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## “Malden” in Blake’s Jerusalem

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## MINUTE PARTICULAR

### "Malden" in Blake's *Jerusalem*

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The role of the druids in the symbolic terminology of Blake's later work has been frequently discussed, and its general significance is now well understood.<sup>1</sup> Northrop Frye and others have shown how the sacrificial rituals of druidism were linked with London Stone and the Tree of Mystery, and have exposed the druidical origins of political tyranny and Newtonian science. Though we are still unclear about Blake's London-Welsh contacts, pictorial and verbal sources for his serpent-temple imagery have been found in antiquarian literature. His presentation of druidism, however, contains many details which remain puzzling, and one of these is the prominence of the name "Malden." *Fearful Symmetry* has nothing to say about Malden and much to say about Stonehenge, but the text of *Jerusalem* names Stonehenge on five occasions and Malden on eight. The connections between Malden and druidism seem worth exploring.

On plate 21, when Albion is lamenting his children's sufferings under the Babylonian tyranny of Hand and Hyle, Malden and Colchester are linked with five British mountains which "Reason in Cruelty" and "Demonstrate in Unbelief," thus tormenting Liverpool and Manchester and causing four London districts to "mourn" and "sicken" for four of Albion's daughters. On plate 27, in the lyrical section of the preface to chapter 2, an eastward movement from Lambeth through Malden to the Euphrates is connected with Albion's sleep, Jerusalem's fall, and the triumph of Satan's druidical religion of human sacrifice. On plate 41[37], Malden and Canterbury are associated with "the delights of cruelty" in another account of Jerusalem's fall and division as an eastward movement. On plate 57, in a passage about the symbolic conflict between "the Fires of the Druid" and the "deep black rethundering Waters / Of the Atlantic," Malden and Colchester are envisaged as the sites of "Druid Altars" and connected with other places where humanity has been sacrificed to a jealous sky-god. On plate 65, when Albion's "Spectre Sons" are tormenting Luvah on the "Stone of Trial," the phrases "over Malden" and "of Canterbury" are awkwardly added to lines from *The Four Zoas* 7 in order to link those towns with the worship of Vala as war-goddess. On plate 68, within the framework of another sadistic war-song,

"Maldens cove" is related to Stonehenge in a further account of Jerusalem's eastward fall. On plate 90, a passage about the response of Albion's "Giants" to the vehement words of Los connects Malden with the Great Glen and the island of Jura, appearing to suggest that all three possessed stone circles of the type erected by druids and deists. On plate 94, the lament of the newly-awakened England or Britannia envisages Malden as a place whose "Oak Groves," like Stonehenge and London Stone, served as settings for a druidical sacrifice of the Eternal Man to prohibitive morality.

Scholars have agreed in identifying Blake's "Malden" not with Malden in Surrey but with Maldon in Essex, which is referred to as Malden in Cooke's *Topographical and Statistical Description of Essex* (c. 1806-10). Although the phrase "Maldens cove" need not mean that Malden is a coastal town, because Blake elsewhere uses "cove" in archaic and dialectal senses unrelated to the sea,<sup>2</sup> nonetheless the allusions to "Malden" on plates 21 and 57 connect it with Colchester, and those on plates 27, 41[37] and 68 place it east of London. It is equally clear that Maldon is to be connected in the cosmology of *Jerusalem* with a druidical religion of oak-groves and stone circles, human sacrifice and rational demonstration. Maldon emerges from these texts as a British analogue to Calvary, a place where the values of liberty and the imagination are cruelly subordinated to those of jealousy and war. Many commentators have found it hard to explain, however, why this minor port on the Essex coast should be envisaged as a major center of sacrificial religion. Foster Damon correctly observes that it has "some prehistoric remains" but "no rocking stones or druidic circle." He also claims that Maldon and Colchester were "connected in Blake's mind with naval or military disturbances," but this is an implausible conjecture based on a misinterpretation of the word "demonstrate."<sup>3</sup> W. H. Stevenson usefully reminds us that Maldon was "supposed (by Camden and others) to be the site of the Roman Camulodunum"; but in explanation of *Jerusalem* 90:58-66 he can only repeat Damon's statement that the town has "prehistoric remains, but no stone circles."<sup>4</sup> One might add that it has not in modern times been conspicuously rich in oak forests.

Maldon is best known among modern students of literature as the site of a battle which was celebrated in an Old English heroic poem, and Morton D. Paley has sought to explain Blake's use of the name by reference to this text. He connects the bloody fight on the Blackwater estuary with Blake's phrase about the accumulation of a "black water"; and he asserts that "the heroic Byrhtnoth was killed with a poisoned spear," and that the victorious Vikings "went on to sack London."<sup>5</sup> Though Blake's anti-militarist ethos is far removed from that of the Old English poem, he might well have interpreted this anni-



hilation of Christian Saxons by pagan Danes as a druidical sacrifice, and readers familiar with *Fearful Symmetry* will have no difficulty in seeing Byrhtnoth as an Anglo-Saxon analogue of Balder, Odin, Absalom, Fuzon, and Christ. Such a connection between *The Battle of Maldon* and Blake's *Jerusalem* is more aesthetically satisfying than historically probable, however, for the Old English poem was scarcely known at the relevant date. When Thomas Hearne produced the first printed text in 1726 in the appendix to a Latin chronicle, he called it "Fragmentum quoddam historicum de Eadrico etc." and made no reference to Maldon; J. J. Conybeare's translation did not appear until 1826, by which time the whole text of *Jerusalem* had been engraved.<sup>6</sup> Even the battle commemorated in the Old English poem was not a conspicuous event in Blake's main sources for early British history. Milton's *History of Britain*, for example, dismisses it in a single sentence:

The third year following, under the conduct of *Justin* and *Guthmund* the Son of *Steytan*, they landed and spoiled *Ipswich*, fought with *Britnoth* Duke of the *East Angles* about *Maldon*, where they slew him; the slaughter else had bin equal on both sides.<sup>7</sup>

Rapin's *History of England*, which Blake knew at least by reputation, is no more illuminating. It too reports the battle in one sentence, and although it names "Brithnoth" it does not at this point name Maldon.<sup>8</sup> For the historians whose work was available to Blake, this routine encounter between Anglo-Saxon and Danish forces could not compete in dramatic interest with the British rebellion which sacked Camulodunum. References to it might catch the attention of readers already interested in Maldon, but there was nothing in the chronicle-derived accounts of the battle that would of itself make the event seem either historically or symbolically important.

A better pointer to the main significance of Maldon for antiquarians of Blake's time is Stevenson's observation that some writers identified it as the site of Camulodunum; and some of the implications of this fact have been explored in a learned and informative article by David Worrall.<sup>9</sup> Taking up a suggestion made by John Beer,<sup>10</sup> Worrall shows that Blake's interpretation of early British history was significantly influenced by the text and engravings of Aylett Sammes' *Britannia Antiqua Illustrata*.<sup>11</sup> He connects Blake's description of Hand with Sammes' account of four Saxon gods, one of whom was "worshipped as Mars"; and he suggests that the overthrow of a false god on plate 94 of *Jerusalem* may recall not only Milton's *Nativity Ode* but also Sammes' report that a Roman statue of Victory was overthrown in Camulodunum at the time of Boadicea's rebellion. Worrall points out that Sammes represents Malden as a "British religious centre" whose chief deities were Heus and Adraste; and he quotes Sammes' conjectures that

"Heus, Mars or Camulus . . . was not only worshipped as a God of War but of Peace also," that "this Camulus" gave his name to "Camulodunum, or Mars-hill, near Malden in Essex," and that the name of Heus was also "given to Bacchus." Sammes further identified Adraste with Venus, thus giving added significance to the ceremonies at her temple in Maldon, where the Britons "sacrificed Prisoners alive" and spent their time "in Feasts and Banquets." This system of multiple identifications would have obvious attractions for Blake, since it allowed him to unite a druidical sacrifice with a Bacchic orgy and to interpret the result as an act of homage to a Urizen-like war-god and a Vala-like love-goddess. Worrall's arguments leave one in no doubt that Blake was familiar with Sammes' work, and that his image of Maldon as a religious center was substantially determined by it.

Sammes' account of Maldon's distinctive place in religious history can be supplemented, however, by reference to works published in Blake's lifetime; among these the writings of Philip Morant (1700–1770) are of particular significance, especially for the connection between Maldon and Colchester. Morant was born in Jersey, but spent most of his life as a clergyman in Essex. In 1738 he became Rector of St.-Mary's-at-the-Walls in Colchester, and in 1748 he published *The History and Antiquities of Colchester*. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1755, and between 1763 and 1768 he produced a richly-illustrated work in two volumes entitled *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*. After his wife's death in 1767 he went to live in Battersea with his son-in-law Thomas Astle, the eccentric lawyer whom Erdman in 1954 identified as the "Etruscan Column" of *An Island in the Moon*.<sup>12</sup> Although Morant died two years before Blake began his apprenticeship, he may well have known Blake's master James Basire, who was engraver to the Society of Antiquaries. *The History and Antiquities of Colchester*, which had been revised and incorporated in the larger work, appeared in octavo and duodecimo versions in 1789 and 1810; *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex* was itself reprinted in 1816.<sup>13</sup>

In the introduction to *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, Morant quotes at length from a dissertation on the county's Roman roads by "the late Smart Lethieullier, Esq." Lethieullier argues that Essex was "fully inhabited in the British times," and that its "vast Forest" was a "proper Habitation" for the Druids; but he explains that the "want of Quarries of Stone" made it impossible for the Britons of this area to "leave such Monuments of themselves here, as . . . at Stonehenge, Rollright, and elsewhere."<sup>14</sup> In his discussion of Colchester, Morant offers a similar picture in support of his claim that there was a town on this site "even in the earliest times." He asserts that the area was "covered



with woods," and points out that "according to J. Caesar, the Strong Towns or fortified Places, of the Britans were only thick Woods, fenced with a ditch and a rampart." He argues that "the Woodiness of this place" was "quite suited and agreeable to the Religion of the ancient Britans," and reminds us that "Woods, especially of Oaks, were the Habitations of the Druids, and their places of religious worship." It was in such woods that "all their Mysteries were transacted, and their Sacrifices offered," and it was there that "their much admired and celebrated Mistletoe grew." As "the Instructors of Youth" they had schools "situated in the midst of pleasant groves," and they also had "little arch'd, round stone-buildings," in one of which a "retir'd and contemplative Druid" might sit "when his Oak would not shelter him from the Weather." Morant acknowledges that the Colchester area has "no remains of Druidical Temples or Altars," but argues that the monuments which once existed "have been demolish'd to make room for other Edifices, or even for the sake of Stones to be employed in building." That the district is now "thinly wooded" does not disturb him, because "great Alterations must have happened in the surface of the Earth in the course of above 2,000 years."

These arguments provide the excuse for a learned footnote about "Druidical Temples and Altars." Morant explains that these are "stupendous and massy stones, either standing single or in circles, or in rows, with others of enormous bulk, set up horizontally." He reports that such monuments exist "at Stoneheng, and Abury, in Wiltshire," and at other sites in Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Jersey; and he asserts that the "true use of them was first discovered by John Aubrey, Esq." For further information he refers "the curious reader" to

the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London's last edition of Camden's *Britannia*, the Rev. H. Rowland's *Mona antiqua restaurata*, J. Toland's *Posthumous Works*, Vol. I, M. Martin's *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, The Rev. Ph. Falle's *Account of Jersey*; and especially the learned Dr. W. Stukeley's most curious *Works* on that Subject.

He does not mention Sammes, however, and he does not suggest that any of these books records druidical monuments on the Essex coast.<sup>15</sup>

Morant's description of druidical Essex is immediately followed by his account of the Roman conquest. He rejects Camden's suggestion that Mars was worshipped at Camulodunum under the name of Camulus; but he reports that a temple was erected there in honor of the Emperor Claudius, and that the priests of that temple "behaved with intolerable Insolence towards the natives." Opposing Camden's suggestion that Camulodunum was at Maldon, he argues that Tacitus' praise of the town's site "agrees very well with Colchester," but "doth not by any means agree with Maldon, seated in

one of the most unhealthy corners of the kingdom"; and he cites archaeological evidence to prove that Colchester was the site of "a very considerable Roman Town." On this basis, he proceeds to demolish Camden's etymological arguments:

After all, there is not so great a Necessity of fetching the name of Maldon from Cama- or Camu-lodunum, as Mr. Camden and others have imagined; upon a kind of presumption that it could not so well admit of any other derivation. For it is plainly a Saxon name formed from the two words Mæl a cross, or boundary, and dun a hill. As if you should say Cross-Hill: The occasion of which name, as of many others, is at present unknown.<sup>16</sup>

Morant also records the tradition that Helena and her son Constantine were born in Colchester; and he claims that her discovery of the True Cross is commemorated in the arms of Colchester, which show "a Cross between three crowns, or coronets."<sup>17</sup> Morant's long account of the history of Colchester includes a brief reference to the Battle of Maldon, which tells us that the Danes overthrew "Byrhtnoth the King's ealdorman" and "remained masters of the field of battle";<sup>18</sup> and the same statements appear in the section about Maldon in his description of the Hundred of Denegay. This section also reports that Maldon "is one of the two ancientest Towns in the County of Essex," that it "stands on an eminence, or side of a hill, south of the river Idumanum, or Blackwater-bay," and that its bay "makes a convenient harbour" from which "the merchants carry on a considerable trade." Here again Morant rejects the notion that Maldon "was the *Colonia-Camulodunum* mentioned in Antonine's Itinerary," and offers an etymology more plausible than Camden's: "The name of it is derived from the two Saxon words Mæl, a cross, and dun, a hill; qu. Cross-hill."<sup>19</sup>

In the writings of Philip Morant, then, Blake could have found the name of Maldon associated with druidism, oak forests, stone circles, imperial tyranny, the Roman war-god, a busy harbour, the death of Byrhtnoth, and a cross on a hill. Most of that material, including the crucial etymology, was available both in *The History and Antiquities of Colchester*, versions of which appeared in 1748, 1789 and 1810, and in *The History and Antiquities of Essex*, which appeared in 1768 and was reprinted in 1816. The chronology of Blake's *Jerusalem* is a complex and controversial problem,<sup>20</sup> but it is obvious that Blake could have encountered Morant's comments on Maldon before he engraved those plates in which the town is mentioned. The large-scale replacement of biblical with British place-names came at a late stage in the development of Blake's mythology, and might still have been in process when the 1810 version of *The History and Antiquities of Colchester* was published; but in any case this material could have reached Blake through an earlier version, or even through the



conversation of antiquaries, booksellers, and engravers. What can hardly be doubted is that Blake's identification of Maldon as a center of sacrificial religion was encouraged by a report that the name of this ancient town alluded to a cross on a hill. Blake had found many passages in the Old Testament which allowed him to equate other biblical mountains with Calvary, and Blake scholarship is familiar with the many variants of that hilltop crucifixion in which Orc howls "time after time" on Mount Atlas. As he moved from biblical to British names, Blake saw analogues to Calvary in the Tyburn execution-place and the Snowdon of Gray's "The Bard"; and he enlisted other British mountains, from Penmaenmawr to "the Rocky Peak of Derbyshire," as equivalents for such places as the mountain-top of Genesis 22 and the Ebal of Deuteronomy 27. It was altogether natural, in this context, that he should attach some importance to a town with druidical and Roman connections whose name was translated by one authority as "Marshill" and by another as "Crosshill." When one adds to this the fact that Sammes gave "Hesus" as an alternative name for the war-god to whom sacrifices were made at Maldon,<sup>21</sup> it becomes clear that the little port on the Essex coast would have for Blake a range of associations which made it a symbol of manifold significance. Maldon took its place, therefore, in Blake's apocalyptic vision of that primeval catastrophe which divided Jerusalem from Albion and released Satan "in all the pomp of War." In the age which "began to turn allegoric and mental signification into corporeal command," the "Oak Groves of Maldon" had been "the Habitations of the Druids, and their places of religious worship." Although the "reasoning historian" might doubt their existence, the stone circles beside "Maldens Cove" had been the "Temples and Altars" where "the Druids golden Knife / Rioted in human gore."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ruthven Todd, "William Blake and the Eighteenth-Century Mythologists," in *Tracks in the Snow: Studies in English Science and Art* (London: Grey Walls Press, 1946); Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1947) 129-32, 397-99; David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet against Empire* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1954) 196-97; Peter F. Fisher, "Blake and the Druids," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 58 (1959): 589-612; A. L. Owen, *The Famous Druids* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) 224-36; S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (Providence RI: Brown UP, 1965) 108-10; Glenda Carr, *William Owen Pugh* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1983) 183-91; Morton D. Paley, *The Continuing City: William Blake's Jerusalem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) 160-61, 196-97; Dena Taylor, "A Note on William Blake and the Druids of Primrose Hill," *Blake* 17 (1983-84): 104-05.

<sup>2</sup>See plate c of *America*, line 1, and plate 66 of *Jerusalem*, lines 13 and 57.

<sup>3</sup>Damon 260.

<sup>4</sup>William Blake, *The Poems*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (London: Longman, 1971) 679, 826-27.

<sup>5</sup>Paley 76, 198.

<sup>6</sup>Thomas Hearne, *Johannis Confratris et Monachi Glastoniensis Chronica sive Historia de Rebus Glastoniensibus*, 2 vols. (Oxonii: e Theatro Sheldoniano, 1726) 2: 570-77; J. J. Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London: Harding and Lepard, 1826) lxxvii-xcvi.

<sup>7</sup>John Milton, *Complete Prose Works*, vol. 5, part 1 (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1971) 334-35.

<sup>8</sup>Paul de Rapin-Thoyras, *The History of England*, trans. and continued to the accession of George II, by N. Tindal, with the reign of George II by T. Smollett, 5 vols. (London: John Harrison, 1789) 1: 104.

<sup>9</sup>David Worrall, "Blake's Jerusalem and the Visionary History of Britain," *Studies in Romanticism* 16 (1977): 189-216.

<sup>10</sup>John Beer, *Blake's Humanism* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1968) 255.

<sup>11</sup>Aylett Sammes, *Britannia Antiqua Illustrata: or, the Antiquities of Ancient Britain* (London: Tho. Rycroft, 1676).

<sup>12</sup>Erdman 30.

<sup>13</sup>Philip Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, 2 vols. (London: J. Osborne and others, 1768), rpt. with an introduction by G. H. Martin (Wakefield, West Yorkshire: E. P. Publishing, 1978) 1: v-xviii.

<sup>14</sup>Morant 1, 1978 intro, ii.

<sup>15</sup>Morant 1, History and Antiquities of Colchester, 11-12.

<sup>16</sup>Morant 1, History and Antiquities of Colchester, 13-15.

<sup>17</sup>Morant 1, History and Antiquities of Colchester, 28, 34.

<sup>18</sup>Morant 1, History and Antiquities of Colchester, 44.

<sup>19</sup>Morant 1, The Hundred of Dengey, 327-28.

<sup>20</sup>Paley 1-7.

<sup>21</sup>Worrall 207.

<sup>22</sup>William Blake, *Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford UP, 1966) 246, 279, 281, 484, 578-79, 650, 689, 706, 742; Morant 1: 12.

## DISCUSSIONS

### Finishing Blake

Paul Mann

Since Peter Otto's response to the tandem articles written by Robert Essick and myself about Blake's possible production plans for *The Four Zoas* is not precisely an attack, this will not be precisely a defense.<sup>1</sup> I had proposed that at some stage of his work on *The Four Zoas*, Blake toyed more or less seriously with the idea of publishing the poem in letterpress, in a format rather like the *Night Thoughts* edition he did with Edwards. Essick nicely modified this hypothesis by proposing that at some earlier stage Blake seems to have experimented with producing the entire work in intaglio, then directed the project toward letterpress with intaglio etched and/or engraved illustrations, then finally suspended publication plans, though without abandoning work on the