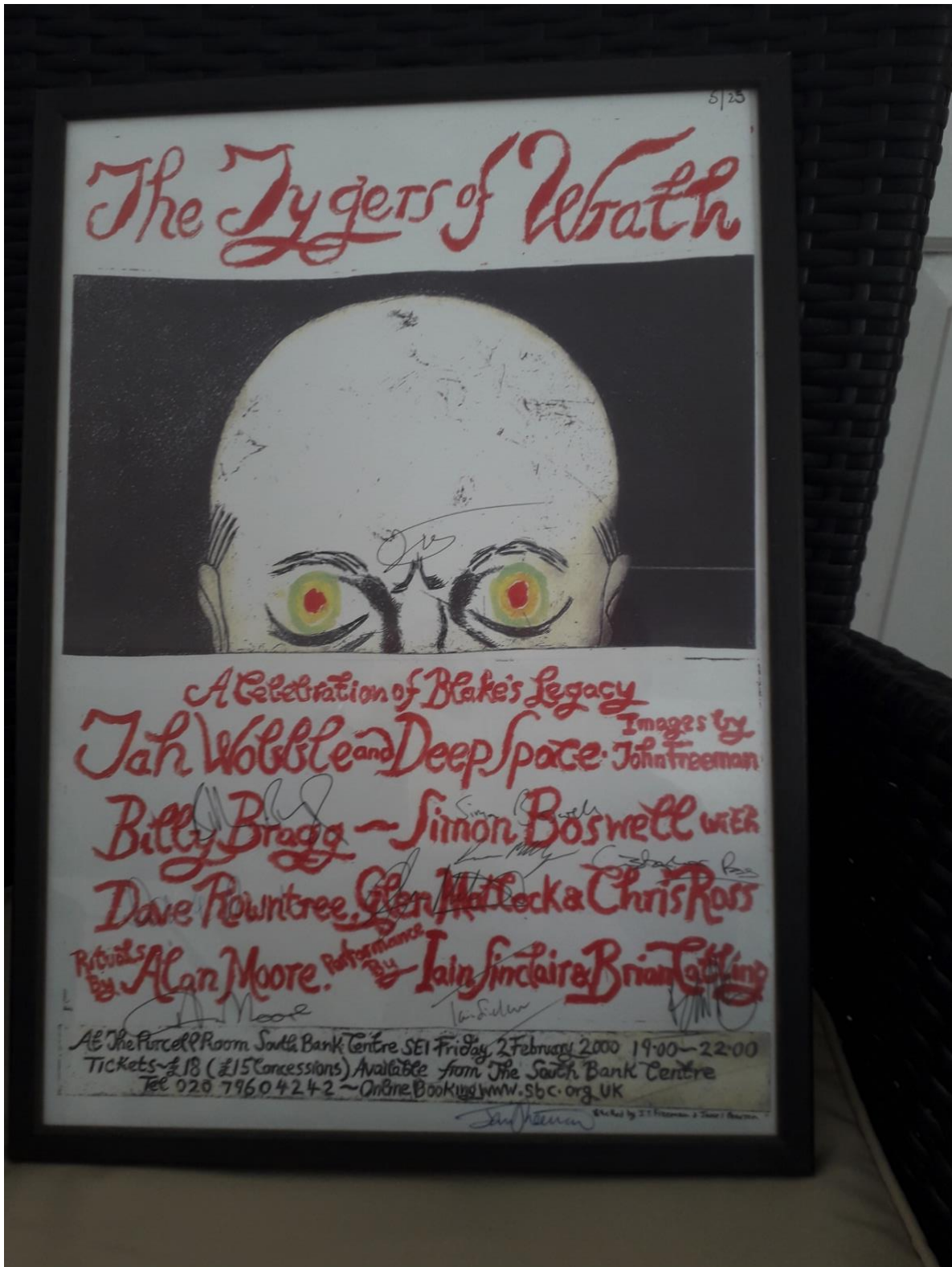




**Figure 94.** A chronology of Blakean small- and independent publishing activities in and around London from the 1960s-present.



**Figure 95.** Brian Catling and Iain Sinclair, sketch map, *Being a Map of the 8 Great Churches: the Lines of Influence the Invisible Rods of Force Active in This City*, from Iain Sinclair, *Lud Heat* (London: Albion Village Press, 1975).



**Figure 96.** Poster for “The Tygers of Wrath,” held at South Bank Centre in 2000. Photograph provided by Iain Sinclair.

**THE RETURN OF THE REFORGOTTEN**  
**The Royal Albert Hall**  
 an evening of poetry and performance  
 7.30 p.m. 16 October 1995



**15 Poets and Performers**  
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*Brendan Kennelly, Sorley MacLean*  
*Kathy Acker, Brian Catling, cris cheek, Aidan Dun, Michael Horovitz, Douglas Oliver,*  
*Alice Notley, Tom Pickard, Denise Riley, Iain Sinclair, Aaron Williamson,*  
*Benjamin Zephaniah*

**Beat to Rasta - Mystic to Bard**



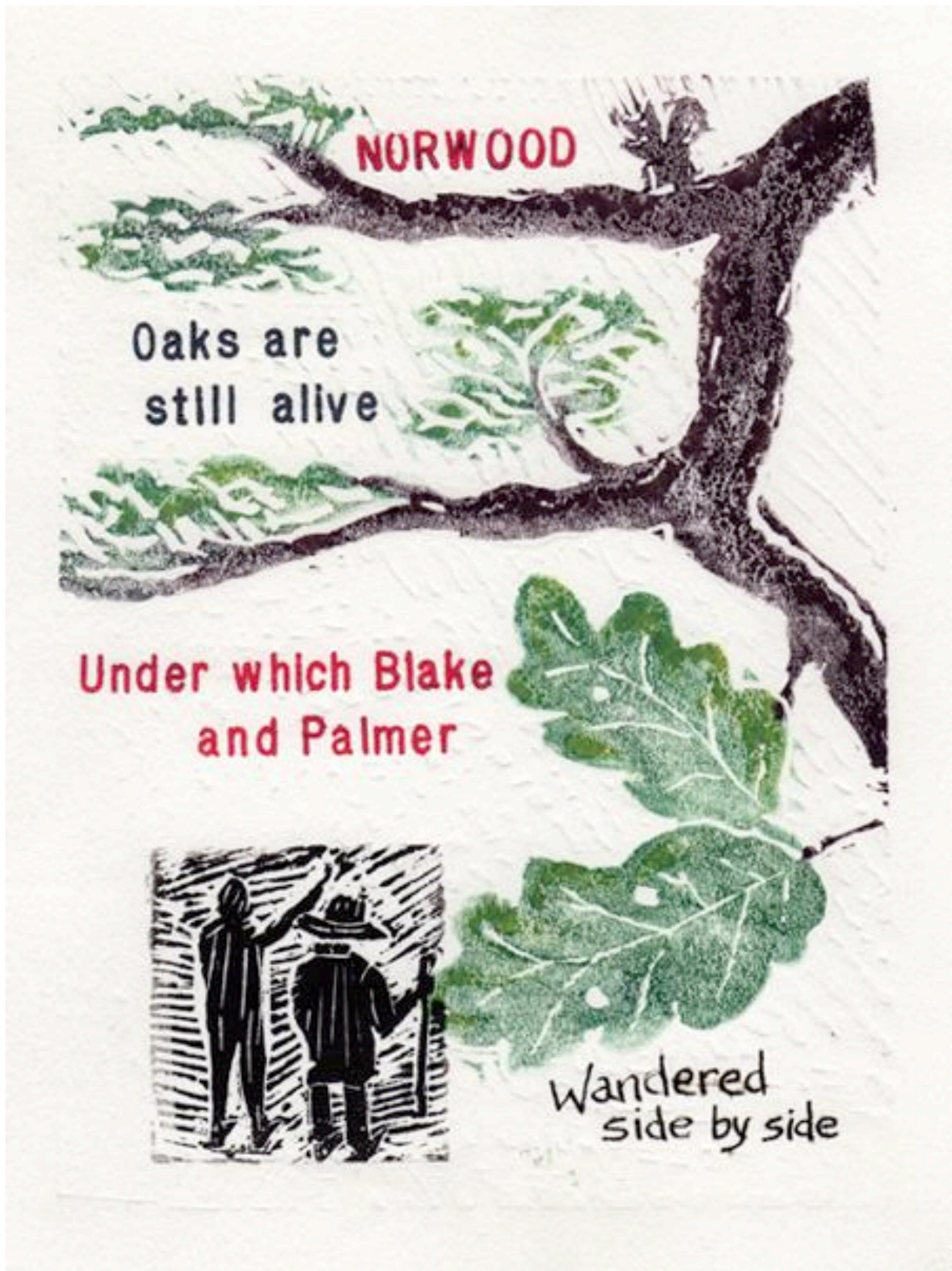
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 and read your poem at the Royal Albert Hall**

**GOLDMARK UPPINGHAM RUTLAND**

**Figure 97.** Goldmark, poster advertising *The Return of the Reforgotten*, event held at Royal Albert Hall, 16 October 1995.





**Figure 98.** John Gibbens, relief print for *The William Blake Birthday Book* (Bath: Bow of Burning Gold, 2007), 2.



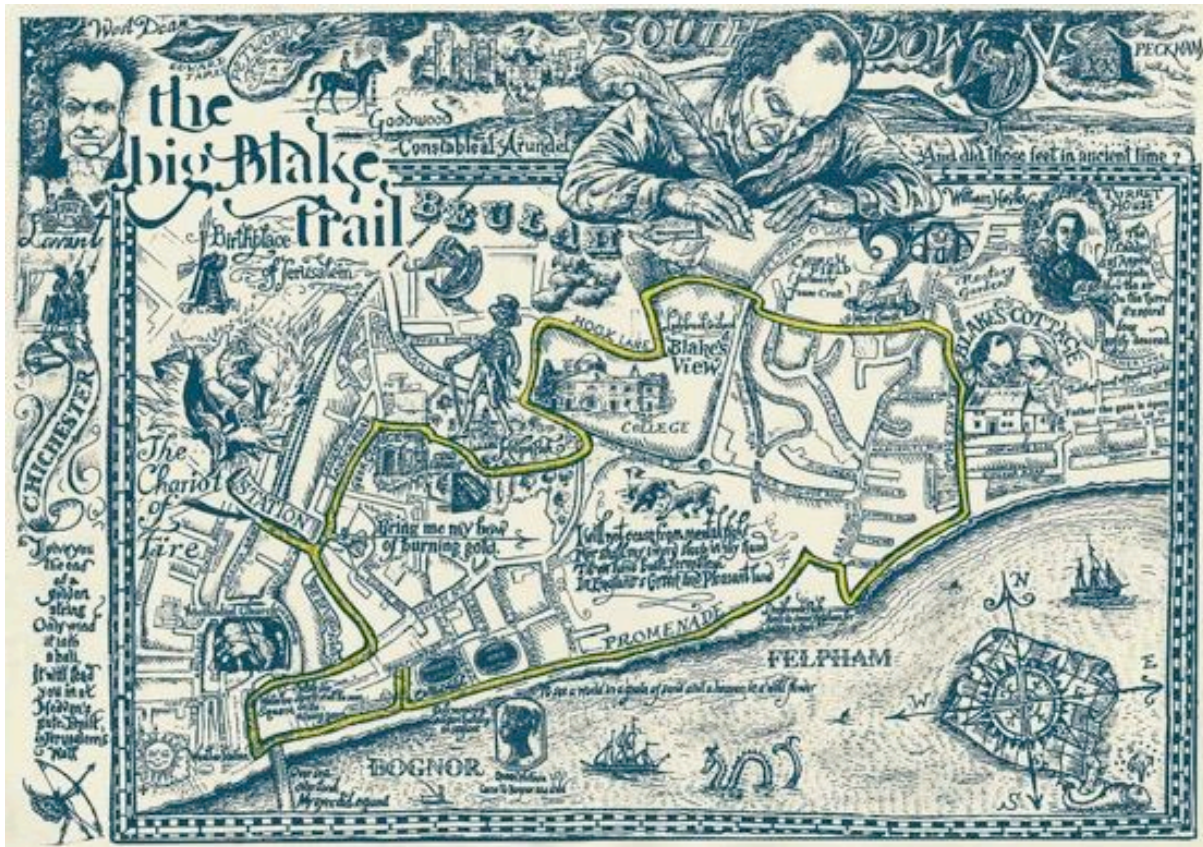


Figure 99. Chris Price, *The Big Blake Trail*, 2014.



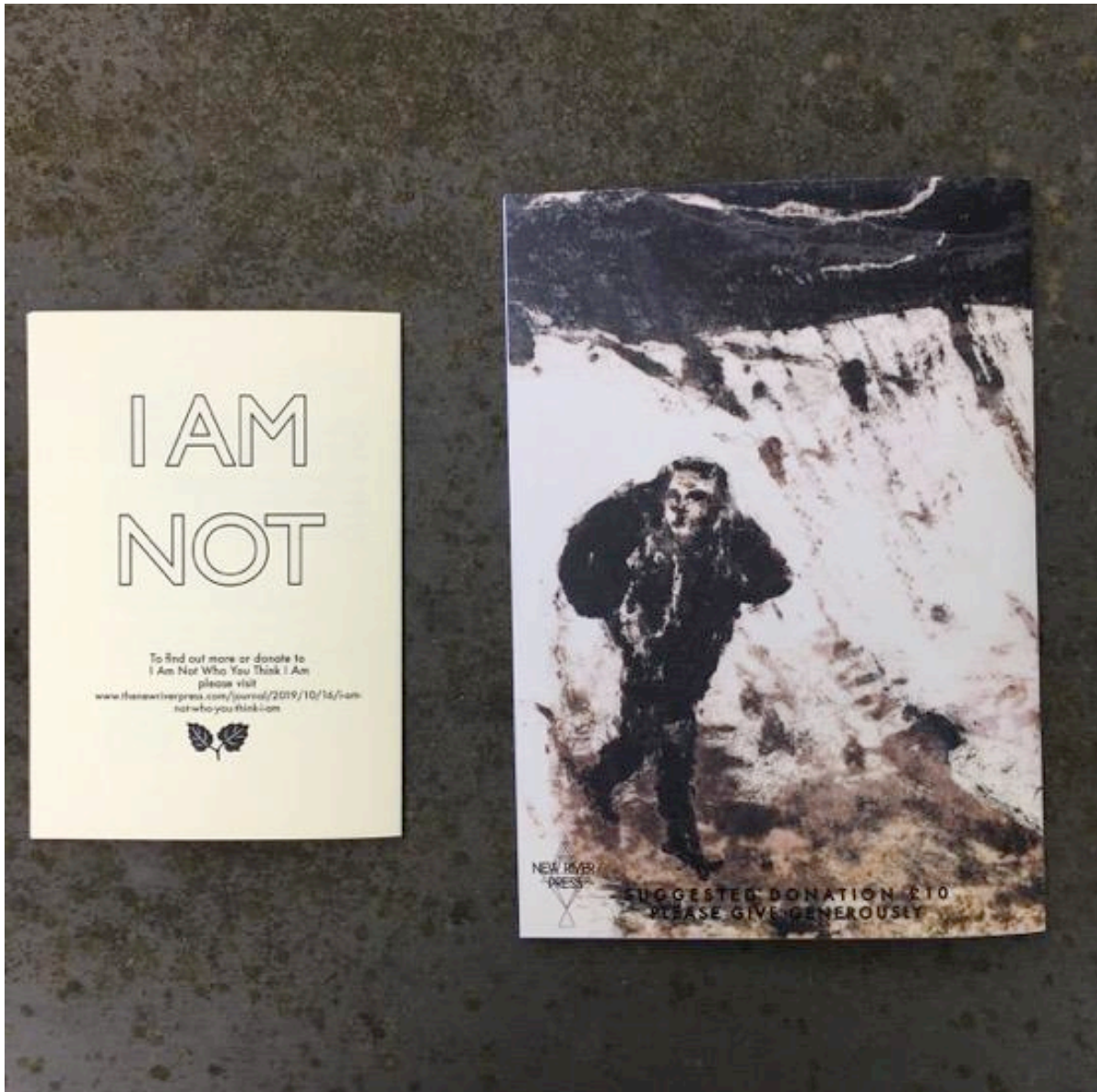
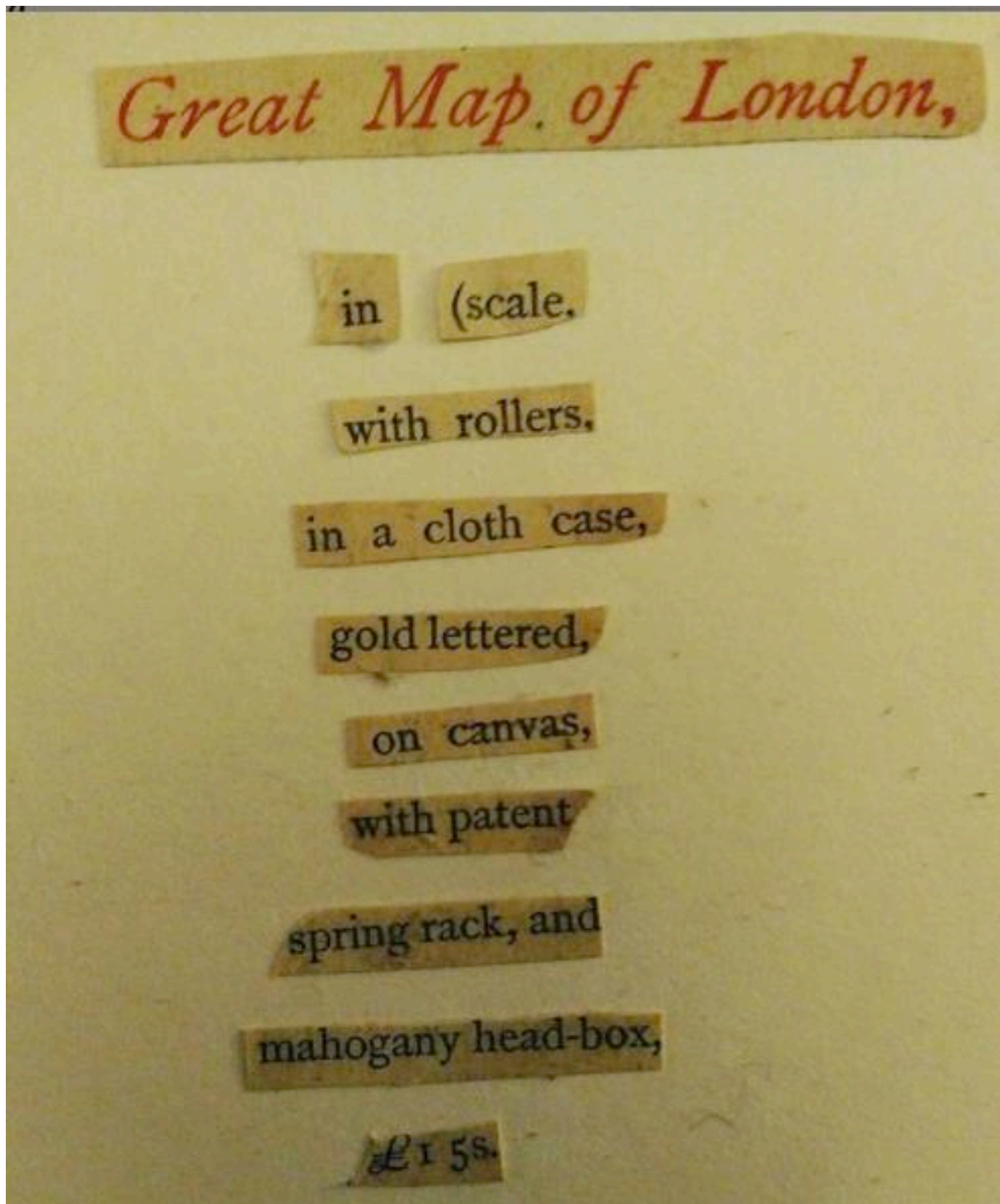


Figure 100. Cover art for *Poetry Against Homelessness* (London: New River Press, 2020).



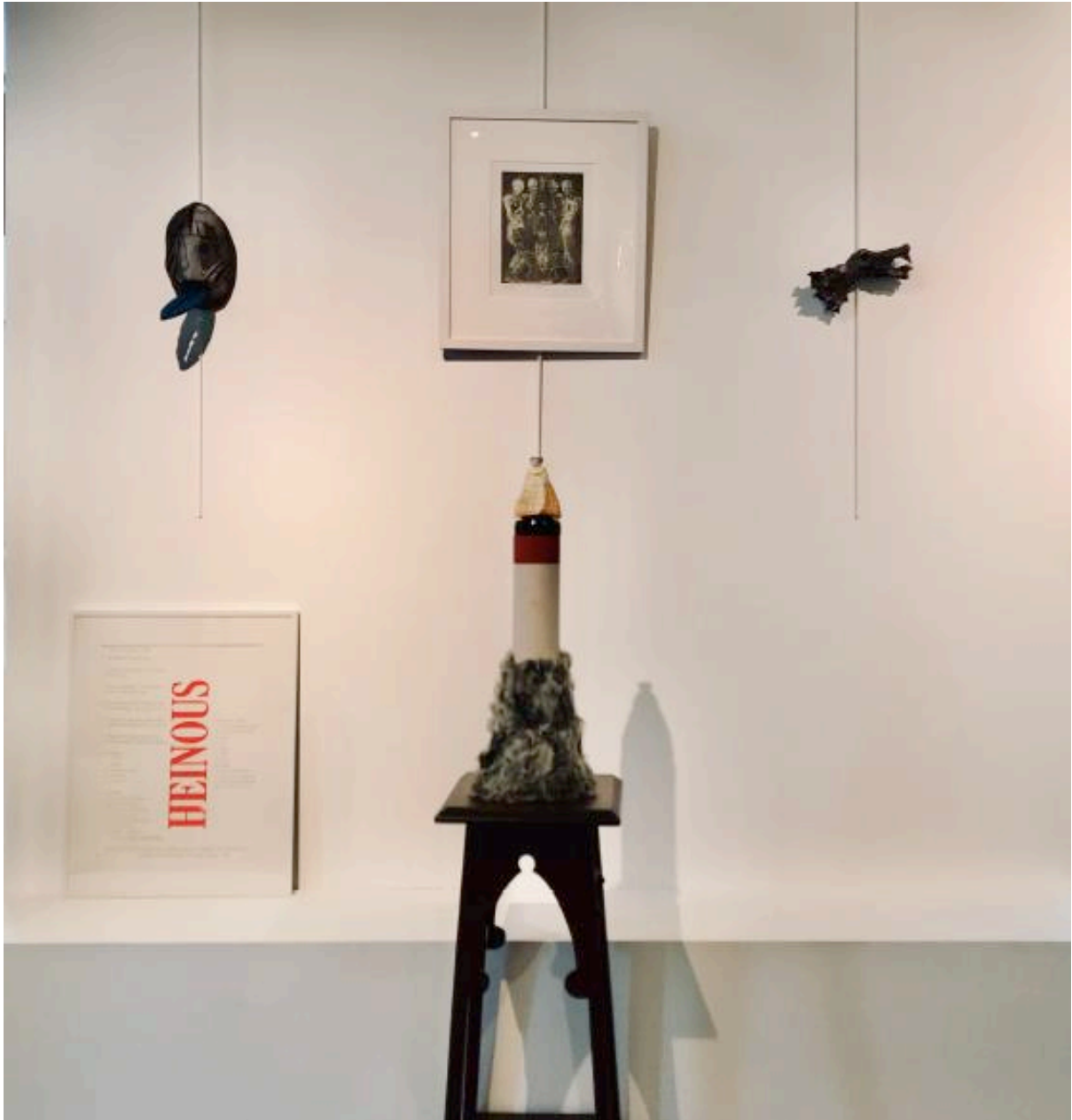
**Figure 101.** Sophie Herxheimer and Chris McCabe, cut-up for *The Practical Visionary* (London: Hercules Editions, 2018). Photo from Chris McCabe's Instagram, url: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BfwglvsDeYW/>, accessed 17 February 2021.



**Figure 102.** Jill Laudet, installation for *The Wraiths of Golgonooza* exhibition held at Noformat gallery, Deptford, 26-29 February 2020. Photograph provided by the artist.







**Figure 104.** Sarah Cliff, installation for *The Wraiths of Golgonooza* exhibition held at Noformat gallery, Deptford, 26-29 February 2020. Photograph provided by the artist.



**Figure 105.** The “guerilla” sellotape exhibition, corner Broadwick and Marshall Streets, Soho, April 2021. Photograph: Max Reeves.





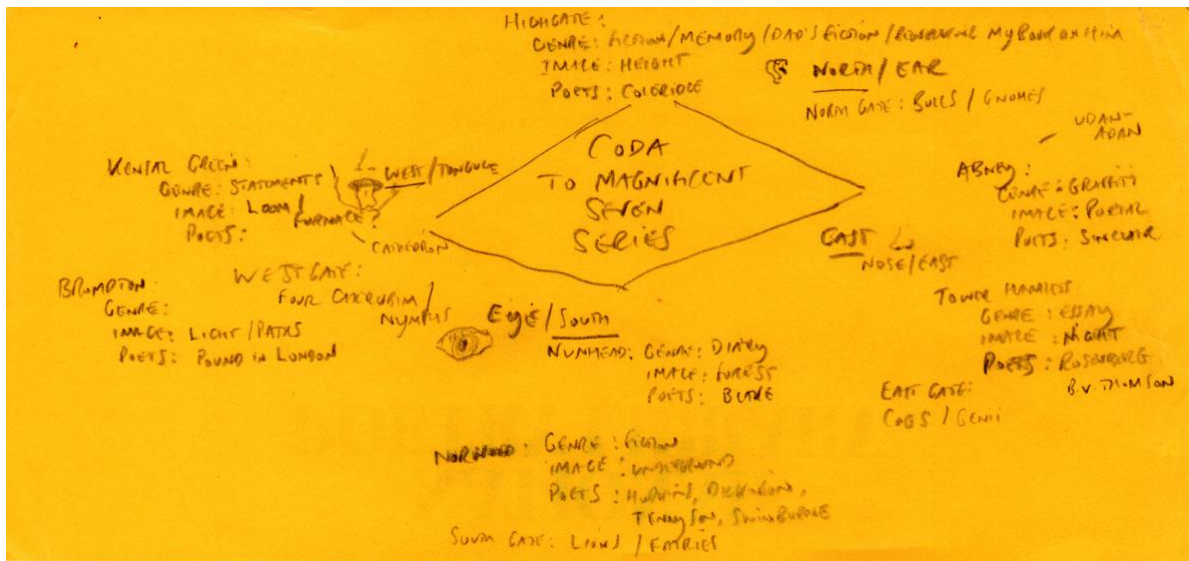
**Figure 106.** Plastic pocket containing free copies of McDevitt's poetry pamphlet, at the outdoor exhibition staged at Broadwick and Marshall Streets, April 2021. Photograph: Max Reeves.



**Figure 107.** After James Gillray, *The Blood of the Murdered crying for Vengeance*, 1793 (hand-coloured etching and engraving, 34.8 x 25.7 cm). London, British Museum, 1868,0808.6277.







**Figure 109.** Chris McCabe, sketch map for his “Magnificent Seven” book series. Photograph provided by the artist.





**Figure 110.** Andrea McLean, *A Contemporary Mappa Mundi*, 2005 (oil on linen, 133 x 133 cm). London, British Library, accession no. BLWA 111.



**Figure 111.** Andrea McLean and Henry Eliot, *A Map of William Blake's Life & Visions: In Felpham's Vale & Golgonooza: The Spiritual Fourfold London* (London: The Blake Society, 2014).





Figure 112. Blake Bloc Banner, designed by Matthew Couper.

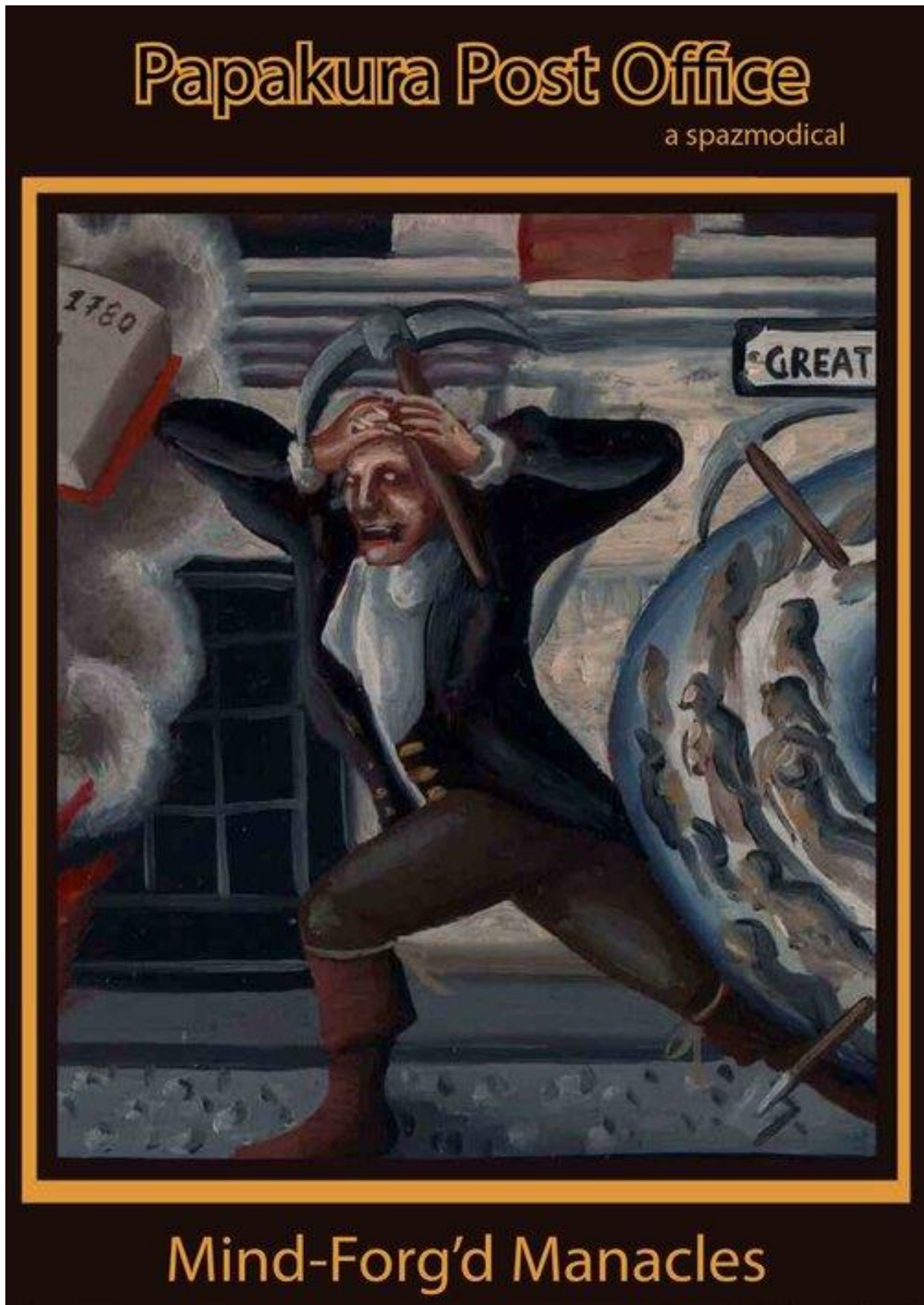


**Figure 113.** The Blake Bloc Banner, held up by Stephen Micallef, Samanta Bellotta, and Helen Elwes. Image from Entropy Press website: <https://www.entropypress.co.uk/gallery>, accessed 27 February 2021.

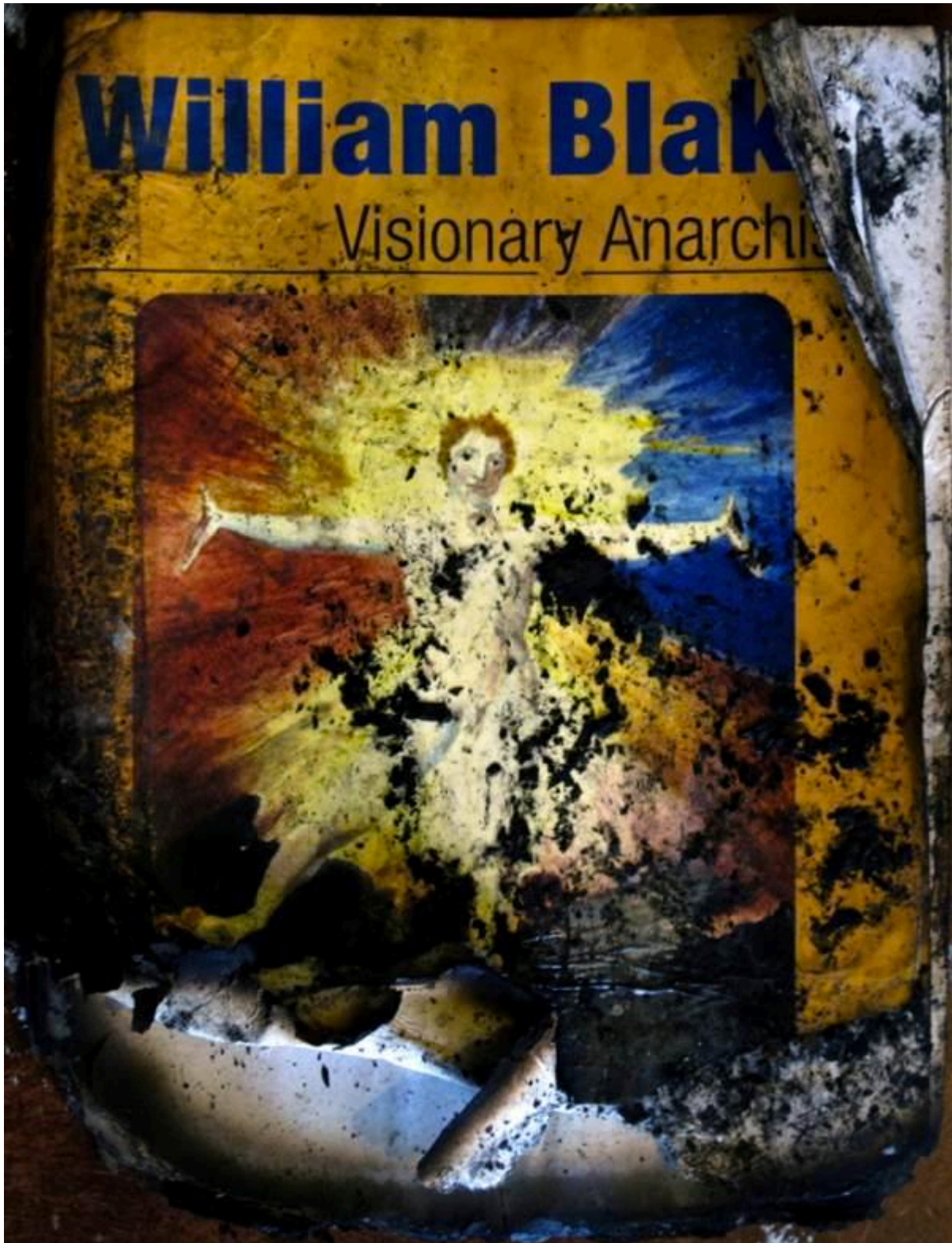


Figure 114. Paul Chan, *The People's Guide to the Republican National Convention*, 2004.





**Figure 115.** Matthew Couper, cover art for *Mind-Forg'd Manacles* (London: Entropy Press, 2012).



**Figure 116.** Photograph of the charred copy of Peter Marshall's book following the fire at Freedom Books. Photograph by "the gentle author," *Spitalfields Life*, 8 February 2013, url: <https://spitalfieldslife.com/2013/02/08/fire-attack-at-the-freedom-press/>, accessed 17 February 2021.