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William Blake and the Hunt Circle

THE TENSIONS WITHIN ROMANTICISM ARE FULLY MANIFESTED IN THE ANIMOSITIES THAT EXISTED BETWEEN WILLIAM BLAKE AND THE HUNT CIRCLE. THE ONCE MARGINAL LEIGH HUNT (AND TO A LESSER DEGREE HIS BROTHERS JOHN AND ROBERT) HAS RECEIVED DUE SCHOLARLY ATTENTION IN RECENT YEARS, AND WE CAN NOW APPRECIATE HIM FOR HIS OWN WORKS, HIS COMMITMENT TO REFORM, AND HIS ABILITY TO CULTIVATE CONNECTIONS AMONG WRITERS. JON MEE HAS REMINDED US, HOWEVER, THAT A SIGNIFICANT PART OF LEIGH HUNT’S PROJECT WAS A FIERCE CAMPAIGN AGAINST METHODISM AND RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM. HUNT’S CAMPAIGN WAS EMBODIED IN A SERIES OF ESSAYS FOR THE EXAMINER, ENTITLED *AN ATTEMPT TO SHEW THE FOLLY AND DANGER OF METHODISM*, WHICH APPEARED AS A SLIGHTLY REVISED PAMPHLET IN 1809. THE ORIGINAL PUBLICATION OF THESE ESSAYS OVERLAPPED WITH ROBERT HUNT’S CRITICAL REVIEWS OF BLAKE’S EDITION OF *THE GRAVE* ON AUGUST 7, 1808, AND OF HIS EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS ON SEPTEMBER 17, 1809. BLAKE, ACCORDINGLY, BECAME THE MOST SIGNIFICANT VICTIM OF THE HUNTS’ CAMPAIGN AGAINST ENTHUSIASM, AND THE CAMPAIGN UNDOUBTEDLY CONTRIBUTED TO BLAKE’S RETREAT INTO OBSCURITY AND POVERTY. BUT THE CLASH ALSO HAD AN IMMENSELY FRUITFUL INFLUENCE ON BLAKE’S LATER WORKS. NOT ONLY DID IT GIVE BIRTH TO THE VILLAINOUS HAND, A MAJOR CHARACTER OF BLAKE’S LATER MYTHOLOGY WHOSE NAME PLAYS ON THE INDICATOR SYMBOL USED BY THE HUNTS AS A SIGNATURE, IT ALSO SHAPED, AS MEE NOTES, BLAKE’S DEFENSE OF METHODISTS AND HIS CONCEPTION OF LITERARY AND RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM IN *MILTON* AND *JERUSALEM*.

Since Mee focuses chiefly on what the conflict between Blake and the Hunts says about enthusiasm, I want to revisit this contentious relationship in light of an unrecorded reference to Blake by Leigh Hunt in the short:


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lived quarterly *The Reflector* (1810/11–12), which is not found in Bentley’s *Blake Records*. Dating from late 1810 or early 1811, this reference comes more than a year after the review of Blake’s exhibition, and it shows that the Hunts maintained their interest in Blake for a sustained period. For Blake, the new attack would have come as he was working on several important projects, most of which were already in dialogue with the Hunts. These projects included the engraving of his Chaucer painting, his *Public Address to the Chalcographic Society* (a group formed for the encouragement of engraving and which was promoted by the Hunts and Robert Cromek, the publisher of *The Grave*), several notebook poems on the Hunts and his other enemies, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*. The *Reflector* influenced many of these works, and in light of the new reference to Blake, I also want to underscore Blake’s awareness of the topics discussed in *The Examiner* and the degree to which Blake’s circle of friends and acquaintances overlapped with that of the Hunts. While the Hunts were not Blake’s only enemies, by figuring Hand as the eldest son of Albion, Blake signaled his recognition of the leadership of the Hunt circle in a new generation of writers. Blake clearly had an enduring interest in the activities and controversies of the Hunt circle, and his concern with Lord Byron, to whom he dedicated *The Ghost of Abel* (1822), may be an extension of this attention. Ultimately, the intersection of Blake’s and Hunt’s circles will help us better understand the personal and professional context of Blake’s public engagement and the intended audience of his later works.

Blake and the Hunts had many avenues for information about each other. The Hunts were the nephews of Benjamin West, who, as President of the Royal Academy, subscribed to *The Grave* along with several other members of the Academy. The Hunts knew Cromek and worked with him on promoting several projects. The Hunts’ friend, Henry Crabb Robinson, wrote an article on Blake in 1808 and attended his exhibition in 1810. Robinson’s diary shows that Blake was a frequent subject of conversation; between 1811 and 1813, Robinson discussed him with William Rough, William Hazlitt, Robert Southey, Charles Lamb, William Wordsworth, Thomas Barnes, and Barron Field, all of whom knew Hunt. By the end of 1810, Robinson had become very close with John Flaxman, whom he drew into the Hunt circle, and who, even more than Cromek, could have provided the circle with many anecdotes regarding Blake and his eccentric-

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ities. It is also possible that the Hunts themselves had met Blake. In the “Fine Arts” section of The Examiner on July 31, 1808, Robert Hunt anticipated his review of Blake’s illustrations for The Grave at the end of his notice of Religious Emblems, a collection of new emblems by John Thurston and Joseph Thomas. The book would not be published until 1809, but Hunt reported that he had seen admirable “specimens” on display. Thomas had served as Blake’s patron as early as 1801, and in 1807 and 1809, respectively, Blake produced copies of his Paradise Lost and “The Morning of Christ’s Nativity” designs for him. Blake had no doubt seen the woodcuts on display as well, and he subscribed to the emblem book along with Richard Cosway, Robert Cromek, Henry Fuseli, and John Flaxman. Whether Blake and any of the Hunts had crossed paths by the time of The Grave review, Robert was familiar enough with Blake to describe him as “such a visionary as Mr. Blake” and to play on elements of an established reputation for eccentricity (Records, 259).

From the time of the first review in The Examiner, the Hunt brothers almost certainly coordinated their attack on Blake. Robert Hunt’s review of The Grave praised all the artists associated with the edition, except for Blake and Henry Fuseli. Leigh had met Fuseli at a dinner hosted by Rowland Hunter, the successor of the bookseller Joseph Johnson, and he greatly disliked the artist well before the review of The Grave. Robert charged Blake’s designs with being an unseemly mixture of the devotional and erotic (Records, 260–61). Perhaps not coincidentally, a letter on “Indecent Prints” followed just two items later in the same issue, and in the following week’s installment of Folly and Danger, Leigh leveled the charge against the devotional language of the Methodists. Blake remained on Leigh’s mind through August 28, 1808, when he included Blake as one of the “Painting Officers” in his list of “The Ancient and Redoubtable Institution of Quacks” (Records, 263). Again, the content of the paper seems to have been stacked against Blake, and while The Examiner often ran columns on quacks, they had, to this point, been focused on medical quackery. Leigh’s list was followed by a letter that denounced quackery in divinity and praised Napoleon for regulating quacks in France.

When Blake published the advertisement to his exhibition of paintings on May 15, 1809, he undoubtedly addressed the attacks of the Hunts. He urged "those who have been told that my Works are but unscientific and irregular Eccentricity, a Madman's scrawls," to view his works and do him "justice before they decide." Yet The Examiner published the only review of the exhibition, calling Blake "an unfortunate lunatic" and dismissing its Descriptive Catalogue as "a farrago of nonsense, unintelligibleness, and egregious vanity, the wild effusions of a distempered brain" (Records, 283). Rather than withdraw from his engagement with the Hunts, however, Blake took up their challenge in a new explosion of creativity. As detailed by Read, Blake's genius must have been sparked by closely reading The Examiner as it promoted Louis Schiavonetti's engraving of Stothard's painting The Canterbury Pilgrims and Cromek's Chalcographic Society throughout 1810. The Examiner also spurred Blake's notebook poems against the Hunts and his other spiritual enemies, but on this point it is worth observing that since most of the notebook poems postdate June 1810, when Schiavonetti died, Blake must have waited nearly a year after The Examiner review of his exhibition before writing them. These late poems include the "Apology for his Catalogue," which was originally subtitled, "[Blake's] defense against the Examiner," and which paraphrased the review: "[Hunt] cries all art is fraud & Genius a trick / And Blake an unfortunate Lunatic." That Blake deleted these lines may suggest that he had realized too much time had passed for a seasonable retort. Blake also may have been aware of some tensions between the Hunts and Cromek since the same poem characterizes Cromek as "A thing thats tied around the Examiners neck."

In another notebook poem, Blake relied on The Examiner for his association of the Hunts with "gentle blushing Daw," the painter George Dawe. In November 1809, Dawe was given membership in the Royal Academy before other students who had been waiting longer or who were seen as more talented, and in its report on the election on November 12, The Examiner was critical of both the painter and the political machinations of the Academy. On May 20, 1810, Dawe was again mentioned when Robert criticized Dawe's Andromache Imploring Ulysses. Strangely, Robert feared

13. Erdman, Poetry, 505. Cromek's first signed piece for The Examiner was his "Account of Mr. Schiavonetti" on July 1, 1810. Read cites a March 13, 1810 letter from the patron Thomas Hope to Cromek, which gives substantiating evidence that Cromek and Robert Hunt were working together as early as March ("Cromek," 71). After the Chalcographic Society dissolved in 1811, the collaboration waned quickly, and Cromek died in 1812.
Dawe’s reaction, writing: “I am perpetually assailed by the resentments, the friendship, and the prejudices of many of those artists, who occasionally come under the animadversions of the Examiner.”

Blake was certainly an artist who had suffered at the hands of The Examiner, but it is less clear if anyone defended him to the Hunt Circle. Nonetheless, Robert’s trepidation regarding the “gentle” Dawe led Blake to compare Hunt with a “trembling hare,” which was also a pun on the name of Prince Hoare, editor of The Artist and Blake’s sometime patron. Blake’s knowledge of the review of Dawe is almost certain since it appeared in the same issue in which the plan for the Chalcographic Society was published. Moreover, the association in Blake’s notebook poem between Dawe and “Yorkshire Jack Hemp,” or John Flaxman, likely originated in the previous week’s Examiner, which had announced that Dawe’s and Flaxman’s mutual patron Thomas Hope had become a patron of the Chalcographic Society.

While Read stresses the importance of Cromek to the Public Address, Blake highlighted the role of The Examiner in more explicit terms:

The manner in which my Character <has been blasted these thirty years> both as an artist & a Man may be seen particularly in a Sunday Paper cald the Examiner Publishd in Beaufort Buildings. <(We all know that Editors of newspapers trouble their heads very little about art & science & that they are always paid for what they put in upon these ungracious Subjects> & the manner in which I have routed out the rest of villains will be seen in a Poem concern[ing] my Three year <Herculean> Labours at Felpham which I will soon Publish.

With its focus on the Chalcographic Society, the Public Address was begun no earlier than the late spring of 1810, and I will suggest below that Blake likely worked on it through early 1811. Blake had two models for the work. The first was John Landseer’s Letter to a Member of the Society for Encouraging Patronage, which was answered by Robert in The Examiner on August 19, 1810. The second was a letter from William Sharp to the President of the Chalcographic Society dated May 29, 1810. Morris Eaves’s suggestion that Blake may have been aware of Sharp’s letter is highly probable. Though Robert typically praised Sharp’s engravings, the enthusiastic Sharp would have been no admirer of The Examiner since it had reprinted

the first part of Southey’s account of Johanna Southcott from *Letters from England* on September 24, 1809 and on October 1, 1809. The account of Southcott appeared just one week after the review of Blake’s exhibition, and it may have been part of the effort to smear him with the brush of Southcottian enthusiasm. The excerpts elicited several responses from Southcott’s followers and detractors, including an April 29, 1810 letter on Sharp’s connection with Southcott, just a month before his letter. It likely gave Blake and Sharp common cause against *The Examiner* and the Chaligraphic Society, which may have led Sharp to believe Blake was more sympathetic to Southcott than he really was. By 1815, Blake would rebuff Sharp’s attempt to make him a believer (*Records*, 319–20) and would satirize Southcott’s claims of immaculate conception.22

Rather than publish the *Address*, Blake limited his public efforts for the remainder of 1810 to the completion of his Chaucer engraving, which was finished by October 8. On December 26, a cropped version of the plate was published in an abridged edition of Chaucer.23 It was around this time that the reference to Blake appeared in *The Reflector*. *The Reflector* is best known for publishing the early essays of Lamb, who came to know Hunt early in 1811.24 Like *The Examiner*, *The Reflector* was published by John Hunt in the Beaufort building and edited by Leigh. It lasted for just four numbers, ending its run in 1812. The first volume included two issues dated “From October 1810 to March 1811,” but the volume did not appear until either December 1810 or early in 1811.25 The reference to Blake occurs in the first issue, in an essay entitled, “Account of a Familiar Spirit, Who Visited and Conversed with the Author in a Manner Equally New and Forcible, Shewing the Carnivorous Duties of all Rational Beings and the True End of Philosophy.”26 The article lampoons the spiritual visita-

tions common to religious enthusiasts, visitations Hunt attributes to excessive eating. In light of Mee’s work on Blake and enthusiasm, the reference is important since it shows that the Hunts did indeed distinguish Blake’s brand of esoteric enthusiasm from that of the plebeian Methodists, even if Blake took the side of the Methodists in his answers to Hunt. Hunt’s efforts against the Methodists continued in _The Reflector_, with the first issue including an extended attack on Methodist missions to slaves in British colonies, but Hunt’s article puts Blake in far different company.

The authorship of a “Familiar Spirit” can be gathered not only from the indicator signature but also from its inclusion in Hunt’s _The Seer: Common-Places Refreshed_, where it is retitled “The Nightmare.” 27 This later, but more accessible, version may explain why the reference to Blake has been overlooked, since the first three paragraphs, which contained many of the mystic figures and radical religious traditions now closely associated with him, were omitted. In the original, Hunt terms these groups and figures “the occult,” and he dismisses their grandiose claims of secret spiritual knowledge:

The emptiness of their knowledge might have been discovered from the noise they made about it, and the uselessness it exhibited. . . . whatever the Cabalists may say to the contrary, I will venture to affirm that the Great Society was understood neither by Peregrinus, nor Cornelius Agrippa, nor Celsus, nor Jamblicus, nor Porphyry, nor Don Calmet, nor Raymond Lully, nor even the divine Aureolus-Theophrastus-Bombastus-Paracelsus. . . . 28

Against the extravagant claims of otherworldly wisdom, Hunt places moral utility, common sense, and self-restraint, which, he suggests, are the only proofs of true spiritual knowledge. That Hunt could delete his original introduction in later versions of the essay shows how much the cultural climate had changed by 1840. The polite efforts to regulate enthusiasm described by Mee had proven largely successful by this date, and the references to the radical religious underground that had inspired the piece could be omitted by Hunt as culturally irrelevant.

Although Hunt refers to Blake in an aside, Blake is the only contemporary figure mentioned in the article, making him the conspicuous, living symbol of the occult tradition. The reference to Blake comes in the con-

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text of Hunt mentioning Comte de Gabalis, the mythic founder of the Rosicrucians:

Monsieur, the Count de Gabalis, may have had the power of invisibility,—a very common virtue with such sages; and the egregious Mr. Blake, who wages such war with Titian and Correggio, both in his writings and paintings, may tell us that he is inspired by certain spirits to alter the human figure;—but to be out of sight can as little benefit mankind as to be out of nature.29

While Blake never mentioned de Gabalis or the Rosicrucians, they likely influenced his conception of religious sexuality.30 Blake's war with Titian and Correggio would have been obvious to any readers of the Descriptive Catalogue, which targets the artists as villains, and the review of The Grave in the Antiquarian Review had noted that Blake was "aided as his friends report, by visionary communications with the spirits of the Raffaeles, the Titians, the Caraccis, the Corregios, and the Michael-Angelos of past ages" (Records, 265). The notion that Blake distorted the human form seems also to have been widely known at this time, for Francis Douce recorded in his notebook in 1811 that "Blake's figures are as if, like Procrustes' men, they had been stretched on a bed of iron," an image which may have originated in a "Familiar Spirit" (Records, 310).

By naming his spirit "Nightmare," Hunt was also trying to evoke an additional connection between Blake and Fuseli, whose most famous painting was The Nightmare. It was perhaps in response to a "Familiar Spirit" that Blake had written in the Public Address: "Many People are so foolish to think they can wound Mr Fuseli over my Shoulder."31 Hunt's linking of Blake's visions to indigestion and Fuseli's conception of nightmare may have been influenced by two earlier pieces that used Blake to attack Fuseli after Blake had publically aligned himself with Fuseli in an 1806 letter published in The Monthly Magazine. The first was The Pleasures of Human Life by the cartographer and antiquarian John Britton who answered Blake's letter to The Monthly Magazine.32 Britton may have influenced Robert Hunt's reviews of The Grave and the exhibition since he likened Fuseli and Blake to Methodists who follow their own imagination over scripture:

[T]here are many designing men, unfortunately calling themselves artists, who, like some methodist preachers, pay little regard to their text, though they religiously adhere to that part of the Mosaic law, which says, or implies, “thou shall not imitate any thing in the heavens above,” (this, however, we will defy even Mr. Fuseli, or his successful pupil and advocate, Mr. Blake, to do) “on the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth.”—Thus prohibited from copying created nature, some of these, print designers have a fair plea for substituting their own creations of fancy: and as these have no natural prototype, they baffle all criticism.33

Another work that anticipated Hunt’s critique of Blake and Fuseli was the anonymous Letters from an Irish Student in England to his Father in Ireland (1809). This Irish student singled out Blake as the most determined admirer of Fuseli and suggested that all of Fuseli’s paintings appeared “to be the crude efforts of a man withering under an agonizing dream of indigestion” (Records, 264), the very situation in which Hunt’s narrator finds himself.

A “Familiar Spirit” also gives some indication that Hunt understood the structure and context of Blake’s ideas. Nightmare visited people differently, depending on “the aspirant’s immediate state of blood,”34 an allusion to a common focus on spiritual and artistic differences among Blake’s radical circles. While Hunt could not have known it, Blake had just reasserted that principle in A Vision of the Last Judgment, declaring, “I have represented it as I saw it[,] to different People it appears differently as every thing else does.”35 In Hunt’s satire, the radical differences in humanity do not rest on transcendent notions of genius or inspiration but rather on what will upset the stomach and lead to nightmares: “With some, nothing more is required than the mastication of a few unripe plums or a cucumber just before midnight: others must: take a certain portion of that: part of a calf.” Unlike Blake’s spirits, Nightmare comes to promote “the enjoyment of virtue,” namely, moderation, with the spirit departing from “the initiated the moment they reduce his theory to practice.”36 By linking digestion and enthusiasm, Hunt is both following a long line of anti-enthusiast satire, such as the farting and belching Aelists in Swift’s Tale of a Tub, and signaling a more general Romantic concern with appetite, consumption, and taste shared by his friend Lamb.37

33. Britton, Pleasures, x–xi.
34. Hunt, “Familiar Spirit.” 89.
37. Lamb would contribute to The Reflector and even play on Hunt’s idea of excessive ap-
Another sign that Hunt may have been more familiar with Blake’s system than has been recognized comes when Nightmare is describing a great glutton with an insatiable appetite for a “multifarious” dish that “sends him almost every night into Tartarus”:

He fancies that though he is himself, he is nevertheless four different beings at once, of the most odious and contradictory natures—that his own indescribable feelings are fighting bodily and maliciously with each other—and there is no chance left him either for escape, forgetfulness, or cessation.38

The glutton’s schizophrenic behavior closely parallels how Blake described, and perhaps experienced, the four Zoas.39 In addition to rumors from their mutual acquaintances, Hunt would have had also the account of The Ancient Britons in the Descriptive Catalogue, which explains how the Strong, Beautiful, and Ugly Men were once “one man, who was fourfold.”40 The same passage mentions that the Ugly Man represented Reason, and Hunt attributed the fourfold vision of this glutton to “excesses” that “abuse . . . the divine gift of reason” and “distort the best tendencies of human nature.” At the same time, if this passage does refer to Blake, it may reveal some grudging respect for him since the visionary glutton is described as “not without information and a disposition naturally good.”41

Since the symbol of Hand cannot predate the review of The Grave, it has been a useful, if frustrating, tool for dating the individual plates of Milton and Jerusalem, both of which are dated 1804 on their title pages but which were largely composed and printed much later. Viscomi suggests that copies A and B of Milton were likely printed in 1811.42 If this date is accurate, it is shortly enough after The Reflector appeared that the two references to Hand in the poem probably do not reflect Blake’s reaction to the piece. In both references, Hand is mentioned with Hyle and Coban (Hayley and Cromek), and the Hand symbol may have been less developed at this point, with Blake more interested in responding to the charges against the

40. Erdman, Poetry, 543.
Methodists in *Folly and Danger*, as described by Mee. Yet Hand remains important to *Milton* since both Milton’s descent into Blake and Palamabron and Rintrah’s reference to Wesley and Whitefield occur between the two references to the character on plates 19 and 22 of copy A.

In *Jerusalem*, Hand is featured in 27 of the 100 plates as well as being illustrated on at least one other. The plates that refer to Hand must be among the later additions to the poem since George Cumberland recorded that Blake had “eng[led] 60 Plates of a new Prophecy” in the early summer of 1807, more than a year before the review of *The Grave* appeared (*Records*, 246). The next sighting of *Jerusalem* came seven months after *The Reflector* was published. On July 24, 1811, Robinson recorded that Southey had told a party at Lamb’s that he had seen “a perfectly mad poem called Jerusalem.” Despite Southey’s own attacks on enthusiasm, Southey “admired both [Blake’s] designs & his poetic talents,” even if he was “a decided madman” (*Records*, 310). Given Southey’s association with the Hunt circle, Blake’s motive in showing him *Jerusalem* may have had more of a purpose than has been recognized, especially if any of its critiques of Hunt had been added to the poem by this date. Southey’s independent relationship with Blake is not well documented. Like Robinson and the Lambs, Southey attended Blake’s exhibition (*Records*, 309), and like Hunt, he knew William Owen Pughe who had commissioned Blake to paint *The Ancient Britons*. In a May 8, 1830, letter to Caroline Bowles, Southey recalled a visit to the Blakes who told him that they believed all of Pughe’s revelations regarding the ancient Druids. The visit likely occurred between 1809 and 1811, when Blake was working on Pughe’s painting, and if it does not coincide with when Southey saw a copy of *Jerusalem*, it may have occurred after he attended Blake’s exhibition and learned of Blake’s own connection with Pughe. While the letter contains several factual inaccuracies, including dating this meeting after the 1814 death of Johanna Southcott, the mistake may be explained by the attention Southcott had received from Southey and the Hunt Circle between 1809 and 1811. What may be more important than these factual errors for why Blake would have shared *Jerusalem* with Southey is the sympathy and pity Southey showed for Blake, which are revealed by his confession that the credulity of the Blakes left him with “so sad a feeling” that he had “never repeated” the anecdote to anyone.

44. Line 58, pl. 20 [22] and line 55, pl. 23 [25]. Erdman, *Poetry*, 113 and 118.
45. Hunt, *Autobiography*, 1:135–36. Pughe also knew Sharp, whom he was about to visit, when Catherine Blake came by with a question about the painting in January 1811 (*Records*, 308).
(Records, 530). Blake may have hoped Southey's sympathy and his knowledge of the Hunts would have made him an ideal reader of Jerusalem.

In the following year, when Blake displayed an unknown number of prints from Jerusalem along with his Chaucer painting and his paintings of Pitt and Nelson at the Associated Painters of Water Colour in 1812, (Records, 311), he must have realized that he was courting a further exchange with the Hunts since The Examiner annually reviewed the exhibition. His hope for vindication, or at least notice, was dashed when Robert ignored Blake completely in his review of May 31, 1812, stating that there was "little worthy of remark."46 This slight by the Hunts stands in sharpe contrast not only to their intense interest in Blake between 1808 and 1811 but also to the June 1812 review of the exhibition by The Lady's Monthly Museum, which felt it could not pass over Blake's eccentric works (Records, 313–14).

It is tempting to link the damage to plate 3 of Jerusalem to Hunt's slight since Blake largely retreated from the public sphere after this point. But whatever the case, even as the Hunts began to ignore Blake, his interest in them continued. He was clearly aware of Leigh and John's time in prison between 1813 and 1815 for libeling the Prince Regent, describing in Jerusalem how "scorn of others & furious pride: / Freeze round [Hanc] to bars of steel & to iron rocks beneath / His feet."47

4 As critical as Blake was of Hunt, Milton shows that he may have had sympathy with him on several issues. After Los has fused with Blake, the sons of Los, Ririath and Palamabron fear that "this Shadow terrible" will become "one with / Albions dread Sons" since "Hand, Hyle, & Coban surround him as / A girdle."48 But even as the threat of aesthetic and spiritual compromise looms over the fusion of Blake and Los, Los incorporates Hunt's attack on Calvin and Luther in Folly and Danger in the response to his sons. Hunt had charged Calvin and Luther with being "two violent men, who spurned the Papacy chiefly because it interfered with their worldly views and ambition."49 He asked, "what have the Genevans achieved [sic] as a people upon the strength of their own superstition? Literally nothing, but a book or two, and a burning," and he added that Calvin's persecution of the Unitarians had created "bad passions" that "are still glowing."50 Following Hunt's lead, Los cautions his sons to "Remember how Calvin and Luther in fury premature / Sow'd War and stern division

46. "Bond-Street Water-Colour Exhibition," The Examiner, 147.
47. Pl. 7, lines 71–73, Erdman, Poetry, 150.
49. An Attempt to Show the Folly and Danger of Methodism (London: John Hunt, 1809), 69.
50. Hunt, Folly, viii, 22.
between Papists & Protestants / Let it not be so now!" &quot; Later in Milton, Luther will be characterized as one of "the Dragon Forms / Religion hid in War," lines repeated in Jerusalem. 

Blake's use of the Calvinistic ideas of the Elect, Redeemed, and Reprobate may also have had its source in Folly and Danger. Hunt denounced Calvinism in his chapter on "Eternal Damnation and Election," but Blake may have been aware that the Hunt circle employed Calvinistic language to describe itself. In his 1810 Memoir, Hunt described his own detractors as "poor reprobates," and as the final fate of the Chalcographic Society was being determined, Cromek also referred to himself in a June 24, 1811 letter as "one of 'God's Elect'—i.e.,—predestined from all Eternity to be beggars." &quot; Blake burned the irony away from such remarks and aligned Hand and his other enemies with the Elect who are "Created continually / By Offering & Atonement in their cruel[ities] of Moral Law." By associating Hand with the Elect, Blake turned the tables on Hunt, who used the concept of the Elect to denounce the supposed humility of the Methodists as "the rankest pride." At the same time, Hunt's assertion that the Methodists were successful because of their earnestness may have appealed to Blake: "Mere earnestness has done more for the Methodists than all the miracles and inspiration can bring together." Rintrah and Palamabron suggest that Hunt is making a false distinction between earnestness and miracles when they insist to Los, regarding Wesley and Whitefield, "Can you have greater Miracles than these? Men who devote / Their lives whole comfort to entire scorn & injury & death." Targeting Wesley's intolerance of insubordination as a sign of Methodist hypocrisy, Hunt notes, "The Methodists say, these things were his foibles; and so they were: they are the foibles and the bad passions of all vain and intemperate demagogues." But Blake will answer in Jerusalem: "how a Monk or a Methodist either, can be a Hypocrite: I cannot conceive. We are Men of like passions with others & pretend not to be holier than others."

As noted above, another aspect of Methodist pride, for Hunt, was the union of the sexual and devotional. In both The Examiner and pamphlet versions of Folly and Danger, Hunt lists Zinzendorf, the Wesleys, White-

52. Milton, pl. 37, lines 42-43, Jerusalem, pl. 75, line 17, Erdman, Poetry, 138 and 231.
53. Hunt, Folly, 247.
54. Qtd. in Read, "Cromek," 81.
55. Milton, pl. 5, lines 11-12, Erdman, Poetry, 98.
56. Hunt, Folly, ix.
57. Hunt, Folly, 76
58. Milton, pl. 23 [25], lines 1-2, Erdman, Poetry, 118.
59. Hunt, Folly, x.
60. Pl. 42, Erdman, Poetry, 201.
field, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Madame Guion, and St. Theresa as examples of profigate devotional literature. In *Jerusalem*, many of these same figures are put at the gate of Beulah: “Fenelon, Guion, Teresa, / Whitefield & Hervey, guard that Gate; with all the gentle Souls / Who guide the great Wine-press of Love.” That Hunt only included James Hervey, the Methodist author of *Meditations and Contemplations*, in the notes of the pamphlet version of *Folly and Danger* strongly suggests that Blake read the pamphlet. Blake also would have encountered Hunt’s attack on the religious sexuality of the Moravians in the pamphlet version, “who in their amorous fury absolutely paid their devotions to what was adored at Lampscas and in a style as grossly obscene as that of the Priapeia,” an attack which built upon his earlier indictment of their antinomianism.

The influence of *Folly and Danger* on Blake’s later works can also be seen in Hunt’s attack on John Bunyan. Hunt quips in both versions of the essay that Bunyan “must not be mentioned with disrespect: he is one of the great teachers of the Godly, the great expounder of holy mysteries, and he was excellently qualified for the office, for he had no education whatever, and therefore must have received all his wisdom from heaven.” He adds, “BUNYAN’s talent was an uncultivated and wild fancy together with a voracious bible [sic] memory just like that of HUNTINGTON, who can quote fifty texts in a breath without comprehending the forty-nine.” By classifying *Pilgrim’s Progress* as an allegory in *A Vision of the Last Judgment* (1810), Blake accepted Hunt’s association of Bunyan with memory, even as he insisted that “Fable or Allegory is Seldom without some Vision” and that “Pilgrims Progress is full of it.” The attack on Bunyan and Hervey by Hunt may have rekindled Blake’s interest in the writers as seen in the illustrations to *Pilgrim’s Progress* and the painting, *Epitome of Hervey’s Meditations Among the Tombs*.

The influence of *The Reflector* article emerges in Blake’s description of Hand as a three-headed monster, an image illustrated on plate 50. It has been assumed that each head corresponds to one of the three Hunt brothers. With the third major attack in *The Reflector*, Blake also had a pattern of action that corresponded to the number of brothers, and he may have

believed that each brother had issued an attack against him. The idea of the Hunts as a threefold creature did not originate with Blake, however. An April 1810 review of *Folly and Danger* in *The Monthly Mirror* described Hunt as "a human *Cereberus*" who had the "threefold character of a politician, a theological polemic, and a dramatic critic." The review praised this quality in Hunt "in his wars against the Methodists," urging him to use even more ridicule. Hunt's *Memoir* also appears in the same issue as this review, and Hunt humorously alluded to his reputation as "a malignant critic—a bad critic—no critic at all—nay, a blackhearted being who delights in tormenting."70

The humor of such remarks may have been lost on Blake, and these descriptions likely influenced his developing characterization of Hand as a torturer and tormenter. Blake would also associate the three Hunt brothers, and possibly the three attacks, with the three accusers of Socrates: Anytus, Mélitus, and Lycon. Blake's association of the Hunts and Socrates may have its origin in a "Familiar Spirit" where Hunt offers Socrates as an example of someone who used his visionary experiences for moral ends:

If you want an instance of a true Cabalist—one who turned his knowledge of the spiritual world to proper account—look at the divine Socrates, whose familiar spirit taught him to utter sayings so witty and so wise—so true and so useful.71

This reference to Socrates comes immediately after Hunt mentions Blake, and it may account for Blake's renewed fascination with Socrates after 1810. From Blake's perspective, Socrates was, indeed, "so witty and so wise," but not as the Hunt brothers understood him. In *Jerusalem*, Socrates is listed among the artistic visionaries created by Los to "preserve [humanity] from Eternal Death."72 while in *The Everlasting Gospel*, Socrates teaches "what Mélitus / Loath'd as a Nations bitterest Curse."73

Blake's conception of Socrates and his accusers may have been shaped by Richard Cumberland who was close to both Hunt and Cromek during this period.74 Joseph Johnson and many others had reprinted Cumberland's *Observer* (1785) in 1807, and in No. 139, Cumberland attempted to refute the accusation of a Roman author that *The Clouds* gave Lycon and Mélitus the idea for their own charges against Socrates:

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[T]his attack upon Socrates was contrived by Anytus and Melitus as a prelude to their criminal accusation of him: this Aelianus expressly asserts, adding that the faction were afraid of his popularity, and therefore set Aristophanes upon him to feel the pulse of the people before they ventured to their public charge against him.\textsuperscript{75}

While Cumberland dismissed this conspiracy against Socrates as nonsense, Blake would have found it all too familiar given his own experience with William Hayley and his trial for sedition. The passage may have revealed to Blake the conspiratorial logic behind all opponents of visionaries, be they aesthetic or political, and if he knew that Cumberland had housed Cromek in 1809, the passage may have had special relevance to him. Whatever his opinion of Cumberland, Blake equated the Hunts with the accusers of Socrates by 1811. This is first seen in the\textit{Public Address}, which alludes to both Cumberland’s essay and \textit{The Examiner} review of his exhibition:

The Painter hopes that his Friends Anytus Melitus \\<& Lycon> will perceive that they are not now in Ancient Greece & tho they use the Poison of Calumny the English Public will be convinced that such a Picture as this Could never be Painted by a Madman or by one in a State of Outrageous manners as these [Villains] \(<\text{Bad Men}>\) both Print & Publish by all the means in their Power.\textsuperscript{76}

Blake had originally written “Anytus & Melitus,” the only two accusers mentioned in Cumberland’s article. “Lycon” was added at a later date, and I suggest that it may refer to the attack in \textit{The Reflector}. In \textit{The Apology}, Lycon is an obscure figure whose testimony supports Melitus’s case, and his influence has led to the idea that he was a well-respected figure in Athens.\textsuperscript{77} Blake likely saw Lycon’s relationship to Anytus and Melitus analogous to that of a more prestigious quarterly supporting the reviews of a weekly paper since, together, \textit{The Examiner} and \textit{The Reflector} would represent the works printed and published “by all the means in [the Hunts’] Power.”

In a \textit{Jerusalem} plate that likely postdates the addition of Lycon to the \textit{Public Address}, the accusers of Socrates are also likened to the accusers of Jesus and are pointing with Hunt’s indicator symbols.\textsuperscript{78} The design of the plate, moreover, reflects the tableau suggested by Nightmare, with the accusing figures judging a reclining female figure that is probably Enitharmion.

\textsuperscript{75} The Observer had been republished by Alexander Chalmers and published by Joseph Johnson et al. in \textit{The British Essayists} (London, 1807), 219.
\textsuperscript{76} Erdman, \textit{Poetry}, 578.
\textsuperscript{77} Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, \textit{Routledge Philosophy: Guidebook to Plato and the Trial of Socrates} (New York: Routledge, 2004), 78.
\textsuperscript{78} Pl. 93, Erdman, \textit{Poetry}, 253.
Hunt's presence is also seen in the fact that the text of the plate echoes Los's lines from Milton that defended his union with Blake, girded with Hand, Hyle, and Coban. Blake's empathy with and conflation of Socrates and Jesus remained so profound that he told Robinson on December 10, 1825, "I was Socrates... Or a sort of a brother—I must have had a conversation with him—So I had with Jesus Christ[,] I have an obscure recollection of having been with both of them" (Records, 696). Blake's recollection of topics from fifteen years earlier may have been triggered by Robinson's connection with the Hunts. As Robinson records, Blake had also just been accused of plagiarizing a painting at Mrs. Aders's house in his Canterbury Pilgrims, a charge that no doubt reminded him of the original controversy over the painting and engraving (Records, 695).

Another intriguing aspect of The Reflector is that one of its contributors was James Scholefield, a professor of Greek at Cambridge. Scholefield's name is strikingly close to that of John Scofield, the soldier who charged Blake with the capital crime of sedition in 1804. If Blake knew of the Hunts' friendship with Scholefield, had spelling, paranoia, or visionary insight could have added to Blake's link between reviewers and accusers of capital crimes. Blake spelled Scofield in a wide variety of ways: Schofield, Scofield, Skofeld, and Skofield. Damon attributes these misspellings to contempt, but it may be that Blake was uncertain about the spelling himself or alternated between the soldier and the professor. In The Reflector, Scholefield wrote under three pseudonyms: S., Philo-Tragicus, and Vindex. The last two appeared in the same issue as a "Familiar Spirit," and together they would have fueled the link between the classics and war that Blake was developing at this time. In Jerusalem, Blake frequently paired Hand and Scofield, associating the Hunts with state cruelty and murder. A "Familiar Spirit" may also have contributed to this association since Nightmare first comes to Hunt when he drifts off to sleep reading the fifth ode of Horace, a description of the slaughter of a child by witches. The ode would have likely reminded Blake of his own Druid symbolism and its connotations of human sacrifice. It may be for this reason that Hand is associated with Molech or Moloch, the god to whom children were sacrif-

81. Kendall, Reflector, 114. A month before its review of The Grave, "Vindex" appeared among the correspondents of the Antiquarian. Since the correspondence was published at the end of the issue and Blake's review was the first item in the following issue, Blake could have easily seen the name if he read the collected volume, which may have suggested hidden alliances among his enemies.
ficed: "The night falls thick Hand comes from Albion in his strength / He combines into a Mighty-one the Double Molech & Chemosh."\textsuperscript{82}

Blake likely builds on how Hunt drifts off into the visionary world when he describes how Hand "In the visions of the dreams of Beulah on the edge of Non-Entity / . . . stood between Reuben & Merlin, as the Reasoning Spectre / Stands between the Vegetative Man & his Immortal Imagination."\textsuperscript{83} By placing Hand between Reuben, the sensual man of generation who corrupted his father's bed, and Merlin, the magician or occult figure of imagination, Blake echoes the beginning of a "Familiar Spirit," where Hunt positions his own Enlightenment reason between "superficial and superstition—extremes equally hurtful to knowledge from the seductive confidence into which they draw unwary minds."\textsuperscript{84} For Hunt, Lord Chesterfield embodied the superficial epicurean life that ended in atheism, while the superstitious extreme was marked by Cardan, a Renaissance mathematician who dived into the occult. According to this Enlightenment schema of knowledge, Hunt represents the virtuous golden mean. In Jerusalem, however, Hand's middle position shows the limitations of reason. Moreover, since both Hand and Merlin are equated with Reuben in the poem, Blake suggests that Reason is not a permanent position, like the notion of the Elect, but is, instead, transitory and shifting and contingent upon one's spiritual state.\textsuperscript{85}

Conclusion

For all his arguments with Leigh Hunt and his circle, Blake recognized Hunt's central place in the literary culture of the early nineteenth century. Hand devours the other sons of Albion to form "a mighty Polypus" from which Hyle and Coban emerge as his "Emissaries."\textsuperscript{86} Since Blake encountered the Hunts well after Hayley and Cromek, the scene makes no sense chronologically. But from the perspective of vision, it shows how the Hunts created a climate in the British literary scene conducive to the generation of Hayleys and Cromeks. The frequent desire of Hand and the other Sons of Albion to devour may be Blake's inversion of the enthusiastic gluttony spoofed in a "Familiar Spirit" and the concern with appetite and taste found in Lamb's Edax essay and Hunt's own popular Feast of the Poets, both of which were published in the last issue of The Reflector. From Blake's perspective, Hand and the sons of Albion not only wanted to de-

\textsuperscript{82} Jerusalem, pl. 84, lines 17–18, Erdman, Poetry, 178.
\textsuperscript{83} Jerusalem, pl. 32, lines 22–24, Erdman, Poetry, 178.
\textsuperscript{84} Hunt, "Familiar Spirit," 313.
\textsuperscript{85} Pl. 32 [14], lines 36 and 32 [16], line 41, Erdman, Poetry, 177 and 179.
\textsuperscript{86} Jerusalem, pl. 18, lines 40, 41, Erdman, Poetry, 163.
vour real artists but were "ravning [sic] to gormandize" what was ultimately their own "Human majesty and beauty." 97

The "Human majesty and beauty" of the second generation Romantics would emerge again for Blake with the publication of Byron's Cain in 1822, which inspired The Ghost of Abel and Blake's typological identification of Byron with the prophet and Messiah figure Elijah. If Blake had followed Leigh Hunt's career in the years after his release from prison in 1815, he may have known that Hunt fell on increasingly hard times. What he could not have known is that, by 1822, the death of Shelley had left Hunt stranded in Italy and dependent on the capricious largesse of the messianic Byron. While Hunt suffered through his darkest period during these years, Blake unknowingly enjoyed his triumph surrounded by youthful admirers who praised his genius, and The Ghost of Abel signaled that Byron now overshadowed Hunt in the new generation of Romantic writers, even in Blake's prophetic imagination.

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Bibliography


