

BLAKE

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY

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KERI DAVIES ON BLAKE'S MOTHER AND THE MUGGLETONIANS

Blake

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY

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Cover: Detail. St. James's, Picadilly. Parish Rate Books, Golden Square ward. Photo courtesy of the City of Westminster Archives Centre and published by permission.

William Blake's Mother: A New Identification

BY KERI DAVIES

When Blake expostulated, "Public Records as If Public Records were true"¹ in the margin of Richard Watson's *Apology for the Bible* (1796), he gave a warning that his biographers would have done well to heed. Certain themes can seduce us, often because they confirm our private naïve conviction, legitimized by means of some apparently convincing documentary evidence. Thompson's *Witness against the Beast* has been widely acclaimed as an important contribution to Blake studies, and it seems to be accepted that he "offers plausible evidence to suggest that Blake's mother may well have come from a family with Muggletonian connections."² I am concerned in this paper with the biographical statements that Thompson makes and my reasons for coming, in some instances, to opposite conclusions to Thompson. What is the evidence that points to a Muggletonian connection for Blake's mother? Why does Thompson insist that her first husband was Thomas Hermitage? He makes a number of assertions:

The chapel at St George's, Mayfair, was a notorious bucket-shop for marriages, and convenient for couples who did not want to tangle with the Church of England. . . . The chapel was a place where radical dissenters, outside the Church, might obtain a quick marriage. . . . [Catherine] was the widow of Thomas Hermitage. . . . Several Hermitages can be found in the parish registers of St James's, Westminster, between 1720 and 1750. It will be recalled that a George Hermitage has two songs in the *Divine Songs of the Muggletonians*, probably from the 1730s or 1740s. Could George have been Thomas's kin? . . . If Muggletonians favoured endogamy, Catherine's first husband, and herself, might have been of the faith?³

I shall demonstrate that all of these assertions of Thompson's are to a greater or lesser extent tendentious, and some of them just plain wrong.

What is known

The Parish Registers of the Church of St. James, Piccadilly,

¹ Annotations to Watson, E 617

² Roy Porter, review of Thompson, *Witness against the Beast*, *English Historical Review* 111 (1996): 743-44.

³ E. P. Thompson, *Witness against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 120-21.

record the baptisms of the children of James and Catherine Blake. Their eldest child James was born 10 July 1753 and christened 15 July. John was born 12 May 1755 and christened 1 June. William, born 28 Nov 1757, was christened 11 December. Another son John (the first of that name must have died in infancy), was born 20 March 1760 and baptized Monday, 31 March. Richard, so named in the Parish Register, was born 19 June 1762, and christened 11 July 1762. Catherine Elizabeth, the only daughter, was born 7 January and christened 28 January 1764.⁴

Aileen Ward, following the suggestion made many years ago by Arthur Symons, has asserted that "Richard" is a clerical error for "Robert," Blake's favorite and youngest brother.⁵ I would agree that the christening of "Richard" Blake is, most certainly, of the child later known as Robert, though there may be reasons other than the carelessness of the parish clerk for the apparent error.⁶

The Registers of St. George's Chapel in Curzon Street ("the Mayfair Chapel") record the marriage in October 1752 of

✦ 15. James Blake and Catherine Harmitage of S^t James^s Westminster.⁷

There can be no reasonable doubt that this records the marriage of Blake's parents. Both Christian names are right. The date is almost exactly nine months before the birth of the first child, James, on 10 July 1753. The ✦ in front of the entry is still unexplained.

The Registers of Bunhill Fields Burial Ground record the burial on 9 September 1792 of

Catherine Blake [aged] 70 [of] S^t James's Westminster.⁸

The implication of these records then is that Blake's mother was born in 1722 and was aged 30 at the time of her marriage to James Blake in 1752. Bentley comments that "The identification of this Catherine Blake with the poet's mother is a sound hypothesis based on the coincidence of names and the burial of her husband (1784) and three sons (1787, 1827, 1827) in the same graveyard."⁹

H. M. Margoliouth was the first writer to recognize the

⁴ The Parish Records of St. James's Church are now housed in the city of Westminster Archives Centre.

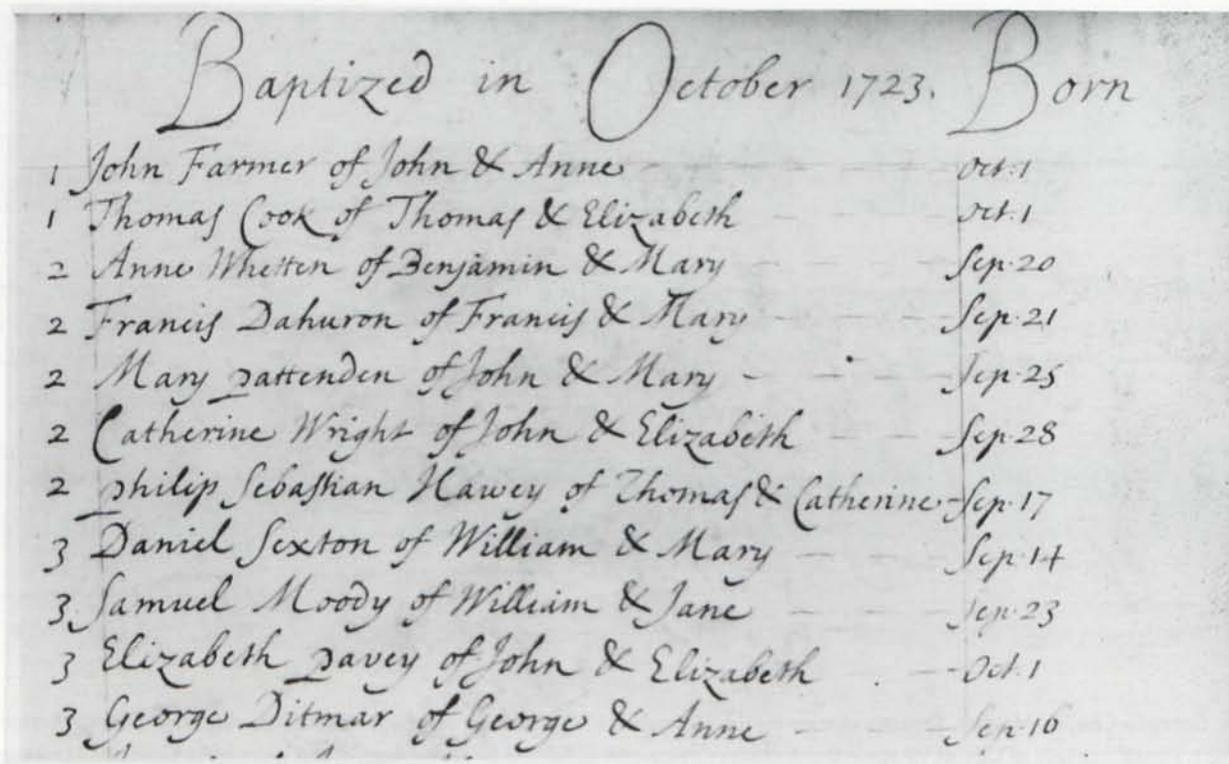
⁵ Aileen Ward, "Who was Robert Blake?" *Blake* (1994/95): 84-89. Arthur Symons, "The Family of William Blake," *Athenaeum* 4096 (1906): 515-16.

⁶ One of many examples would be the playwright R. B. Sheridan who was baptized Thomas. His parents changed their minds for some reason, and started to call him Richard. See Fintan O'Toole, *A Traitor's Kiss: the Life of Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (London: Granta, 1997) 17.

⁷ City of Westminster Archives Centre. St. George's Chapel, Mayfair. [Register. Vol.]: 3

⁸ Public Record Office. Bunhill Fields Register RG 4/4695

⁹ G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 47. My summary of biographical data is, of course, entirely indebted to Bentley's work.



1 St. Martin in the Fields, Westminster. Parish Register: baptisms for 2 October 1723 showing baptism of Catherine Wright, daughter of John and Elizabeth. Photo courtesy of City of Westminster Archives Centre and published by permission of the Vicar of St. Martin in the Fields.

entry in the *Register* of the Mayfair Chapel as referring to Blake's parents.¹⁰ Margoliouth admits that he worked solely from the Harleian Society transcript which he took to be accurate and complete. Adequate for most purposes, the transcript regularizes the form of entries and omits the mysterious marginal crosses.¹¹ Margoliouth is appropriately tentative as to the conclusions to be drawn from his discovery. The name "Harmitage" he recognizes as an obvious error, perhaps for "Hermitage" or maybe "Armitage." Again, the choice of the Mayfair Chapel for the wedding is problematic since marriages there were "irregular" though entirely legal. Margoliouth comments that "Convenience, cheapness, privacy, or even fashion . . . may have brought James and Catherine there. It is also possible that, if, as is vaguely asserted by biographers (chiefly, perhaps, on the evidence of

subsequent burial at Bunhill Fields), they were dissenters, they may have preferred to avoid an episcopal licence or parochial banns."

The passing of Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act put a stop to the marriages at Mayfair; but on 25 March 1754, the day before the Hardwicke Act came into operation, 61 couples were married there. Thompson's reference to the Mayfair Chapel as a "bucket-shop" distracts us from the fact that Mayfair marriages, though legally "clandestine," were always performed in accordance with the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England by ordained, though "unbeneficed," Anglican clergy and were in some measure "fashionable."¹²

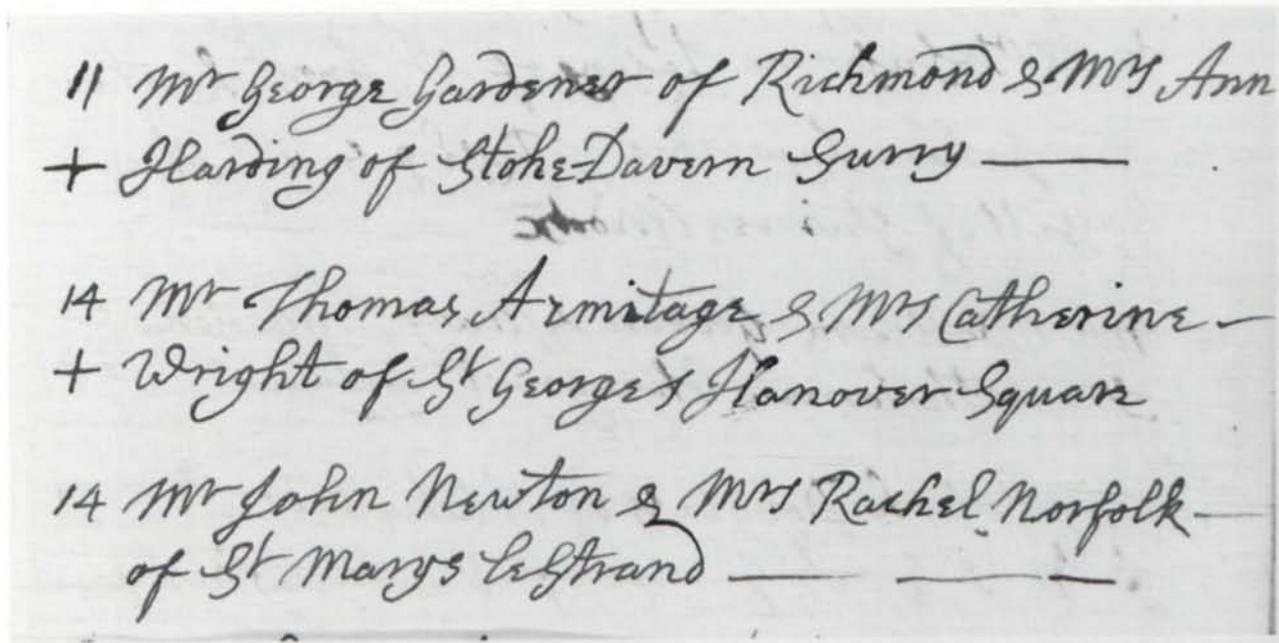
What kind of name is Harmitage?

I have endeavored to apply to our known data the resources of *FamilySearch*, a set of genealogical programs and data files on CD-ROM published by the Genealogical Society of Utah.

¹⁰ H. M. Margoliouth, "The Marriage of Blake's Parents," *Notes and Queries* (1947): 380-81

¹¹ George J. Armytage, ed., *The Register of Baptisms and Marriages at St. George's Chapel, May Fair; transcribed from the Originals now at the Church of St. George, Hanover Square, and at the Registry General at Somerset House*. Publications of the Harleian Society. Registers; xv (London: Harleian Society, 1889).

¹² On the Mayfair Chapel and its notorious minister, Alexander Keith, see John Southerden Burn, *History of the Fleet Marriages*, 2nd ed. (London: Rivingtons, 1834) 141-45, and George Clinch, *Mayfair and Belgravia: Being an Historical Account of the Parish of St George, Hanover Square* (London: Truslove & Shirley, 1892) 56-60.



2 St. George's Chapel, Mayfair. Register entries for 14 December 1746, showing marriage of Thomas Armitage and Catherine Wright. Photo courtesy of City of Westminster Archives Centre and published by permission of the Vicar of St. George's, Hanover Square.

Of most use in researching William Blake's family history has been the *International Genealogical Index (IGI)* which is now available as data files within *FamilySearch*.¹³ IGI is a file of names extracted principally from parish and other vital records. The data incorporated in IGI and now available on CD-ROM have transformed genealogical research in a way inconceivable to Margoliouth or Thompson. The main (1993) file contains 58,969,065 entries for England, of which 6,498,290 represent Greater London; the 1994 Addendum adds another 8,528,059 for England, including 290,270 for Greater London.

IGI records just 29 births or christenings with the surname "Harmitage" in British parish registers from 1582 to 1873. There is just one Harmitage birth recorded in Greater London in the eighteenth century, when Mary Harmitage, daughter of John and Mary, was christened 11 October 1756 at Saint Luke, Chelsea.¹⁴ Twenty-nine instances out of the more than 86 million British entries in IGI is so low a figure as strongly to suggest that we are dealing with a clerical error of some

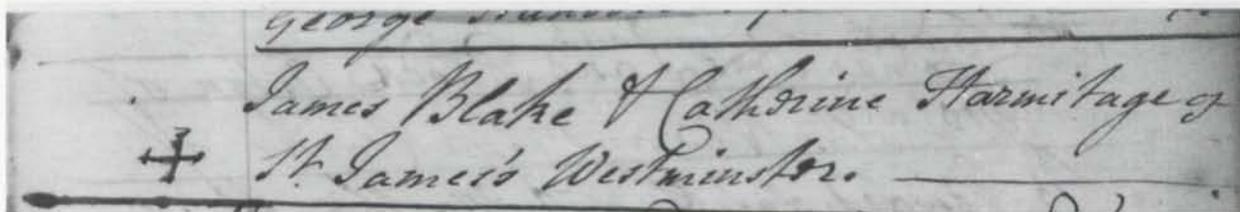
¹³ *International Genealogical Index*, 1983 edition and 1984 addendum, as incorporated in the *FamilySearch* CD-ROMs published by the Genealogical Society of Utah. Subsequent to the writing of this paper, a 1998 Addendum was issued. It occasions no significant changes to the evidence adduced here. A beta version of *FamilySearch* is now available online at <http://www.familysearch.org>.

¹⁴ IGI's coverage of Greater London parishes is better than 75% complete; better than 85% for Inner London.

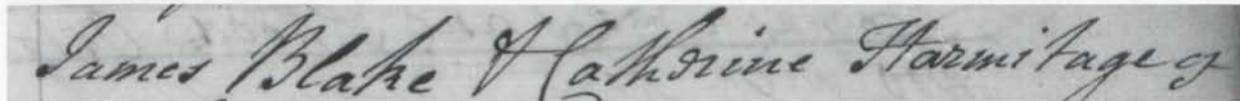
sort. "Harmitage" is an impossible surname—of such rarity that Catherine, if "Harmitage" were really her maiden name, would have had no plausible parents or siblings.

According to the St. James's Parish Rate Books, number 28 Broad Street, on the corner of Marshall Street and Broad Street (North) was occupied by a Thomas Lane from 1745 to 1747, after which someone named "Armitage" paid the rates from 1748 until 1753 when the name "Armitage" is erased in the Rate Book and the name "James Blake" written alongside. So James Blake's precursor at the Broad Street premises he was to make his family home and his shop after marrying Catherine was called Armitage. The coincidence of names is such that the simplest hypothesis is that "Harmitage" should be read as "Armitage." I think it is possible to explain the spelling "Harmitage" as the result of Catherine's nervousness at her second wedding—the intrusive aspirate is a typical Cockney response to a situation where she felt out of place and under stress. Other instances of this phenomenon will be quoted later.

28 Broad Street was a corner house with a shop frontage on Broad Street but an entrance to the family dwelling around the corner in Marshall Street. For most years the house is actually listed in Marshall Street, because it was on the corner of Broad and Marshall Streets, and the main domestic entrance was in Marshall Street. This sample of en-



3 15 October 1752: marriage of James Blake and Catherine Harmitage in the notebook of the officiating minister at the St. George's Chapel, Mayfair (PRO RG 7/248 f.207). The name is unequivocally "Harmitage." Published by permission of the Public Record Office, Kew.



Detail.

tries from the rate books traces the route of the rate collector around Golden Square ward over a period of years:¹⁵

| | Marshall Street [last house] | [Corner House (28 Broad Street)] | Broad Street (North) [second house] |
|------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| 1747 | Thomas Woster | Thomas Lane | David Parish |
| 1748 | Thomas Woster | Armitage | David Parish |
| 1752 | Tho ^s Worster | Armitage | David Parish |
| 1753 | Thomas Worster | Armitage [erased] James Blake [written alongside] | David Parish |
| 1754 | Widow Worster | Ja ^s Blake | David Parish |

Armitage itself (let alone "Harmitage") is an unusual surname in eighteenth-century London. I can trace no Catherine Armitage born in London around 1722 who would fit the bill as bride of James Blake. Historically the Armitages were a Yorkshire family that took their name from a hermitage in the township of Crosland in the parish of Almondbury.¹⁶ The surname is still much more common in West Yorkshire than anywhere else in England.

"Armitage" only paid rates for four years, which is not long enough period to convince one that Catherine was marrying from her parental home. The most plausible hypothesis, and the one chosen by Thompson, is that Catherine was married first to Armitage (whom he calls "Hermitage"),

¹⁵ City of Westminster Archives Centre, St James's Parish Rate Books: D489 (1747), D501 (1748), D58 (1752), D61 (1753), D63 (1754).

¹⁶ There is an account of the origin of the surname and its early history in George Redmonds, *Yorkshire: West Riding*. English Surnames Series, 1 (Chichester: Phillimore, 1973) 192-93.

then to James Blake. And, of course, the will located by Thompson, of "Thomas Armitage of the Parish of Saint James Westminster . . . haberdasher and hosier" justifies this hypothesis.¹⁷ What evidential support is there for Thompson's theory that Catherine's husband was really surnamed "Hermitage"?

The register for the Mayfair Chapel now in the Westminster Archives Centre carries the already-cited entry for 15 October 1752:

✚ 15. James Blake and Catherine Harmitage of S^t James^s Westminster

where there is an apparent hesitation in writing the name "Harmitage."¹⁸ Thompson treats this as evidence for "Hermitage" as Catherine's surname on marriage.

However, what Thompson ignores is that the register was not compiled contemporaneously with the marriages it lists but is a clerical compilation made by the clerk to the Chapel from the officiating ministers' notebooks. These notebooks survive in part at the Public Record Office.¹⁹ In fact, the apparent hesitation in writing Catherine's surname—the clerk has, in my opinion, begun to write "Hermitage" and then corrected himself to "Harmitage"—is not apparent in the minister's notebook which is unequivocally "Harmitage." It therefore makes most sense to search for Catherine's marriage not to a "Thomas Hermitage" but to a "Thomas Armitage."

¹⁷ E. P. Thompson, *Witness against the Beast* 120n4.

¹⁸ For the symbol ✚, see note 21.

¹⁹ Public Record Office RG 7/248 (Mayfair marriages 6).

Obviously *IGI* is an excellent indicator of how common a particular surname is, or a particular spelling of that surname, or even where that surname is most commonly found. It clearly establishes how unusual a surname "Armitage" was in eighteenth-century London, confirming that no Catherine Armitage was born there in 1722 and recording just four London christenings of a "Thomas Armitage" that century. Was there any baptism of a "Catherine Armitage" in the eighteenth century? *IGI* records just two: in 1721 and 1765, both in Yorkshire. Additionally one should note that there are no entries for the baptism of a "Thomas Hermitage" in *IGI* or its *Addendum*.

Was there a marriage of Thomas Armitage to a Catherine?

One can also use the resources of *Family Search* to search for combinations of names. I set out to search for a "Thomas Armitage" who had married a "Catherine." I found two entries: Thomas Armitage who married Katherine Murley at Pampisford, Cambridgeshire in 1699 (which is clearly not the marriage we're looking for), and Thomas Armitage who married Catherine Wright at the Mayfair Chapel, 14 December 1746. The coincidence, if that's what it is, is striking to say the least. This is the only marriage of a "Thomas Armitage" to a "Catherine" between 1740 and 1750 that *IGI* records in Greater London. If we widen the search to cover the whole British Isles, there are eight other marriages of a "Thomas Armitage," but none to a "Catherine." (A check of the 1994 *IGI Addendum* yields just one marriage of a Thomas Armitage, but he didn't marry a Catherine.) The entry transcribed from the Register of the Mayfair Chapel for December 1746 reads as follows:

✦ 14. M^r Thomas Armitage & M^{rs} Catherine Wright
of S^t George's Hanover Square²⁰

This, without a shadow of a doubt, is William Blake's mother. (Note that again there is a cross in the margin alongside the entry. In the Register of the Mayfair Chapel, some 7% of all entries are accompanied by a marginal cross ✦ including both the marriage of Catherine Wright to Thomas Armitage and that of Catherine Harmitage to James Blake. These crosses occur both in the clerk's Register and in the officiating ministers' notebooks.)²¹ As I shall demon-

²⁰ Or in the printed transcript: George J. Armytage, editor, *The Register of Baptisms and Marriages at St. George's Chapel, May Fair*. Publications of the Harleian Society. Registers; xv (London: Harleian Society, 1889) 73. At this date, the honorific "Mrs." carries no indication of marital status and could be used, as here, by any unmarried woman who was not a minor and did not need parental consent to marry.

²¹ What significance can these marginal crosses have? The options, it seems to me, can be that the marginal cross refers to the persons being married, or it refers to some rite of the Church of England, or it refers to some extra document or payment (in other words an administrative note to the Mayfair chapel clerk).

strate, the discovery of Catherine Wright (for, as far as I can determine, this is the first publication of the true maiden name of Blake's mother) challenges the very basis of the Muggletonian hypothesis.

The evidence of the poll book

The poll book of the Westminster election of 1749, where the Whig Viscount Trentham was challenged by the candidate of the "Westminster Independents," Sir George Vandeput, is of considerable interest, in that both James Blake and Thomas Armitage appear in its pages, voting for the same candidate.²²

The method of procedure at the election required the poll clerks, who were provided by the candidates, to enter the following information about each voter in the appropriate poll book: his Christian names(s) and surname; the street, square, court, alley, etc. of his residence; his status, profession or trade; the candidate supported. As the recording procedures appear to have been based on what the voter said and thus on what the poll clerk thought the voter had

Could the ✦ perhaps refer to some question about the status of either party to the marriage? For example, the marginal cross might imply that the bride is a widow or the groom a widower. Since there are crosses against the entries for both of Catherine's marriages I am forced to reject that hypothesis. Or could it indicate that either party was a minor? Marriage at the Mayfair Chapel did not require parental permission, which hardly applies in this case anyway — Catherine "Harmitage" for one is no longer a minor, and if my identification is correct, neither is Catherine Wright.

Could the ✦ refer to some rite of the church such as baptism? It is a Canon Law requirement that parties to a Church of England wedding be baptized Christians. If James Blake was baptized at his wedding then this would explain why we can't find any trace of his infant baptism. But it looks as though Thomas Armitage was baptized (if I have identified him correctly) and so too was Catherine.

Or could the ✦ be an administrative note to the Mayfair Chapel clerk? Crosses are always transferred from the minister's notes to the clerk's register. The significance of the crosses is probably something relevant to that particular event, not to any former status of bride or groom. Most likely, since the clerk felt obliged to transfer the marginal crosses to his register, they record some aspect of the functioning of the Chapel — fees not paid in full or extra payments for copy certificates.

²² Surviving poll books (both printed and manuscript) for Westminster elections are listed in Jeremy Gibson and Colin Rogers, *Poll Books c1696-1872: a Directory of Holdings in Great Britain*. 3rd ed. (Birmingham: Federation of Family History Societies, 1994).

I have used the following printed poll book for the 1749 Westminster election: *A Copy of the Poll for a Citizen for the City and Liberty of Westminster; Begun to be Taken at COVENT-GARDEN, upon Wednesday the Twenty-Second Day of November; and Ending on Friday the Eighth Day of December 1749. Peter Leigh, Esq; High-Bailiff. Candidates, the Right Hon. GRANVILLE LEVISON GOWER, Esq.; commonly called Lord TRENTHAM and Sir GEORGE VANDEPUT, Bart.* (London: Printed for J. OSBORN, at the Golden-Ball, in Pater-Noster Row; and Sold by the Booksellers of London and Westminster. M.DCC.XLIX.). I consulted the copy

15. Daniel Felix Fleischman and Mary Cotton of St. Martin's in the Fields
 15. Nicholas Cron and Ann Clarke of Richmond Surry
 15. James Ash and Mary Mathews of St. Lawrence London
 15. William Andrews and Sarah Buckmaster of St. Martin's in the Fields
 +15. James Blake and Catherine Harmitage of St. James's Westminster
 15. Samuel Allen and Ann Deane of St. George Hanover Square Middlesex
 15. Joseph Hill and Elizabeth Phillips of the Tower Hamlet London
 16. William Bull and Mary Bates of Stratton Hertles Oxon.
 of St. George's Hanover Square

4 St. George's Chapel, Mayfair. Register entries for 15 October 1752, showing marriage of James Blake and Catherine Harmitage. Note the clerk's hesitation in writing "Harmitage," as though he's begun to write "Hermitage" and then corrected himself in transcribing the minister's notebook. Photo courtesy of City of Westminster Archives Centre and published by permission of the Vicar of St. George's, Hanover Square.

Catherine Harmitage of St. James's Westminster

Detail.

Harmitage

Detail.

said, there were numerous opportunities for mistakes. Voters in St. James's Parish in 1749 include both a "Harmstrong" and a "Handerson" (that intrusive aspirate again)! There are indeed numerous instances where the parish rate books and the poll books are in disagreement, sometimes quite markedly. Peter Lens, of Berwick Street, wrote a letter of complaint to the press when he discovered, from the printed version of the poll book that he had been recorded by the clerk as Peter Borlence. James Ellison of Hedge Lane is the voter, while James Allison is the ratepayer. Another voter, Joseph Austen of Haymarket, is almost certainly Joseph Forster of the rate books.²³

According to the poll books:

James Blake *Glasshouse-str.* Hosier

voted for Vandeput in St. James's Parish, Saturday 25 November 1749²⁴ and

Thomas Hermitage *Broad-street* Hosier also voted for Vandeput in St. James's Parish, 1 December 1749.²⁵

Thomas is the only "Hermitage" in the poll book and does not appear anywhere in the rate books. Similarly, the "Armitage" of the rate books cannot be found in the poll book. Although the rate books sometimes offer a variety of forms of the same name over a period of years, on balance they are likely to be consistent and thus more reliable than the forms of the poll books, based on aural interpretation and of one occasion only.

In voting for the Tory (Thompson prefers the expression "anti-Court") Sir George Vandeput, Thomas Armitage and James Blake voted for the losing candidate. In both 1741

in Cambridge University Library (Ddd.25.58⁹). Printed copies of the 1749 book are also held at the Guildhall Library and the City of Westminster Archive Centre.

Separate manuscript poll books exist for the parishes of St. Anne, St. George, St. James, St. Margaret & St. John the Evangelist and St. Martin in the Fields. A single poll book sufficed for the parishes of St. Clement Danes and St. Mary le Strand and another for the parish of St. Paul, Covent Garden and the Liberty of St. Martin le Grand. There are, therefore, seven poll books in all. The manuscript poll books for Westminster elections are held in the London Metropolitan Archives but are generally too fragile for use. A typescript index to the manuscript poll books made by Osborn (1979) is held by the City of Westminster Archive Centre.

²³ G. F. Osborn, compiler, *Alphabetical Index of Those who went to the Poll in the Westminster By-Election 1749, followed by a Alphabetical Arrangement of Them by Their Trade & Profession* (London, 1979) ii.

²⁴ *A Copy of the Poll for a Citizen for the City and Liberty of Westminster* (London, 1749) 167. Also on page 19 of the manuscript poll book.

²⁵ *A Copy of the Poll for a Citizen for the City and Liberty of Westminster* (London, 1749) 196. Also on page 52 of the manuscript poll book, though the address is given there as "Brad Street."

and 1749 the Court won a solid majority in four of the nine Westminster parishes. In the fashionable suburbs of St. George Hanover Square and St. James Piccadilly the Court candidate gained a comfortable victory.²⁶

James Blake's politics

Nicholas Rogers, in his detailed study of the 1749 Westminster election, comments that there is little evidence of Westminster tradesmen deliberately pitting their energies against wealth, name and influence in the way Francis Place and his compatriots did in the early decades of the next century. He adds that "in a constituency such as Westminster, dominated by the gentry and conditioned by the existence of a luxury consumption economy, the web of political influence cut across trade and occupation."²⁷ The pressures of Court and aristocratic authority, and the peculiarities of Westminster's luxury economy, helped to perpetuate a system of social stratification where deference and dependency held sway, and emasculated the emergence of class interests in an articulate form. After Trentham's final victory, the Tories under the guise of "Westminster Independents" drifted into oblivion; the Whigs, the Court party, enjoyed two decades of undisputed superiority in Westminster politics.²⁸

The incoherence of voting patterns in the 1749 election, the lack of any clear class solidarity amongst voters, is such that, *pace* Thompson, no claims as to James Blake's or Thomas Armitage's political radicalism or radical sympathies are justified. Thompson, by disguising the Tory George Vandeput as merely the "anti-Court" candidate, fudges the issue of James Blake's politics and attributes to James Blake and Thomas Armitage a spurious radicalism that cannot be justified from the documentary evidence. One might say that even though the two men voted for the same candidate, there is no reason to suppose they did so for the same reasons.

The evidence of the will

I am myself puzzled that Thompson did not recognize the primacy of the will of Thomas Armitage.²⁹ It's the only document listing Thomas and Catherine which is derived from written documents to which they placed their signatures.

²⁶ For an analysis of voting patterns in Westminster, see Nicholas Rogers, "Aristocratic Clientage, Trade and Dependency: Popular Politics in Pre-Radical Westminster," *Past and Present* 61 (November 1973): 79.

²⁷ Nicholas Rogers, "Aristocratic Clientage" 93

²⁸ See also Nicholas Rogers, "The Urban Opposition to Whig Oligarchy, 1720-60" in Margaret C. Jacob and James R. Jacob, editors, *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism*. Revised paperback ed. (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1991) 152-68.

²⁹ E. P. Thompson, *Witness against the Beast* 120.

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----|----|---|----|----|----|----|
| Annabell Wilson | II | 30 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 5 | |
| John Wells | II | 24 | 1 | | 1 | | |
| Winter Marshall | II | 21 | | 17 | 6 | 17 | 6 |
| James Giles | II | 21 | | 17 | 6 | 17 | 6 |
| Ann | II | 21 | | 17 | 6 | 17 | 6 |
| James Donaldson | II | 21 | | 17 | 6 | 17 | 6 |
| Thomas Wender | II | 19 | | 15 | 10 | 15 | 10 |
| James Blake Armitage | II | 21 | | 17 | 6 | 17 | 6 |
| Bread Street North | | | | | | | |
| David Parist | II | 16 | | 14 | 2 | 13 | 4 |
| Henry Paine | I | 20 | | 16 | 0 | 16 | 0 |
| Peter King | III | 21 | | 17 | 6 | 17 | 6 |
| Thomas Edwards | II | 30 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 5 | |

5 St. James's, Picadilly. Parish Rate Books, Golden Square ward. Poor rate (collector's book) for 19 October 1753 (D 61). The book open to show the entry for the corner of Marshall Street and Broad Street North. The name "Armitage" has been crossed out and "James Blake" written instead. The facing page bears the annotation "James Blake Xmass." Photo courtesy of the City of Westminster Archives Centre and published by permission.

James Blake Armitage II 21

Detail.

The rate book and the poll book were both based on oral testimony as to names. But the will is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury transcript made by experienced legal clerks of an original signed by Thomas Armitage. The evidence for Armitage not Harmitage/Hermitage is overwhelming.

Omitting conventional pieties, the substance of the will is as follows:

I give devise and bequeath unto my dearly beloved Wife Catherine Armitage all rest residue and remainder of my Estate Real or Personal of what nature kind or quality soever or wheresoever to be by her peaceably and quietly used and enjoyed to her own use and benefit But it is my Will and mind That if my said wife Catherine Armitage shall happen to Marry Then she shall be obliged to give and pay the following sums of

Money unto the several Persons hereafter mentioned (that is to say) unto my Brother William Armitage the sum Twenty Pounds for himself and the sum of Twenty Pounds for his son Thomas Armitage to be by my said Brother Placed out at Interest upon good Security for the Benefit of my said Nephew Thomas Armitage untill he shall attain the age of Twenty one Years if not at that age at the time of such Marriage at which age it is my Will the said Thomas Armitage shall receive both Principal and Interest that shall be then due To my Brothers and sisters Richard Armitage Joseph Armitage Elizabeth Fox and Grace Hattersley or to the Heirs of them that shall be then living the sum of ten Pounds to each and every of them and I do hereby ordain nominate and appoint my said wife Catherine Armitage to be sole Executrix of this my last will and testament.³⁰

³⁰ Public Record Office PROB 11/790 (1751 November quire 298 [folio 390v]).

What can we find out about Thomas Armitage?

Thomas Armitage, "Haberdasher and Hosier," wrote his will in July 1751, and his widow was granted probate in November the same year. The will tells us that Thomas Armitage had brothers Joseph, Richard, and William, and sisters Elizabeth and Grace. At the time the will was written, William had a son Thomas (a minor), Elizabeth had married a Mr. Fox, and Grace a Mr. Hattersley. Where then was Thomas Armitage born and where buried?

Could the Armitages have been a London family? *IGI* records just 25 London baptisms of an Armitage child in the years 1700-50: Benjamin 1736, David 1736, Elizabeth 1713, Elizabeth 1731, Henry 1711, Hugh 1746, Joseph 1721, Joseph 1728, Joseph 1750, Mary 1733, Michael 1736, Robert 1739, Samuel 1706, Sam¹ 1717, Sam¹ 1742, Samuel 1745, Sam¹ 1749, Stephen 1701, Stephen 1733, Thomas 1701, William 1708, William 1709, William 1719, William 1738, William 1748. No Richard or Grace, and the only Thomas's birth in 1701 would make him implausibly old to be Catherine's first husband. However, using *IGI* to locate all Thomas Armitages baptized in England between those dates, we get the expected result that nearly 90% (53 out of 60) took place in Yorkshire. The probability then is that Catherine's husband was a Yorkshireman.

My conclusion is strengthened by the discovery that a Grace Armitage and a Joshua Hattersley were married on 11 August 1743 at Royston in Yorkshire. Could this be Thomas's sister (the Grace Hattersley of the will)? And are Grace and Thomas the children of Richard Armitage, whose son Thomas was christened 21 June 1722, also at Royston?³¹ So Thomas would be the same age as Catherine and of Yorkshire origin which suggests a wool trade connection appropriate to a haberdasher and hosier.

Where was Thomas Armitage buried? I can confirm that there are no Armitage (nor Harmitage nor Hermitage for that matter) burials at St. James's, Picadilly nor in the St.

³¹ From the Bishop's transcripts of registers for Royston or Roystone parish, Yorkshire, in Sheffield Archives, I transcribe the following entries:

[1712]

William the son of Richard Armitage of Cudworth was bapt. September y^e 25th

[1719]

Grace daughter of Richard Armitage of Cudworth bapt. Decem. 5th

[1722]

Thomas the Son of Richard Armitage of Cudworth Farmer bapt. June y^e 21st

[1743]

Joshua Hattersley of the Parish of Silkstone and Grace Armitage of Cudworth were married August y^e 11th

The parish of Royston is now a locality in South Yorkshire and administratively part of Barnsley district. The records were consulted on microfilm, the originals being in the Diocesan Record Office at Wakefield.

James's Burying Ground, Hampstead Road. If he were a dissenter of some sort, could he have been buried in Bunhill Fields like Catherine and her second husband? Again the answer is negative.

One has the ignoble thought that with her Armitage in-laws away in Yorkshire, Catherine may have opted for a quiet Mayfair marriage to James Blake to avoid fulfilling the terms of her first husband's will! The will would have required her to pay £80 to the Armitages on her remarriage.

Catherine (Harmitage) Blake: a tentative identification

We know that Catherine Harmitage Blake must have been born *circa* 1722 since, when she was buried in Bunhill Fields on 7 September 1792, her age was given as 70. Can we find a likely Catherine Wright? *IGI* records 25 christenings of a Catherine Wright in Britain between 1720 and 1724. I think we can ignore the seven christenings in Scotland, and any births in Ireland, for if Catherine was Scots or Irish, then surely this would be clearly reflected in documents and anecdotal evidence connected with Blake's work and biography.

We are left with five christenings in Greater London and 13 provincial christenings. To deal first with a possible provincial origin for Catherine, could she have been born in the same parish as Thomas Armitage and have come to London to marry her childhood sweetheart, or could she have been a girl from the country in domestic service in London? These seem the likeliest options that could have brought Catherine to London. Of the 13 Catherines from the provinces, only two come from Yorkshire (from Sheffield, and from Bridlington) and nowhere near what I have identified as Thomas Armitage's birthplace of Royston. I therefore think it unlikely that Catherine came from the same parish as Thomas Armitage and moved to London to get married.

Similarly, I think it unlikely she was a maidservant. If she were a girl from the provinces who was in domestic service in London, it is implausible that she should become the wife of a shopkeeper. Do maidservants marry into trade, and do they marry at the Mayfair Chapel? Very few I think—marriage there was discreet, but expensive at one guinea. The servant classes married in the Fleet for half-a-crown. Also, if Catherine was a maidservant then William Blake's biographers would have noted it—just as they noted the rumor that his wife Catherine Boucher had been in service.³²

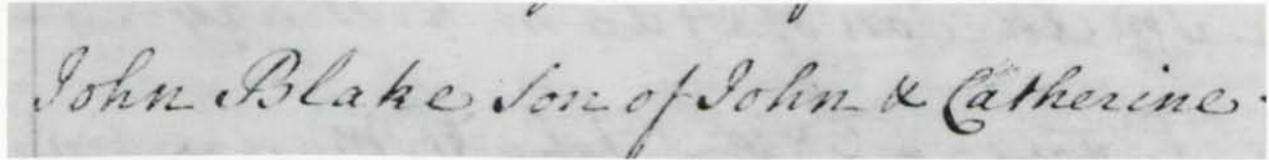
Catherine was most likely a Londoner and the Mayfair register gives her as a resident of St. James's parish at the time of her marriage. We should look for the christening of

³² I'm aware that I'm on shaky ground here. There are plenty of instances of widowers, in particular, marrying their servants. Nevertheless, I think the balance of probabilities favors my argument, and it does lead to a conclusion which makes a good fit with the known facts.

JUNE 1755.

- 1. William Groom, son of Richard & Jane May 15.
- Hollin M. Lauchlan, son of Hollin & Anna Maria, ^{May} 17.
- Thomas Partridge, son of Richard & Elizabeth, May 31.
- John Blake son of John & Catherine May 12.
- Thomas Marshall, son of John & Martha . . May 16. 17.
- Thomas Jefferies, son of William & Ann May 16. 18.
- Edward Davies, son of Moses & Elizabeth . . May 20. 19.

6 "Public Records as If Public Records were true"—perhaps Blake had this sort of thing in mind! St. James's Church, Picadilly. Parish Register: baptisms for 1 June 1755 showing the baptism of John Blake son of John [sic] and Catherine. Photo courtesy of City of Westminster Archives Centre and published by permission of the Rector of St. James's Church, Picadilly.



Detail.

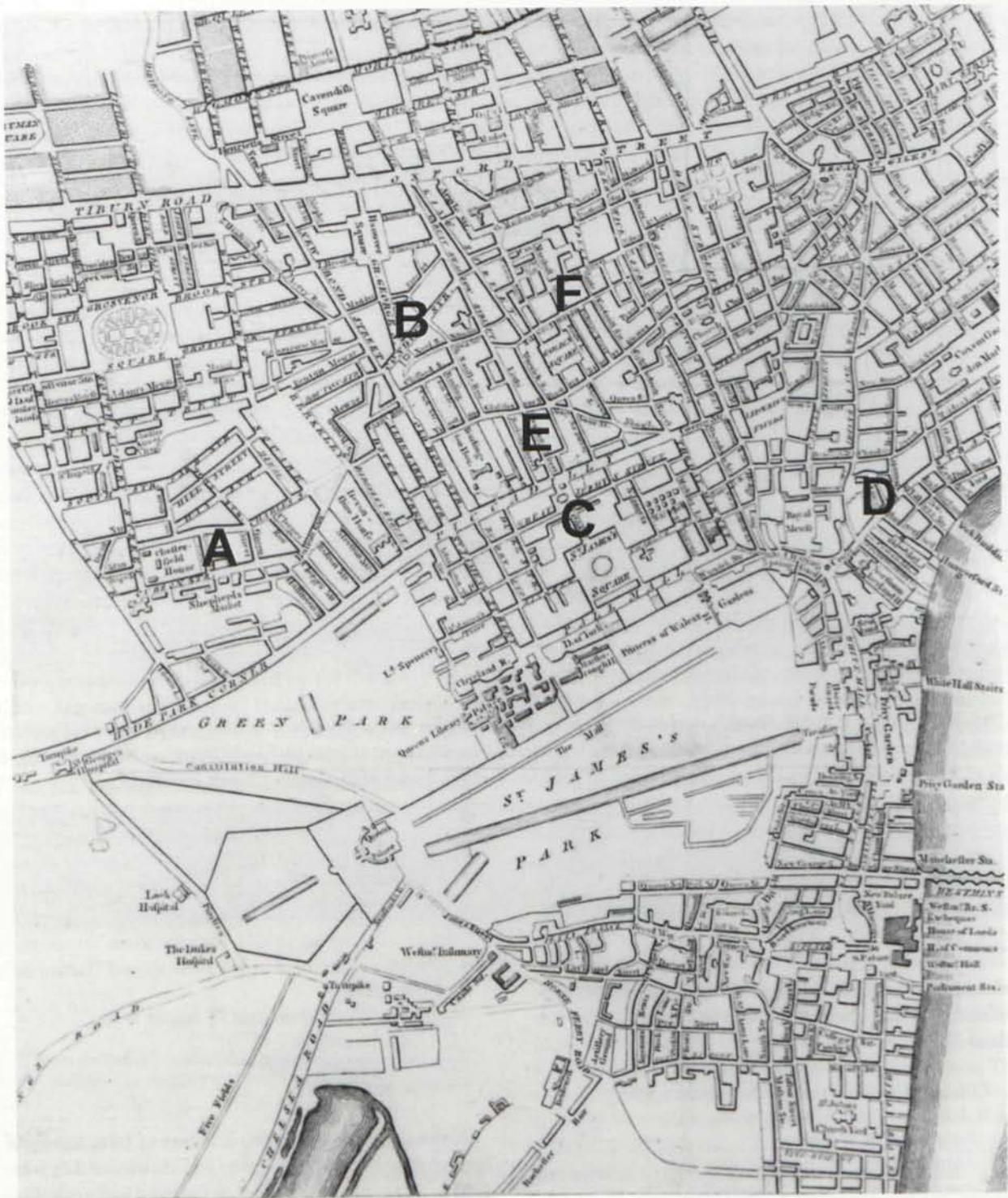
a child born not too far away. I have been able to trace the following London christenings for the two years on either side of 1722:

- Katherine Wright christened 10 February 1720;
St. Lawrence Pountney, London
Father: Joseph Wright
Mother: Anne
- Catren Righte christened 5 November 1721;
St. Bartholomew the Great, London
Father: John Righte
Mother: Marey
- Catherine Wright christened 2 October 1723;
St. Martin in the Fields, Westminster
Father: John Wright
Mother: Elizabeth
- Katherine Wright christened 5 August 1724;
St. Dunstan, Stepney
Father: Hen^r. Bexley Wright

- Mother: Mary
- Catherine Wright christened 23 August 1724;
St. Olave, Southwark
Father: Thomas Wright
Mother: Catherine

Of these, Catherine Wright, daughter of John and Elizabeth Wright, born 28 September and christened 2 October 1723 at St. Martin in the Fields, is the most likely candidate for the woman who married Thomas Armitage and James Blake and became mother of the poet. By reason of her date of birth, her residency in a nearby parish, and her parents' Christian names, she provides the "best fit."³³

³³ The register of St. Martin in the Fields, Westminster, records the wedding of John Wright to Elizabeth Smith on 23 October 1722. But the baptismal records of the same parish also note that John the son of John and Elizabeth Wright was born October 13 and christened 3 No-



7 Detail from a fragmentary engraved map of circa 1765. This is most probably Cluer Dicey's *New & Accurate Plan of the Cities of London & Westminster* (Darlington & Howgego, Printed Maps of London, no.133). Note the Mayfair Chapel (A), the Parish Church of St. George, Hanover Square (B), the Parish Church of St. James, Picadilly (C), the Parish Church of St. Martin in the Fields (D), James Blake's bachelor residence in Glasshouse Street (E), and the Blake family home on the corner of Broad Street and Marshall Street (F). Photo courtesy of the City of Westminster Archives Centre and published by permission.



Detail.

In the eighteenth century, children were not named arbitrarily but usually took their names from their grandparents, their parents' siblings, and less frequently, a more distant relative or close friend of the family. I would claim that we can see this process at work in the naming of James and Catherine's six children. The eldest son James (born 1753) was named after his father and his paternal grandfather. The next child John (born 1755) was named for his maternal grandfather. From what relative did William (born 1757) take his name? The next child (born 1760) is again called John—the first of that name had died in infancy. The insistence on reusing the name is itself significant. Then comes Robert (born 1762), perhaps named after some unknown relative. And finally the only daughter, Catherine Elizabeth (born 1764) whose names commemorate both her mother and her maternal grandmother.

Conclusion

To summarize. My trawl of currently available genealogical evidence strongly suggests that Blake's mother Catherine's first husband was Thomas Armitage of Royston, Yorkshire. I can confidently say that it was one Catherine Wright who married first Thomas Armitage and subsequently James

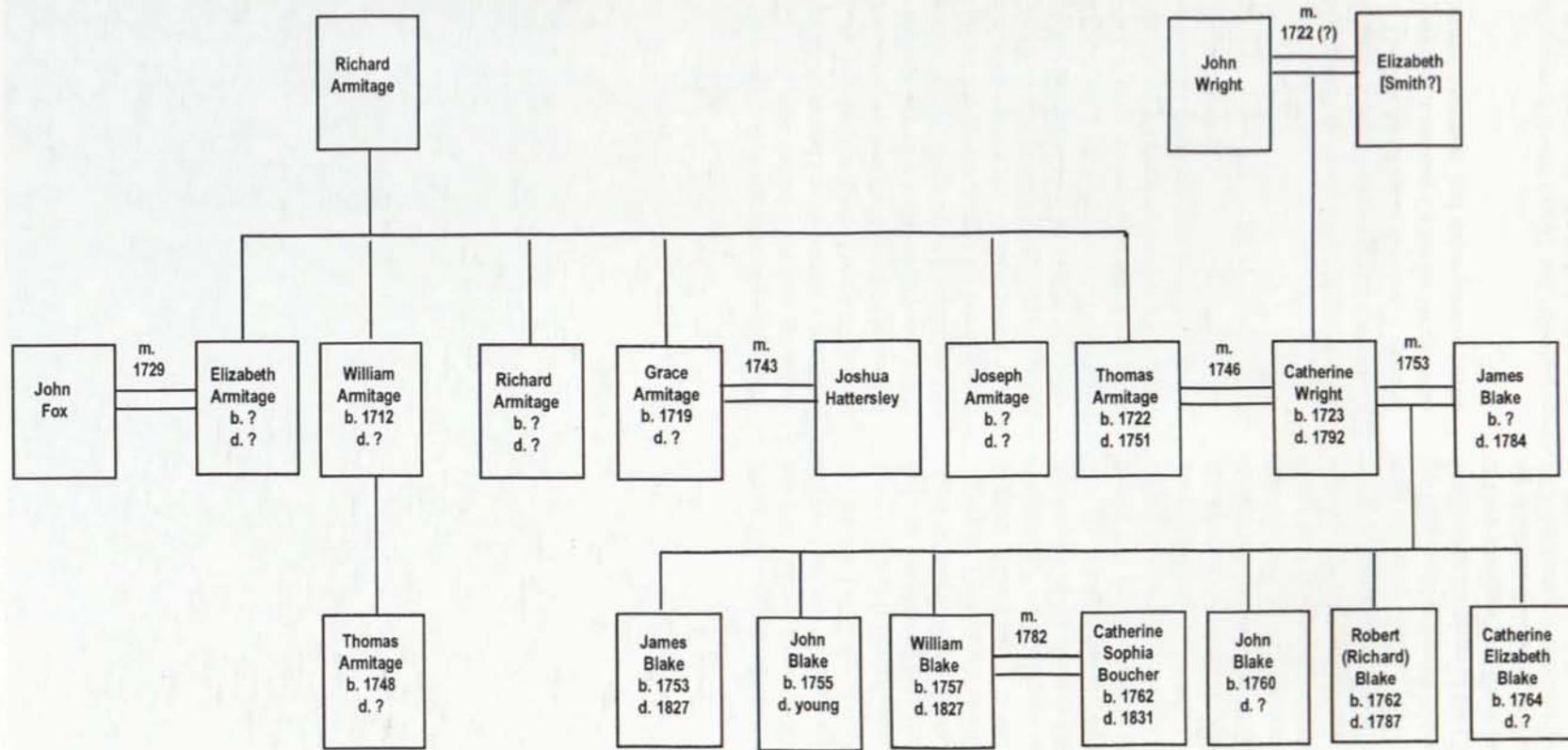
ember 1723. Born, that is, just two weeks after Catherine. It looks as though there may have been two couples named John and Elizabeth Wright resident in St. Martin's parish and we can take our research into Catherine Wright's ancestry no further.

Blake. The simplest explanation is the best. Catherine Wright married Thomas Armitage at the Mayfair Chapel on 14 December 1746, was widowed in 1751, and married James Blake in October 1752—the answer was under our noses all the time. It is highly likely Catherine Wright was born in London, the daughter of John and Elizabeth Wright of the parish of St. Martin in the Fields.

Despite Thompson's assertions, there is no evidence to connect Blake directly to known followers of Lodowicke Muggleton.³⁴ As Thompson makes clear, without realizing the import of his discovery, Blake's mother was not born into the "Harmitage" or "Hermitage" or even "Armitage" family. Her family name, in fact, was Wright and her only connection to the Armitage family was through her first marriage. There is no evidence whatsoever of a link between the Thomas Armitage she married and the "George Hermitage" who wrote some Muggletonian hymns. In any case, there is a very great difference between being born into, and raised in, a Muggletonian family, and later marrying a man who has alleged Muggletonian connections.

The evidence of an Anglican (though "irregular") marriage ceremony and baptism of children in the parish church but later burial at Bunhill Fields suggests that either the Blake family were members of the Church of England at the time of their marriage and moved toward religious dissent during William's childhood, or else they were dissenters of very

³⁴ A list of Muggletonians contemporary with William Blake, with further comment on Thompson's hypothesis, is given in the Appendix.



Genealogy of the Armitage, Blake and Wright Families

mild persuasion (maybe Moravian, maybe Methodist) who perhaps objected to the Anglican clergy (a political stance) but had no overriding theological objection to Anglican rites and ceremonies. When Blake died in 1827, he was buried, like his father, mother, brothers and aunt, at Bunhill Fields, the dissenters' burial ground. But, at his own request, the burial service followed the Anglican Prayer Book.³⁵ Certainly Blake's expressed wish to be buried at Bunhill Fields, but by the Anglican rite, is not suggestive of any extreme dissenting background. Thompson fails to give due weight to the will and the rate books in his anxiety to link Catherine with the Muggletonian George Hermitage. Despite Thompson's considerable eminence and reputation as a historian, the fundamentals of his historicism, in this instance, are seriously limited by his failure to see the relative significance of his archival sources. He fails, in fact, to adhere to the normal canons of probability.

The implication of the surviving documents is that the elder Blakes were more conventional in their religion and political beliefs than some scholars have romantically envisaged. Or at least, as shopkeepers with a clientele that included the St. James's Parish, they found it expedient to conceal their views.³⁶ The social and political implications of what we know about Blake's parentage must now be amended in the light of these discoveries.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to David Worrall, Ted Ryan, and my brother Geoff, who read and commented on successive drafts of this paper. Particular thanks must go to John Sargent of the City of Westminster Archives Centre for his invaluable assistance in obtaining photographs of documents deposited with the Archives Centre. An earlier version of this paper was read to the Blake Society in December 1998.

Appendix: Blake's Muggletonian contemporaries, or, whatever became of Uncle George?

The register of St. James's Church, Piccadilly contains just two entries for the name Hermitage: on 7 July 1727, "L^y Hermitage" married Francis Nequier, and on 14 November 1742, Elizabeth Hermitage, the infant daughter of George and Susanna, was baptized. I can find no further trace of the mysterious aristocrat ("Lady Hermitage"?) who married

there in 1727. The George Hermitage whose daughter was baptized in 1742 may well be the contributor to the *Divine Songs of the Muggletonians* mentioned by Thompson.³⁷ But, as is shown below, no Hermitages survived to become Muggletonian contemporaries of William Blake.

Thanks to the efforts of E. P. Thompson, the British Library's Department of Manuscripts now contains the *Muggletonian Archives*. Vol. 2 of the *Archives* (BLAdd. 60169) contains on fols. 102-03, "A Collection of the Names of Male Friends Residing in England" dated Aug¹ 14th 1803. A transcript of these pages follows:

[fol. 102r]

Names of Male Friends Residing in England.

In London

M^r Pickersgill Sen^r
 M^r Pickersgill Jun^r
 M^r Geo. Smith
 M^r Silcox
 M^r Vincent Sen^r
 M^r Vincent Jun^r
 M^r J. Tregunno
 M^r T. Tregunno
 M^r W^m Robinson
 M^r Rob^t Robinson
 M^r Geo. Robinson
 M^r Sedgwick
 M^r Cates
 M^r Frost
 M^r Wade
 M^r Hack
 M^r Hurcum
 M^r Williams
 M^r White
 M^r J. Dawson
 M^r Hovenden
 M^r Pearson
 M^r W^m Wade
 M^r Deal
 M^r Read
 M^r Labdon
 M^r Lynch Sen^r
 M^r Lynch Jun^r
 M^r Boatwright

³⁵ J. T. Smith's brief life of Blake, quoted in Bentley, *Blake Records* 476. Smith states that Blake requested a "service . . . of the Church of England." Alexander Gilchrist presumably drew on Smith for the account in his *Life of William Blake, "Pictor Ignotus"* (London: MacMillan, 1863) 1: 361.

³⁶ Stanley Gardner, *Blake's Innocence and Experience Retraced* (London: Athlone Press, 1986) documents the Blake family's commercial dealings with St. James's Parish.

³⁷ Joseph Frost and Isaac Frost, editors, *Divine Songs of the Muggletonians in Grateful Praise to the Only True God, the Lord Jesus Christ* (London: R. Brown, 1829) contains two songs by George Hermitage. However, there are no Hermitages (nor Blakes, nor Wrights for that matter) among the subscribers to this work.

The song "Praise's to my Maker's glory" (page 132), by George Hermitage, is set to the tune *Stella darling of the muses* from Giovanni Battista Pescetti's opera *Demetrio*, revived at the King's Theatre, London, in 1737. The date certainly fits in with the George Hermitage who lived in St. James's parish.

M^r Fleming
M^r J. Sheilds
M^r Tho^s Tyley
M^r Johnson
M^r Rob^t Mills
M^r Abr^m Mills
35

In Kent

M^r Rob^t Dawson
M^r Abr^m Tregunno
M^r W^m Tregunno
M^r Bowen
M^r Abbott
M^r Farley
M^r Burr
M^r Bowles
& About 12 More, names unknown
20

In Hertfordshire

M^r John Twyne
M^r W^m Twyne
M^r John Chalkley
M^r W^m Chalkley
M^r J. Clemitson
M^r Parker
6

In Norwich

M^r Tho^s Hill
M^r John Minns
M^r Rob^t Waller
M^r David Murrill
M^r W^m Murtin
M^r John Johnson
M^r Rob^t Lawes
M^r W^m Hoe
M^r James Sutton
M^r Joseph Sutton
M^r John Sutton
11

[fol. 102v blank]

[fol. 103r]

In Derbyshire

John Cotes
Jonathan Cotes
Edw^d Moore
John Norman
Sam^l Cutler
Tho^s Briggs
Geo. Taylor
Benj^m Hall
Geo. Hunt
Jos^h Robinson
Jos^h Alexander

W^m Maddox & 2 Sons
W^m Wright
Francis Scarrat
John Carwithen
John Hunter
Ferdinand Turton
2 More, names unknown
21

Divers Places

M^r Holmes Walworth
M^r Rich^d Tyley Old Ford
M^r Richd Smith Ireland
M^r Mathiss
M^r Osmond Bath & Bristol
M^r Woods
6

In all about 100 Male Friends, Aug^r 14th 1803.

These 83 names from perhaps 63 families represent the extent of the Muggletonian community in Blake's time. Fewer than 30 families have London addresses. There are Muggletonians in Derbyshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Norfolk, Somerset, Surrey, and Ireland, but there is no reference to the Armitage (or Harmitage, or Hermitage) or Blake families. The only Wright lived in Derbyshire. There are no families listed with the Yorkshire connection that I would have expected were there to be Muggletonian Armitages. There is just no evidence whatsoever linking William Blake to the Muggletonian community.

John B. Pierce. *Flexible Design: Revisionary Poetics in Blake's Vala or The Four Zoas*. Montreal & Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998. xxvii + 9 illus. \$36.00.

Reviewed by THOMAS A. VOGLER
(Santa Cruz Blake Study Group)

If Catherine Blake had been given to journal writing we might be fortunate enough to find an entry that read: "Mr. Blake told me today he decided what to do with his Vala poem. It will be. . . ." But Catherine was no Dorothy, and we are left with both a mystery and the fact that the "final state" of *Vala or The Four Zoas* is a manuscript. The unavoidable truth is put forcefully in Paul Mann's observation that "it is as manuscript that *The Four Zoas* must be read, and manuscript not in some fiction of completion which one's reading continually tries to approximate: that is, neither as the trace of an interrupted compositional trajectory nor as something to be read as if it were finished" (208). John B. Pierce's new book does not venture to solve the mystery of what final form Blake intended for the poem, or what phases his material plans for its production might have gone through, but he does claim to show us how to read the work as a manuscript. It is a promising, but in the end a frustrating and disappointing book.¹ The promise is to provide a "manuscript poetics" and a "poetics of revision" based on a "critical approach driven primarily by the physical state of the manuscript, with its many erasures, additions, and com-

¹ Although the publication date of *Flexible Design* is 1998, there are many signs that suggest it was basically written in the 1980s. Most conspicuous of these is Pierce's statement that the "standard edition" of Blake's works is "the revised edition of the *Complete Poems* in 1982" (xiv; he gets the title right in the bibliography), rather than the newly revised edition of 1988, which includes some further corrections of transcription and of mistakes made in 1982 (no more "abdominal void" in *Urizen*). He points out that "Magno and Erdman's facsimile offers helpful reconstructions of many of the erased drawings" (xv), but shows no signs of having used it. Indeed, he gives embarrassing evidence of *not* having used it when he gives us Bentley's description of page 12, where Bentley sees at the top of the page "a circle, perhaps for a head." Pierce goes on to say, "It is tempting to speculate that the 'circle, perhaps for a head' between Los and Enitharmon was to be that of Urizen (77). If he had consulted Magno and Erdman's facsimile, he would have found their description of that page, where with the help of Vincent De Luca and infrared photography we can now "see Urizen descend, with grinning human face but serpent body, swinging down from a tree to hover between them" (31).

plex rearrangements, which require careful, focused, and detailed scrutiny" (xv). Pierce claims to be "bringing the material force of the manuscript into play with an interpretative approach" in "a study weighted towards a close reading of textual detail" (xv). Unfortunately, his choice of text to quote is Bentley's transcript in his 1963 facsimile, which is decidedly inferior to Erdman in accuracy. Those who want to follow Pierce's close reading of textual detail will have to have a copy of Bentley, and even then it will be difficult to understand why he chooses one reading over another in some cases and gives alternate readings in others; or why at times he keeps Bentley readings even when they are clearly in error, and at other times goes for Erdman's infrared recreations.

Consider for example the two epigraphs that open Pierce's work, coming after the title page and before the table of contents. The 14 lines of quoted text (34:9-15, 21:1-7) differ from Erdman at seven points. The first of these differences is in the first line, where Pierce quotes: "Now Los & Enitharmon walkd forth on the dewy Earth," and Erdman has "For Los & Enitharmon. . ." The answer would seem to be that the manuscript has "For Now Los & Enitharmon. . ." which Bentley has rendered [For] Now Los & Enitharmon. . ." and Pierce has chosen the earlier reading. This would jibe with his keeping the lower-case "elemental" in 34:15 even though the manuscript clearly shows it changed to "Elemental" as Bentley has indicated with his "[E] elemental." But in the second epigraph (21:1-7) he goes the other way, keeping the two manuscript revisions: from lower case to upper with "As One Man. . ." and the more substantial change of "One Man above Mount Giliad Sublime" to "One Man above the Mountain of Snowdon Sublime."² In neither case do the lines "taken from G. E. Bentley, Jr.'s facsimile edition" (xi) actually reproduce Bentley's typographic rendering, with its minimal graphic indications of revisionary stages.³

More important than the numerous basic mistakes in transcription that mar this book are the clearly strategic decisions that seem in conflict with its announced goals.⁴ The most glaring of these is the choice to examine only Blake's

² The other differences from Erdman are where Erdman reads lower case "c" in "contracting" and "call" where Bentley reads upper case, and lower case "o" in "one" where Bentley reads upper case.

³ When he does make use of editorial markings, he chooses Erdman's brackets with italics [. . .] to indicate deleted material and < . . . > to indicate new material, where Bentley uses brackets to indicate new material and italics to indicate deleted material. The result is mildly confusing and irritating for a reader attempting to check against Bentley, and another instance of Pierce's not in fact quoting Bentley's transcription. Also the lack of page references to Erdman makes it difficult to find quotations on those (quite a few!) pages where Erdman has different enumeration.

⁴ Some mistakes belong to Bentley, e.g., "I am made to sow thistle for wheat" (96, quoting 35:1) instead of "I am made to sow the thistle for wheat," a clear manuscript reading and in Erdman. He follows

verbal text, in spite of the claims to "make full use of the material complexity of the manuscript" (xiv) and "to take fully into account the material form of the manuscript as part of the reading process" (xxvi). This amazing decision is "dictated partly by the general incompleteness of many of the drawings" that "leaves the viewer lost in a field of conjecture with no firm basis for argument. In addition, the drawings do not readily lend themselves to the developmental discussion usually possible with a written text" (xv-xvi). Why does a study committed to "flexible design" and "the turmoil of composition and revision" (xix) require a "firm basis for argument?" Why does an argument so involved with "synchrony" require a "developmental discussion"? One would expect that Pierce's passion for "a synchronous narrative" (xxii) would lead him to privilege the drawings that provide a consistent manifestation of that quality.

Given his choice to focus on the graphics of the verbal, and the dynamics of textual revision, it is surprising that Pierce has no interest in communicating Blake's textual dynamism with even the minimal potential of a printed text. Thus after a gesture towards *Vala* or *The Four Zoas* as the "title" for the work under consideration, he settles in for *Vala* through the rest of his study. One would at least expect ~~Vala~~ in this context—or better still, ~~VALA~~. But Pierce is attracted to "the bold calligraphy" of "VALA" and sees that title "with only a slight pencil mark through it, a mark distinct enough to be registered but not definitive enough to cancel out its potential status as a title" (148).⁵ Since even "Blake's Careful Hand" (73) could be scraped away for palimpsestic revision, it seems odd to belittle the pencil, so easy to change that *not* changing it can almost seem to affirm it. At any rate, Pierce's holograph ontology sees text in pencil as *de facto* having a "rather tentative nature" that shows it "was not an integral part of *Vala*" (93). One could argue equally well that Blake's "careful" copperplate hand is that of a copyist, the quickly penciled text that of the inspired poet. Pierce reads the poem's subtitles as offering a choice: "The Death and Judgement of the Eternal Man" suggests "a teleological structure leading from death to judgment and

Bentley's "Enitharmon let loose in the troubled deep" (57) instead of the manuscript and Erdman "on the troubled deep." At other times he silently corrects Bentley's errors, as when on page 67 quoting 8:14 he includes "Beech" (as per the manuscript and Erdman) instead of Bentley's "Beach." I'm not sure whether the fact that many quotations are punctuated with periods not in the text (e.g., 57, 67, 82, 87, 89, 96, 132) is an example of mistake or inconsistency, since occasionally a quotation not ending with a period will be closed by Pierce with an ellipsis.

⁵ See my argument for *MIL/TON* as preferable to *Milton* in "RE: Naming *MIL/TON*." Pierce claims that "the pull towards the title of *The Four Zoas* in Blake criticism generally registers a desire for a return to the work after the cacophony of textual revision" (148-49). The pull in Pierce towards *Vala* as title would seem to register the opposite desire, manifested at the end with his attempt to transcribe the full copperplate text of the poem.

Flexible Design

Revisionary Poetics
in Blake's *Vala* or
The Four Zoas

John B. Pierce

presumably to redemption," while the later addition "Torments of Love & Jealousy" bespeaks "emotional turmoil," indicating a "shift from teleology to states of torment" and to what Pierce calls a "poetics of character" (66). Thus in terms of his analysis they are equally pertinent to the poem in spite of the difference between writing style and instrument.

Early in his study Pierce quotes with approval a statement from "the Santa Cruz Blake Group" (he does get the name right in the bibliography): "what the manuscript exhibits in the most graphologically explicit fashion is an ongoing, unfinished process of self-editing, a process which print ordinarily shuts down." He then claims that "This statement acts as a background to my own methodology" (xx). A distant background, for it is not only the title where he rejects graphic mimesis. He explains that "where it is relevant" to his discussion he gives "Bentley's (or on occasion Erdman's) readings of erased or canceled words," but that he does not "include erasures or cancellations where they might needlessly complicate a passage under discussion" (xi). However, it is often difficult to follow his sense of relevance, and more often than not his quotations are brought "under discus-

sion" by stripping them of precisely that (needless?) complication that constitutes the manuscript experience. Consider this simple example. On page 132 Pierce gives a quotation described as the "final lines of the addition to page 105":

there was hidden within
The bosom of Satan The false Female as in an ark &
veil
Which christ must rend & her reveal.

(105:24-26)

A look at the manuscript or either facsimile shows that these are not the "final lines," and that line 105:26 as quoted is half (with no period) of the first of an additional three lines that are indented and end with "The daughters &c". The manuscript strongly supports the reading "then" instead of "there," and Erdman chooses that alternative for his text. This may seem like a very small change, but when one is arguing, as Pierce is here, about "the diachronic demands of narrative development" (132), the difference between a temporal "then" and a spatial "there" can be significant. Here is the way Bentley transcribes the final lines of the addition to page 105:

[[there was hidden within]]
[Which give a tincture to false beauty *therefore they*
were calld
[The daughters &] [[The bosom of Satan The false Female
as in an ark & veil
[[Which christ must rend & her reveal Her Daughters
are Calld
[[Tirzah She is *calld* namd Rahab their various div-
isions are calld
[[The daughters &c]]

Pierce's proposal to treat the manuscript as "a distinctly layered event" whose "meaning exists in the stages of development of the poem, not its organic unity" (xxvi), can be seen in action in his discussion of page 4 of the manuscript, one of those opening pages that exhibit a palimpsestic agon of re-re-revision. Starting with what he calls "the earliest *surviving* reading" (99, italics added) of 4:10-11, he goes on to attempt a layered series of readings of material forms of the manuscript, some of which could never have existed in isolation or been available to an actual reader, and none of which is available to the reader of the manuscript in its present form. Here is how he presents the case: "I have hidden thee Enion in Jealous Despair / I will build thee a Labyrinth where we may remain for ever alone." These lines begin a story of Tharmas's jealousy and possessiveness" (99). Presumably this is a "surviving" reading because "I have hidden. . . ." (how appropriate!) is written over a prior erased

copperplate line.⁶ Whether the line includes "O Pity Me" or not, its "reader" (who? when?) would have experienced it as written over an erased prior state, one which—as copperplate script—would have been a transcription of a still prior state. On the next page we find Pierce's version of the next stage of revision:

I have hidden <Enitharmon> in Jealous Despair O Pity
Me
I will build thee a Labyrinth <also O pity me O Enion>

Now we have "the pitying quality that Tharmas is generally noted for but that was virtually non-existent in phase 2" (100) and we have "Enitharmon" in the place of "Enion." But this is the way the text would look if Blake had made a new transcription at this stage, if this does indeed accurately represent a stage. What we would actually have in the manuscript at that hypothetical stage would look more like this:

Jerusalem
I have hidden ~~thee Enion~~ in Jealous Despair O Pity Me

The hypothetical reader of this hypothetical line would clearly see that Jerusalem had replaced Enion in a change to a line that had displaced a prior, erased line that had been a transcription of a still prior version.

By the time we reach the "latest revisions" Pierce is losing interest. Blake was "not thoroughly consistent" (103) and the changes are "tentative" or marked by accidental neglect as Blake shifts from meaningful revision to "tampering with this text" (104). Line 4:10 (Erdman 4:9) is now quoted in reduced form as "Hidden <Jerusalem> [instead of Enitharmon] in Silent Contrition."⁷ But we are now up to the current stage of the manuscript, and what the reader encounters in Bentley's transcript of 4:10-4:15 is:

[Jerusalem in Silent Contrition]
I have hidden *thee Enion in Jealous Despair* O Pity me
[also O pity me O Enion]
I will build thee a Labyrinth *where we may remain for*
ever alone
[why has thou taken sweet Jerusalem from my inmost
Soul
[Let her Lay secret in the Soft recess of darkness & si-
lence
[It is not Love I bear to Enitharmon It is Pity

⁶ According to his announced policy, Pierce must be following Bentley here; but Bentley includes "O Pity Me" at this stage and Pierce does not, presumably because "it is not always possible to tell which erased text is the earliest copperplate one" (97) and because he wants it to be in stage 2 where it shows character transformation (cf. 100). He should cite Erdman, but Erdman numbers the lines 9-10 rather than 10-11.

⁷ Another sign that Pierce does not favor this "stage" is that he inserts "[instead of Enitharmon]" here, but did not write "[instead of Enion]" in his prior transcription.

[She hath taken refuge in my bosom & I cannot cast her out.]⁸

I have gone through line 15 (Bentley's numbering) here to illustrate one last point about this dense scenario where Enion and Enitharmon and Jerusalem all seem to be competing (if that's the right word) for the same space. If Jerusalem were winning, how could Blake not have changed "Enitharmon" in line 4:14? Pierce suggests that the change was "only very tentative" (compared with what else in this context?) or—quoting Erdman—that Blake "accidentally neglected making the same change here as in lines 9 and 11" (that line number problem again) or that Blake's "incomplete revision signaled his temporary abandonment of the text" (104). That last alternative might serve as a generic description of any manuscript at any stage; anything less than "completion" is abandonment.

In a brief concluding chapter, Pierce invokes Joseph Viscomi's discussion of the illuminated works as supportive authority on "how Blake constantly revised his works" and how "Fluidity and change become the norm" (141). In doing so, he drastically misreads and misrepresents Viscomi's position. Abandoning his own earlier assertion that "the sharpness of definition is the sharpness of the engraving technique—the antithesis of the tentativeness and freely shifting boundaries of the pencil sketches" (xxv), Pierce now claims that "the copperplate becomes a medium with the flexibility of the sketchpad" (141), and therefore the site for meaningful revisions. But Viscomi rejects the notion that the plate can be seen as "the initial invention" separated from printing and coloring, and he also rejects the view that differences among copies mean we can equate execution with revision (178–79). More explicitly still, Viscomi asserts that "the plate image cannot be treated like a manuscript that has been distorted or deliberately altered" (178). Viscomi

⁸ Bentley's notes to these lines help convey some of the complexity of the manuscript at this point: "Line 10: the alteration first read in pencil 'Enitharmon in Silent <?> Contrition'; then 'Enitharmon' was changed in pencil to 'Jerusalem'; and then the whole was darkened in ink. The deleted words are crossed out in pencil. Line 11: the words deleted were crossed out in pencil, and 'also pity me O Enion' written above them; the addition was then confirmed in ink, with the added addition of 'O'. Lines 12–15, 18–26 (a single block) seem to be written over about twelve erased modified copperplate lines which had been written over the erased copperplate lines. The modified copperplate lines begin farther to the left than those in the copperplate hand. Of the modified copperplate lines only 'Enion' at the end of the next to last line, and 'light<?> of day' at the end of the last line are legible. Lines 12–15 seem to be written over the same thing in pencil (with the exception of line 12), which were written over erased modified copperplate lines, which in turn were written over erased copperplate writing. All this alteration makes reading exceedingly difficult, and the erasure has almost worn through the page. Line 12 read in pencil:

[Jerusalem]

[Why hast thou taken] Enitharmon from my inmost soul'

argues that *meaningful* differences between the works must be understood at the level of *editions* rather than—with rare exceptions—of the individual copy. Nothing could be more explicit than his assertion that Blake's "variations do not signify a rejection of uniformity and all it supposedly represents" (175), that "the absence of more pronounced differences among copies within an edition is quite surprising, and the differences themselves seem minor" (175), and that "what is questionable are the ideas that Blake willfully produced variants within editions for the purpose of making each copy of the edition a unique version of the book, that he believed variants within editions altered the book's meaning, and that variations express a conscious desire to rebel against engraving uniformity" (183).

Pierce's invocation of Roland Barthes' distinction between "work" and "text" in that chapter seems even more off the mark. In his eagerness to show that he is "a post-Saussurean, poststructuralist reader" (xvi) and "to take account of recent theoretical movements" (xv), he claims that his "approach to the work as text, as a network of signifiers, delivers the work into the order of language and writing" (143). But Barthes firmly associates the category of *manuscript* with the notion of the *work* (160), and the two together with the authority of the author. The work is *material* for Barthes, "a fragment of substance" that "can be seen" and "can be held in the hand," whereas "the text is held in language" (156–57). How is this different from "the material complexity of the manuscript" (xiv) with its "material resistance" (xv) that Pierce takes as his object of study? For Barthes, the *work* "refers to the image of an organism which grows by vital expansion, by 'development'" (161), and this is precisely what Pierce attempts to do as he "traces the evolution of Blake's poetic thought" (xvi) through the "conscious revision and correction of an essentially diachronic narrative" (xvii–xviii). While claiming that "any study of the manuscript will be heavily driven by such conceptualizations of author as intentional consciousness" (144), Pierce wants to keep that conceptualization only for the manuscript changes that "suggest an attempt to achieve coherence and consistency" (144). But any change that is not systematically registered through the whole manuscript "calls into question the use of a unified conception of an author embodying conscious and singular intentionality. Did Blake forget, give up, or get careless?" (144). We are offered "an author figure [who] can only be reconstructed as embodying multiple conceptions of the poem simultaneously rather than as presenting a unified or consistent consciousness," but one who is nevertheless a "figure" based on hypothesized states of consciousness. Here too we can see a conflict between a poststructuralist pose that claims, "I am not attempting to reconstruct Blake's subjective thought processes, rather to trace out the evolution of a poetic construct. Intentionality is thereby a function of the manuscript rather than of an individual consciousness" (xvi), and Pierce's actual prac-

tice, which claims to "trace Blake's process of composition in great detail" (xx) and insists repeatedly that "Blake's poetics are the result of conscious revision and correction" (xvii) and "This type of revision seems conscious on Blake's part" (56).

Insofar as Pierce has a method, it can best be described as an example of "compositional fiction," a phrase coined by Paul Mann. Emphasizing "the fact that the 'final state' of *The Four Zoas* is a manuscript," Mann points out that any hypothetical reconstruction of what Bentley calls its "composition and growth" is "an entirely separate concern" (208). "No matter how tentative and conditional the language of these compositional fictions they regularly determine editorial decisions" (208) and in Pierce's case they regularly reconfirm his simplistic view of Blake's writing practice in *VALA*.⁹ In fact, Pierce has two different compositional fictions for Blake's manuscript, both highly speculative. His argument embodies the same "conflict" he attributes to the manuscript, with subtle accounts of seamless transition alternating with dramatic accounts of quantum-leap "ruptures." On the one hand, the "manuscript tells a tale of steady addition and enlargement" (142) through "conscious revision and correction of an essentially diachronic narrative" (xxvii-xviii). But even though Blake's poetics was fundamentally and essentially narrative (xvii), it "underwent a gradual shift during composition, transcription, and revision of the poem, a shift accompanied by a growing emphasis on synoptic and synchronic tendencies" as he "gradually altered the shape of the poem" (xvii). On the other hand, "Blake's process of revision and recomposition seems part of a sometimes frantic attempt to save all that he wrote" (19). Blake was given to "tampering with this text" (104), and produced "fractures in the framework of his epic" (109), creating "vertical rupture" and "disruptions" that "mark a breakthrough in narrative strategy" (46), causing "a multitude of shifts in the poem that disrupt an earlier 'concep-

⁹ For examples of the frequency of speculation, see 72: "Blake's aim here seems to be. . . those above possibly suggest. . . seem to predate. . . This addition may also. . . Presumably, the fact that. . . Although we cannot always know for certain. . . those figures seem thoroughly compatible. . . figures on page 8 'seem to represent'. . . Enion appears bent over. . . These ideas and designs were probably a part of. . . One factor that seems consistent. . . Another set of additions that might be early. . ." On page 35 we get five speculations in ten lines: "Blake may have contemplated rejecting the preceding Night and starting his epic with the second Night. It is possible that he considered beginning *Vala* with the Second Night while reconsidering the appropriateness of the original text on pages 3-7. Perhaps the revisions he required were so significant that he considered discarding the whole Night. It is also possible that, even after he made extensive revisions to these pages, he was still unhappy with the results. Therefore, he changed the title of the Night to 'Night the First' and at the same time may have changed the 'Then' of the first line to 'The' in an attempt to remove or blunt the sense of narrative continuity implied by the adverb."

tion' of the poem's narrative" and producing "a radical effect on the poem's design" leading to "a late but overwhelming notion, one that overpowers the bulk of the base transcription of the poem" (49). In particular, "Blake made three separate additions to the end of Night VII[a], each more disruptive than the last, producing a serious rupture in this narrative sequence, a rupture that increasingly precluded any attempts at maintaining sequential 'fit'" (51).

Pierce sees Blake as an author unable to decide whether he is writing a "diachronic" poem or a "synchronic" poem. At times Pierce claims that Blake was striving to move the poem "away from a diachronic concern with narrative sequence towards a synchronic principle of juxtaposition or discontinuity" (48) only to succeed in the end in producing a "material failure" (xxvi). At other times he writes as if the synchronic "ruptures" were spoiling a poem that wanted to be diachronic narrative, so that a "sequentially coherent and consistent narrative structure" was being ruined by "a subversively disjunctive and disruptive narrative" (109). In either case the result is a failure, but the two views are quite different. At still other times Pierce suggests a positive sense of "flexible design" (xxii) and a process in which "the poem is revised to enact its own meaning through emergent forms" (xxvi). This sounds much better than failure. There are still other times when "all additions and revisions cohere around a single mythic core until at the end of the poem a right balance is established among the four faculties within the mind of the eternal man" (85). These contradictions in Pierce's text can be read as embodiments or enactment of his basic intuition, but they are not consciously deployed. Pierce seems bent on seeing *VALA* as a unique site of conflict, but what he describes are universal aspects of apocalyptic or eschatological writing in general and of Blake's writing in particular. Vincent De Luca adopted the dynamics of the sublime to discuss Blake's structural *peripeteias*, arguing that Blake intentionally designed his poetry so that the reader's time-bound and narrativized "Corporeal Understanding" will be frustrated and overwhelmed by "a vision determinate and singular, measured and finite, a miraculous (or astonishing) compression of all contingent forms into one intellectual identity—the living Word of Eternity" (102).

As long ago as 1971 I was discussing what Pierce calls "the unresolved conflict between a diachronic and a synchronic poetics" (32) as it appears in the work of Blake, Wordsworth, Keats and Hart Crane.¹⁰ Another book that anticipates Pierce's formulation and qualifies its claims for Blake's uniqueness is Thomas Greene's *The Descent from Heaven* (1963). Greene discusses numerous prior instances of the topos of "descent" in precisely the dynamics Pierce attributes

¹⁰ In *Preludes to Vision I* map some of the same narrative structural issues Pierce discusses, using temporal epic and atemporal lyric as polar examples of structure.

to Blake. For Pierce, Blake's "descent of the Lamb" comes when "a truly divine revelation is needed" (45), and "the descent of the Lamb acts as a vertical marker, a synchronic disjunction, that ruptures the teleology of a diachronic narrative of war as it moves to its temporal climax and spatial completion" (46). "The vertical rupture brought to this narrative of death through the intervention of the Lamb of God offers an alternative focus, redirecting attention from the foregrounded cataclysms of sequential development to the apocalypics of synchronic perception" (46). In his study of the epic, Greene focuses on "the history of a minor form within a larger, encompassing form," choosing "the descent of an emissary god or angel from heaven bearing a message to earth. . . . In most respects the celestial descent makes a peculiarly useful point of critical departure. For it does more than describe the swift and dramatic movement of a body through space. It constitutes typically a crucial nexus of the narrative; it represents the intersection of time and the timeless" (237).

Pierce claims to have identified "a new kind of narrative form towards which Blake was striving" (44) and thinks that the form was fulfilled in *Jerusalem*, where the diachronic is fully abandoned for the synchronic (109). He suggests repeatedly that Blake is striving to make *VALA* become *Jerusalem*—or we might rather say, a poem that can be read the way we have been taught to read *Jerusalem* ever since Frye announced in *Fearful Symmetry* that the poem was the climax of a poetic canon produced "in accordance with a permanent structure of ideas" (14). But Morton Paley, who is praised by Pierce for demonstrating that *Jerusalem* is synchronic in structure, does not in fact make the extreme claim attributed to him. Rather he insists that "There is a story in *Jerusalem*, consisting of many episodes, but this diachronic aspect of the work is for the most part subordinated to its synchronic aspect. . . . The organizational container reinforces the expectation of a strong narrative line, an expectation which is subverted time after time in the work itself" (303). This sounds more like Pierce's view of *VALA* than like the unilateral triumph of an oxymoronic "synchronic narrative." The co-existence of the diachronic with the synchronic, claimed by Pierce as a unique feature of *VALA* is an inevitable aspect of all narrative, and is a dominant feature of all texts in the apocalyptic tradition.¹¹ As Paul Youngquist notes, "To isolate the synchronic thus requires a prior immersion in the diachronic, which the resulting 'single archetypal pattern' functions to repress. Synchronism

¹¹ Barthes gives a typical structuralist description in his "Structuralist Analysis of Narratives": "To understand a narrative is not merely to follow the unfolding of the story, it is also to recognize its construction in 'storeys', to project the horizontal concatenations of the narrative 'thread' on to an implicitly vertical axis; to read (to listen to) a narrative is not merely to move from one word to the next, it is also to move from one level to the next" (87).

in fact arises through the diachronic process it subsequently subordinates. The recognition of repetition that underwrites traditional criticism of *Jerusalem* is also the cipher of time and contingency. In the barely visible gap that opens within 'spatial form' to define its self-identity can be glimpsed its diachronic origins in the process of reading the poem" (604). Far from being unique to or originary with *VALA*, the eschatological dynamic Pierce finds there is everywhere in Blake and as old as the Christian Bible, carefully edited so that the diachronic temporality of the "Old" Testament and the synoptic gospels give way to the synchronic realm of the Gospel of John ("Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.") and to the apocalyptic climax of Revelation. What Blake is doing in *VALA* is typical of an apocalyptic tradition that includes writers as different as Dante and Wordsworth. Dante increasingly notes the distinction towards the end of the *Paradiso* as he approaches the point at which all time becomes present ("il punto a cui tutti li tempi son presenti") coming to eternity from the temporal ("all'eterno dal tempo era venuto") he finds that a single moment can produce more effect than twenty-five centuries ("Un Punto solo m'è maggior letargo / che venticinque secoli alla 'mpressa"). In *The Prelude* Wordsworth recounts those vertiginous moments of estrangement and vision where he felt in touch with the hiding places of Power. Such spots of time can be found and multiplied, like the "Wild Thyme" of Blake's "Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find."

Pierce's problems in gaining a coherent perspective on the poem reflect those he claims to find in the poem, and are related to the ways in which a teleological narrative of origins is taken to be the *repetition* in time of a prior structure of temporal events. He remains what Donald Ault calls a "Newtonian reader," in spite of his appeals to Ault's notions of Newtonian and anti-Newtonian narrative. His compositional fiction, seeking "a sequentially coherent and consistent narrative structure" (109) of the poem's origin, holds him back from a reading of the manuscript *as manuscript* that would be congruent with Ault's argument that

the *Four Zoas* narrative is a purely relational process that has no existence (cannot be pointed to) in any form except through the act of reading. . . . This radical relational narrative process undermines Newtonian narrative ontology (through retroactive transformation, aspectual interconnection, and so on); it invades and desubstantializes the independently existing Newtonian reader and text, reconstituting them relationally as the primary conditions of the coming-into-existence of the narrative. (22)

All of the characters in *VALA* are "fallen," and all seek to "remember" what caused them to fall, in the process of which they construct a multitude of stories without realizing that they are "actively constructing rather than passively remembering" (Adams 636). Thus narrativity—or a mistaken notion of narrativity and time—is the fallen condition. *VALA* is the only one of Blake's three great works in which he does not constantly and explicitly refer to himself as author, reminding the reader of the ongoing present of writing and physically producing the work in what Adams calls a "dramatic mimesis of visionary creation" (630).¹² In *VALA* that dramatic mimesis is continuous in the material form of the poem itself and the reader/editor of the manuscript is called on to become co-producer of whatever meaning emerges in the reading process. As Ault points out, "In its naked preservation of the traces of its struggle to be (re)composed, *The Four Zoas* pushes to the foreground the productive labor of writing; it is a text that insists on its own radical heterogeneity, on its own struggle to be different from itself, indeed, ultimately on its process of eradicating a potentially unitary textual 'self' from which 'it' could 'differ'" (xiii).

Blake did not simply set out to write a diachronic narrative, as if that were an aesthetic or formalist decision. His initial goal seems to have been to achieve a Hegelian *Aufhebung* through time, as in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), to reach through memory a triumph of the mnemonic over time in an apocalyptic self-absorption at the end of history when past and present, being and becoming are harmonized. In the process of working on the poem he made the discovery that was to mark the nineteenth century—that memory is the mechanism by which ideology materializes itself, and that a transformational account of human structures is common both to the political theorist and to the visionary poet. In *The Sense of an Ending* Frank Kermode deploys the useful terms *chronos* and *kairos*, where *chronos* is the linear sense of history and *kairos* is a sense of time that integrates past, present and future: "*Chronos* is 'passing time' or 'waiting time'—that which, according to Revelation, 'shall be no more'—and *kairos* is the season, a point in time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end" (47). *Kairoi* are historical moments that are out of time, and eschatology plots the pattern of *kairoi* in relation to the End. It is possible to see many of the temporal experiments of high modernism as motivated by an inspired ideal of *kairos* in opposition to linear history.

Modernism itself, informed by "spatial form" and the model of cinematic montage, self-consciously sought to become the art of a new consciousness that would disprove Lessing's relegation of the verbal arts to the temporal di-

mention. Joyce's "Bloomsday" in *Ulysses* and his Vicinarian *ricorsi* in *Finnegans Wake* were attempts to align the literary work with the force of *kairos*. Virginia Woolf, whether poised between the gendered temporal poles of Mrs. Ramsey's *kairos* and Mr. Ramsey's *chronos*, or focused on Mrs. Dalloway's day, or an interval "between the acts" of history, sought the same effect. Yeats revealed the same concerns in his obsession with occult repetitions, as did Lawrence in his striving for apocalyptic endings to his novels, or in his *Apocalypse*, where he announced that "Our idea of time as a continuity in an eternal straight line has crippled our consciousness cruelly" (quoted in Bradbury 51). The tension between *chronos* and *kairos* is the central theme of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, where we see the Dantesque poet ("So here I am, in the middle way") revealing a secular perception of diachronic time challenged by Christian eschatology:

A people without history
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
Of timeless moments. So, while the light falls
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel
History is now and England.

(237–41)

In many ways as different from Blake as another poet could be, Eliot here shares with Blake the struggle against linear time, and looks to patterns preserved in national tradition and archaic myths of organic community, to find the possibility of a redeemed temporality.

I think we can be better readers of Blake if we stop thinking of him as a solipsistic creator of a private myth and see how many concerns he shared with other significant writers of the modern period. Similarly, we should not think of his manuscript struggle with *VALA* as a uniquely "Blakean" experience as Pierce suggests, but take note of how the more we learn of the text life of other authors the better we can understand the real process of *writing* (verb) *writing* (noun). One of the more serious omissions in Pierce's study is the context provided by work done in recent years on recovering and reading the manuscripts of other romantic and nineteenth-century writers.

Especially relevant here is work on Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley. If we read *The Prelude* (of course that title begs the question!) in its full textual plurality, or "Home at Grasmere" (originally intended as Book I of the never-written *Recluse*), along with the myriad of poems Wordsworth continually rewrote and rearranged, we see that Wordsworth was a poetic Penelope who wove and reweave his poems endlessly to avoid the spectre of closure. Wordsworth's obsessive (the term is de Selincourt's) revisions include many poems he seems never to have intended to publish at all. His famous inability to leave his poems alone has led to the Cornell Wordsworth project, organized with the aim to print texts of poems and all variants from first draft to final life-

¹² There is only one explicit indication in *VALA* that someone is writing it: Night V (6:9) where Blake wrote, "I write not here but all their after life was lamentation."

time (or first posthumous) publication, together with facsimiles of available manuscript versions. The growth of his *Prelude* can now be traced through up many different versions. His constant alteration of his poems, even after they were published, is notorious. If we see these poems as traces of a scene of writing, rather than as finished products, we can sense how Wordsworth continually altered his poems in order to keep the activity of writing going. His endless process of alteration was a way to preclude a closure of identity in a fixed text, to avoid becoming one who had written rather than one who was writing. His was a writing project that had to inscribe itself as something ever more about to be, in order to avoid being a copy of something that already was.¹³ The long-standing Cornell Wordsworth project has led to an enhanced sense of Wordsworth as reviser of his own work, and has helped in particular to identify multiple versions of *The Prelude*, ranging from its humble beginning in 1798 on the last page of a German lesson notebook ("Was it for this?") to the 14-book version that was left at his death. We can now read the poem as a scene of action rather than a report on events that happened elsewhere in the past, events that are "over." Coleridge too is increasingly seen as a Penelope. Jack Stillinger asks "How Many *Mariners* Did Coleridge Write?" in an essay where he considers how Coleridge "undermines the concept of a stable text by his continuous revising" (38). One might equally well ask how many *VALAS* (or *Urizens* or *MIL/TONS* or. . .) did Blake write?¹⁴

Useful recent work in this area has not been limited to English authors. Blake's contemporary Hölderlin left behind a horde of manuscripts, especially those of the remarkable elegies and hymns from his later years, that resemble palimpsests on which the poet constantly revised his work, using all the space in the margins and even the space between lines. In contrast to the "authoritative" text of the monumental *Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, the life-work of Friederich Beissner and his colleague Adolf Beck, the new *Frankfurter Ausgabe*, edited by Dieter E. Sattler (and published by a leftist publishing collective called Roter Stern) provides a *Rezeptionstheorie*-friendly edition for readers who believe that meaning is generated through acts of reading. Where Beissner sought to produce the effect of authoritative readings, creating the impression that definitive versions of the work could be recovered, the Frankfurt Edition provides a mapping of poems in process that keeps the graphic integrity of Hölderlin's poetic process with a facsimile of the manuscript, accompanied by a diplomatic transcription that follows the spatial configurations of the original. In addition there is a "phase analysis" of the manuscript that converts the spatial arrangement of the page into a linear sequence where the different stages of com-

position are indicated by different typefaces. Finally, there is an explicitly "provisional" reading text version of the work.

Recent textual work on post-romantic writers can also help prepare us to read *VALA* in its manuscript form. For example, the last 10 years have shown a remarkable intensification of interest in the materiality of Emily Dickinson's writing. The facts that her writing is almost exclusively in manuscript form, that she regularly suggested alternative words or phrases and produced alternate versions, that the distinction in her writing between poetry and prose is not always clear, have led to a growing body of writing on her work dealing both with editing and reading theory.¹⁵ As Jerome McGann states, "Dickinson's scripts cannot be read as if they were 'printer's copy' manuscripts, or as if they were composed with an eye toward some state beyond their hand-crafted textual condition" (*Textual Condition* 38). One of the significant features of Dickinson's manuscripts is the inclusion of alternate readings with no indication of status or priority. Similar cases occur in Blake when multiple revisions leave the text suspended. A good example can be found in *VALA* 5:44-53 and 6:9-7:7, where the lines are deleted in pencil, but circled in ink—a printer's symbol for reinstating text according to Andrew Lincoln, whose presentation convinced Erdman to include them in the text. As Ault writes, these considerations "are compelling but not decisive: it is as though Blake's text leaves open or indeterminate the rules for interpreting what should be excluded or included" (501). Another area of textual scholarship that could be useful to those interested in a better understanding of "manuscript poetics" is the growing field of genetic research in Joyce, especially *Finnegans Wake*. The *James Joyce Archive* includes 15 thick volumes of facsimiles for the surviving Joyce notebooks and 20 volumes that reproduce drafts, typescripts and galley proofs for the different stages of the text of *Finnegans Wake*. The manuscript evidence ranges from handwritten sketches to final galley proofs, and genetic criticism of Joyce's *Wake* is rooted in the manuscript remains of his work habits from 1922 to early 1939.¹⁶

I'm concerned here with the experience of reading Blake's

¹⁵ In "The Importance of a Hypermedia Archive" Martha Nell Smith describes the organization of the Dickinson Editing Collective. Susan Howe, Ellen Louise Hart, Marta Werner, Roland Hagenbach, Jerome J. McGann, and Jeanne Holland are other members of the Editing Collective whose work has greatly advanced the understanding of Dickinson's handwritten poetic experimentation in punctuation, lineation, calligraphic orthography and mixed media layouts.

¹⁶ Graham Falconer has a useful survey of contemporary genetic criticism in his "Genetic Criticism." A somewhat dated bibliography of *Wake* genetic criticism can be found in the revised edition of McHugh's *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (1991). Ongoing archival research is regularly reported on in *Genesis*, the journal published by the *Institut des Textes et Manuscrits Modernes* in Paris. The *Institut* is dedicated exclusively and rigorously to genetic studies and has included among its more notable members Daniel Ferrer, Jean-Michel Rabaté, Laurent Milesi and Claude Jacquet. There is also an Antwerp school of

¹³ I discuss Wordsworthian revision at greater length in "A Spirit, Yet a Woman Too!"

¹⁴ Stillinger is expanding on J. C. C. Mays's "Reflections on Having Edited Coleridge's Poems."

writing, in as full and unmediated a way as possible. One major hindrance to realizing this goal is access to the manuscript text in suitable form. Few of us can visit the British Museum to read the *VALA* original, and the two facsimile options are expensive to own and difficult to read. We may never know what final form Blake intended for *VALA*, and it is quite likely that his material plans for the poem went through several phases. A more tractable but still difficult question is, in what form is the work best made available to the prospective reader? The possibility of an edition along the lines of Sattler's edition of Hölderlin is appealing, but none that I know of is in the works. The closest thing to it in Blake studies is the invaluable facsimile *Notebook* with diplomatic transcription that David Erdman did with Donald Moore back in the 1970s. But then we need not be limited in our study of Blake's materiality to a literally material version of his text. The poem has not appeared yet on the Blake Archive priority list, but it is tempting to anticipate the kind of polymorphous textual experience that a proper hypertext edition could make possible.¹⁷ If when we read a manuscript we are reading writing *as writing*, then every aspect of the text exemplifies its physical contingency, its distance from that ideal unique unchanging work that leads a textual critic like Thomas Tanselle to claim "that language is an intangible medium and that words on paper are therefore not verbal works themselves but only guides to the reconstitution of such works" (*Textual Criticism* xi). Tanselle claims that many critics (both textual and literary) "have been led into muddy thinking by a failure at the outset to recognize the basic distinction between texts of works and texts of documents" (*Rationale* 35). Over against the mud metaphor he posits the clear thinking of a material text that is "the crystal goblet of typography and calligraphy [that] conveys a cargo that is abstract" (*Rationale* 40). But Tanselle's clear thinking is muddled on a number of important ontological issues and—perhaps even more telling—it is divorced from the actual practice of writing engaged in by many literary artists, and from the text-work they produce.

I have concentrated so far primarily on Pierce's emphasis on the manuscript status of *VALA*. He has a second related focus on what he calls a "poetics of character," for which he claims that his "use of character arises from the suggestions offered by Barthes in *S/Z* that character 'is an adjective, an attribute, a predicate,' or, more in keeping with 'the ideology of the person,' 'the sum, the point of convergence' of a set of signifying elements (what Barthes calls 'semes') that

genetic Joyce criticism, led by Geert Lernout, who has also done a study of Hölderlin. In Ireland the leading genetic scholars are Danis Rose, Vincent Deane, Roland McHugh and John O'Hanlon.

¹⁷ Bill Ruegg's "Experimental Hypertext" and accompanying essay are suggestive to a certain degree. The Emily Dickinson Editing Collective has plans for a hypertext archive of her writing to supplement the new variorum edition being prepared by Ralph Franklin.

cluster around a proper name." Pierce has difficulty with Blake's revisions because Blake's "clustering of 'adjectives' can lead to a set of apparent contradictions in character attributes with each reworking of the poem" (xxiii), making the poem exhibit a "contradictory sense of the whole idea of stability in characterization" (xxiv). It's not surprising that Barthes' formulation doesn't work all that well for a work like *VALA*, since Barthes is describing the conventional coding of conventional fiction where the *effect* of "character" is produced by semiotic consistency readers have learned to expect. As Melville pointed out in his *Confidence-Man*, "there is nothing a sensible reader will more carefully look for, than that, in the depiction of any character, its consistency should be preserved" (69). But Melville goes on to ask, "is it not a fact, that, in real life, a consistent character is a *rara avis*?" (69). Neither Melville in *The Confidence-Man* nor Blake in *VALA* is committed to the representation of something that could be called "character," and it is not at all clear that the names that multiply like weeds throughout the manuscript should be interpreted as signifiers of character. Bentley identifies 143 different "symbolic names" in *VALA*, and according to his count 117 names (82% of the total) appear only in added passages or in Night VIII, while 94 (66%) appear on only one page.

I think it is rather Pierce's need for consistency that is at work here, as he labors through many pages to show how he thinks Blake is consistently revising to create stable "characters" who can be consistently and *judgmentally* identified by the reader as "evil" or "blatantly evil" or "malevolent" or "sympathetic" or "fallen." Here too as with the compositional fiction, we have a program of staged readings where for Pierce Blake can only imagine a shift from one essentialism to another, as sympathetic (i.e., good) characters become evil and evil characters become repentant, so that "as Tharmas grows more evil, Enion becomes a more sympathetic (or simply pathetic) victim" (104). Pierce seems oblivious to the fact that these descriptions of character are often spoken by other "characters" who are tendentious to the extreme. For example, he cites Ahania's "first approach" to Urizen, where she says: "Thou sitst in harmony for God hath set thee over all" (after 37:9; see E 830), and notes that Blake "struck out this line and made a series of other changes that undermine any positive value in Urizen's creation" (90). Is this in fact a change by Blake in an omniscient valorization of Urizen, or is it a change in Ahania's perception of him, or a change in her rhetorical strategy in dealing with him? *VALA* is not a disembodied "story" that portrays "character," but a dramatic logomachia in which "voices" with different names hurl accusations and confessions at one another.

According to Pierce's criteria Milton, when he got to the point where Eve and Adam ate the apple, would have to go back and re-establish their essential "character" as fallen in order to be convincingly consistent. As Davis P. Harding pointed out long ago, Milton, "as a theologian, was com-

pelled to maintain a spotless innocence in Adam and Eve until that precise moment when Eve actually eats the Fruit. As a poet, he was compelled to anticipate the Fall by implying in both our first parents not only a predisposition to sin but the specific frailty out of which the sin could grow and take its shape, as a plant is formed from its seed" (68–69).¹⁸ Blake and Milton were both writing in traditions where radical, inexplicable character transformation was possible, for better and for worse, and Pierce's labors to convince us of Blake's labors for consistency are not successful. Pierce writes, "There is no essential character that [Blake] fears violating in such revisions" (xxiv); the point is, that there is *no essential character*.¹⁹ When Blake in 29:1 writes "Eternal Man," then erases "Eternal" and writes "Fallen," then writes "Ancient" above "Fallen" in pencil, then erases "Fallen" and return us to "Ancient," he is not going from one essential attribute to another one, but creating a site where there is no fixed identity.

VALA raises the question of character identity by thematizing it, and by embodying it textually with parts of the manuscript that are not clearly in or out of the poem, or that enter and leave the poem as it is revised and revised again. The instability of the text, reflected in its material manuscript embodiment, is not an accident or an aesthetic choice, but a reflection of a problematic subject and theme that is intimately related to the interrelationship between narrativization and the grounding of identity in memory as a dimension of human consciousness. From the time of Locke on, in the Anglo-European discourse, personal identity as a state of continuous subjectivity has been intertwined with narrating and tropes of writing as a special effect. But if identity is grounded in memory, and in the ability to remember and narrate, then fluidity of memory will preclude the traditional grounding of stable identity. As Theodore Adorno expressed it,

The unstable character of traditional philosophy's solid identity can be learned from its guarantor, the individual human consciousness. To Kant, this is the generally

¹⁸ Harding's study is a wonderful revelation of Milton's rhetorical stratagems to "implant in the minds of his readers a secret, furtive, tentative uneasiness about Adam and Eve—not so much doubts as the shadows of doubts—while simultaneously maintaining the illusion of their entire sinlessness" (69).

¹⁹ Pierce adds to—or reflects—the situation by making seemingly contradictory assessments of "characters." For example, at one point we read about "preparation for the transfer of power into Los later in the poem" (117) and later we read that "Los becomes a mere product of the Fall who will disappear at the end of time" (122). Pierce claims that it was the development of Tharmas as a "significant character" that caused Blake to abandon his elaborate copperplate fair copy (114), but even though Tharmas "as chaos, is father to Los, the human creative principle" (116) and has "symbolic ascendancy over the other Zoas" (125) and it is his cry that "begins the action of the poem and expresses the universal anxiety felt by all the characters in the work" (126), he is said to have "only very local and very limited effect in the plot" (117). If these contradictions are meant to be statements that apply to different stages of revision of the poem, Pierce needs to be much more precise in his formulations.

predesigned unit underlying every identity. If fact, if an older person looking back has started early on a more or less conscious existence, he will distinctly remember his own distant past. It creates a unity. Yet the 'I' which he remembers in this unreality this I turns simultaneously into another, into a stranger to be detachedly observed. (154)

The analogue for a Kantian identity is a belief that time is related to a fundamental continuum that provides the condition of possibility for memory and narrative. Paul Ricoeur, in *Time and Narrative*, has given a thorough and exhaustive treatment of this concept, arguing that time is possible because of a continuum we are always in, a *chronos* uninterruptedly continuous with the earliest "archaic" moment (*arkhè*, as beginning, origin, principle). Ricoeur presents Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* as a prime example of his theory, claiming that the novel demonstrates the connection of the narrator's involuntary memories through the non-temporal zone or grounding continuum that Proust calls "time." Freud subjectifies this concept and problematizes it, by hypothesizing an unconscious that functions like Ricoeur's continuum for the individual psyche: "It is a prominent feature of unconscious processes that they are indestructible. In the unconscious nothing can be brought to an end, nothing is past or forgotten" (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE 5:577–78). This unerring repository of our past with its equivocal power is both the problem Freud sought to solve and the solution. For Freud, the unconscious contains an unchanging record of the past, somehow "written" in us in a mysterious material form. But consciousness "circulates a mobile and ungrounded *representation* of these contents to which direct access is theoretically impossible. These two memories cohabit within us but cohere nowhere; these two pasts constitute us but conflict ceaselessly" (Terdiman 289).²⁰ The memory that might permanently ground our identity, for better or worse, is not directly available to consciousness, and the representations produced by the memory function in consciousness demonstrate a protean volatility in which things can be changed into other things interminably. Derrida observed that "The substitution of signifiers seems to be the essential activity of psychoanalytic interpretation" (210), and in this the Freudian hermeneutic and the textuality of *VALA* as manuscript are alike both in cause and effect.

Since the transition to consciousness is not a derivative or repetitive writing, a transcription duplicating an unconscious writing, it occurs in an original manner and, in its very secondariness, is originary and irreducible. Since consciousness for Freud is a surface exposed to the external world, it is here that instead of

²⁰ I am indebted in these observations to Richard Terdiman's discussion in *Present Past* of Freudianism as a theory of memory.

reading through the metaphor [i.e., of writing] in the usual sense, we must, on the contrary, understand the possibility of a writing advanced as consciousness and as acting in the world (the visible exterior or the graphism of the literal, of the literal becoming literary, etc.) in terms of the labor of the writing which circulated like psychical energy between the unconscious and the conscious. The "objectivist" or "worldly" consideration of writing teaches us nothing if reference is not made to a space of psychical writing. (Derrida 212)

I offer these observations on Freud because the prophetic ambition of Blake's *VALA* suggests the cultural equivalent of psychotherapy, and because they suggest how instability of identity and instability of text can both be related to the thematics of *VALA* and its manifestation in the text as unstable writing or manuscript—what Terdiman aptly calls "the unlimited plasticity" of representation in general and the "extravagant mobility of psychic contents" (292). For both Freudian hermeneutics and Blake's *VALA*, the basic problem is how a stable representation of the past can be possible. I also want to avoid the possible implication in my discussion that there is anything like a universal "manuscript poetics" which governs or manifests itself in all manuscript writing. I am convinced that *VALA* remained in manuscript because it became a poem about writing, and about its own writing, a dynamic, ongoing process with no conceivable end. "There is more than enough work to do on the specifics of Blake's daily (changing) practice as writer, printer, engraver, and painter" (McGann, *Literature of Knowledge* 13), while the ongoing process of writing, in its immediacy and materiality, is available for a myriad of contingent relationships to the "meaning" of innumerable texts by other authors. In spite of its shortcomings Pierce's book will have served a useful function if it directs our renewed attention to reading Blake's writing.

the books remaind still unconsumd
Still to be written & interleavd with brass & iron &
gold
Time after time for such a journey none but iron pens
Can write And adamantine leaves recieve nor can the
man who goes
The journey obstinate refuse to write time after time
VALA 70 (second portion) 39-43

In conclusion, I'd like to return to my initial statement in this review. I do believe that the manuscript of *VALA* calls out for study as a manuscript. Surely Blake deserves the kind of careful scrutiny that is being brought to bear on the manuscripts of other authors; and Blake studies, especially of *VALA*, can benefit from some of the critical and methodological gains being made in contemporary textual studies. In spite of my disappointment with Pierce's book, I want to emphasize that it is situated in an important but still rela-

tively unexplored area of Blake studies. He is right when he points out that

critical arguments do not make full use of the material complexity of the manuscript. . . . none has yet fully embraced the material resistances of the poem—its state as manuscript with alternate readings, cancelled possibilities, uncertainties in direction, and variations in pen, ink, crayon, colour wash, stitch marks, writing styles, paper, and so on. These matters mark the poem as graphically as its characters, themes, and narrative complexities. (xiv-xv)

My own hope is that future work on *VALA* will be broader in its focus than Pierce's book is, and will be informed by an awareness of recent textual studies and theory that can help to refine our ability to read Blake's manuscript.

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NEWSLETTER

BOOKS BEING REVIEWED FOR *BLAKE*

William Blake and the Myths of Britain

Jason Whitaker (St. Martins)

Blake in the Nineties

Steven Clark and David Worrall, eds. (St. Martins)

A Guide to the Books of William Blake for Innocent and Experienced Readers

Henry Summerfield (Colin Smythe Ltd., dist. by Oxford)

Blake, Politics, History

Jackie DiSalvo, Christopher Z. Hobson, G. A. Russo, eds. (Garland)

The Dialectic of Vision: A Contrary Reading of William Blake's Jerusalem

Fred Dortort (Station Hill)

Rereading Frye: The Published and Unpublished Works

David Boyd and Imre Salusinszky, eds. (University of Toronto Press)

Blake et le Sacre

François Piquet (Didier Erudition)

The Healing Power of Blake: A Distillation

John Diamond (Vital Health Publishing)

BLAKE/AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY NEWS

Blake's postal costs have nearly doubled over the past few years. For this reason we've been forced to raise our subscription rates and postal surcharges. Individual subscriptions are now \$30, institutional rate is \$55. Postal surcharges are \$10 surface and \$25 airmail for overseas. We regret this necessity.

Electronic submissions are now accepted by diskette or email attachment. The optimal format is Microsoft Word. Other formats are usually acceptable. Again, due to increased postal costs, no articles will be returned unless accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope.

BLAKE AND MUSIC

In 1988 William Franklin (Professor of English, North Central Texas College, Corinth) wrote an M.A. thesis on Emily Dickinson that featured original musical settings. At the University of North Texas in 1997 he completed his Ph.D. dissertation, "Awen, Barddas and the Age of Blake"—on the Welsh bards and their influence on the mythic imagery of Blake. Meanwhile, he composed music for a number of Blake's lyrics from the *Songs*, using the popular music of the day as models. Franklin is currently remastering the music on CD and plans to make the music available in some additional digital formats, perhaps WAV audio and/or MP3. [wfrankli@gte.net]

Fall 1999

Someone else so named
For some nookie.co.uk
Box no. 24/01.

Why, oh why, oh why? Answers to 47-year-old male serving life sentence in Scottish Academia. Respondents must know absolutely nothing about Byron or Shelley and loathe the thought of reading Wordsworth and Keats. Blake is a concessionary 'maybe' only. Box no. 24/02.

Nubile, sylph-like, sex-starved 19-year-old Dutch girl trapped inside the body of a 57-year-old part-time lecturer in Greek art seeks male gymnast (aged 17-65)

BLAKE SIGHTINGS

The above personal appeared in the *London Review of Books* 7 January 1999.

Tom Horton (Computer Science, Florida Atlantic University) reports the following exchange from a recent National Public Radio interview between reporter Bob Edwards and singer-songwriter-actor Kris Kristofferson, who revealed that, as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, he had studied Blake: [Edwards] "He [Blake] was a rebel too—they arrested him for sedition." [Kristofferson] "He was a bad boy, but so was Hank Williams."

NEW BOOK ON STEDMAN?

Nathaniel Weyl lived in Surinam in 1948. He traveled with Rudolf van Leer (editor of the 1971 edition of Stedman's *Narrative*) on an anthropological trip into the Djuka region of Surinam's interior, which largely corresponds to Stedman's terrain. Weyl requests any information on research done or in progress concerning John Gabriel Stedman and his relationship with Blake and other antislavery intellectuals in the 1790s. Before he commits to a book, Weyl would particularly appreciate information on whether current work in progress by other people has pre-empted the field, and on what new aspects of Stedman's struggle against slavery need to be explored. Please contact him at natweyl@aol.com.

UPDATING DONALD FITCH'S *BLAKE SET TO MUSIC*

Donald Fitch, author of the standard catalogue of musical settings, *Blake Set to Music* (California, 1990), is completing an update of his work for *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*. He would very much like to hear from anyone who has information about musical settings of Blake created in the past decade. Please write alybear@postoffice.pacbell.net or meav@mail.rochester.edu; or, by regular mail, Donald Fitch, 7281 Butte Drive, Goleta CA 93117-1335.

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly 63

Faint, illegible text in the top left corner, possibly a header or introductory paragraph.

Second block of faint, illegible text in the middle left section.

Third block of faint, illegible text in the lower middle left section.

Fourth block of faint, illegible text in the bottom left section.

Faint, illegible text in the top right corner.

Second block of faint, illegible text in the middle right section.

Third block of faint, illegible text in the lower middle right section.

Fourth block of faint, illegible text in the bottom right section.