

1-1-1979

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Citation

Sandler, Florence. "Book Review: *Angel of Apocalypse: Blake's Idea of Milton*." *Modern Philology*. 77.2 (1979): 228-234. Print.

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CHICAGO JOURNALS

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Modern Philology, Vol. 77, No. 2 (Nov., 1979), pp. 228-234

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/437519>

Accessed: 13/10/2014 18:21

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If posterity has generally endorsed this view of Swift, *The History of John Bull* goes far to justify Cowper's praise of Arbuthnot. This admirable edition will be of immense and lasting value both to the historian and to the student of literature.

Donald F. Bond/*University of Chicago*

Angel of Apocalypse : Blake's Idea of Milton

Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr./Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975. Pp. 332 + 45 plates.

Angel of Apocalypse is an interesting and ambitious book, examining Blake's idea of Milton as it is expressed in various ways: in Blake's portraits and graphic portrayals of Milton; in his illustrations for Milton's poems; and, finally, in his absorption of Milton's poetic influence and his celebration of Milton as the hero of the short epic to which he gave Milton's name. There has been general agreement that the influence of Milton, along with the Bible, is central to Blake's work—indeed, no one who has ever read Blake's *Milton* could overlook it. But the exact nature of Milton's influence, the way in which Blake discriminated among Milton's works, especially *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, his particular points of criticism and approbation, the extent of his familiarity with Milton's prose, and the relationship that he saw between the poet and the political pamphleteer—all these issues have not been so easy to determine; and certain statements that have been made (mostly on the strength of the notorious passage on Milton in the early *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*) are apt to mislead, especially when they make no allowance for the ambivalence or evolution of Blake's views. If Blake did not always see Milton (or himself) as being entirely of the Devil's party, then when and on what grounds did he suppose that Milton had resigned? A full-length study of Blake's view of Milton has been noticeably lacking, and Joseph Wittreich (the editor of *The Romantics on Milton* and joint editor of volumes of critical essays on both Blake and Milton) is the person to provide it. It may be that the present book is unnecessarily complicated by the division of the subject according to the modes of Blake's activities in relation to Milton, rather than according to the chronological development of his views. But Wittreich is less concerned with tracing Blake's development (an approach that often implies condescension) and more concerned to demand respect for Blake as a mature thinker and artist. In any case, his book is as thorough and comprehensive a treatment of the subject as one could wish.

What Wittreich proposes as Blake's idea of Milton is signified by the title: "Angel of Apocalypse" is no mere flourish but a concept argued for on every page. If, having finished the book, one still feels vague about the Apocalypse, one is quite clear on how Milton gets to be an angel and how an angel is to be handled. Wittreich argues plausibly that we have missed the point of the relationship from having failed to supply the right context, which is a Renaissance conception of the poet's role of delivering the Golden World, and more particularly a Christian

conception of the poet-prophet who, in the manner of John on Patmos, delivers within time and experience the Paradise or New Jerusalem. The very titles of the major works support this view: *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Jerusalem*.

Blake's *Milton* also belongs to this prophetic series. In the Book of Revelation, angels (literally, messengers) are of both kinds, divine and demonic: the dialectical opposition between the two is the process by which Error or Babylon is made apparent and then dispelled in the interests of the establishment of Truth or Jerusalem. Picking up this theme and imagery for his poem, Blake presents Milton himself as a messenger, with aspects both demonic and divine (he has the forms of both meteor and human being), engaged in the dialectical process of realizing and dispelling his Error (or, as Blake calls it, annihilating the Selfhood) in order to find the Truth of his Humanity. But the reader of *Milton* is often hard put to understand wherein Milton's Error has consisted. In Blake's mind it apparently has something to do with Milton's alienation from his Emanation, as seen in his strained relations with his three wives and three daughters. The reader can concede this emphasis as being necessary to Blake's thesis which will equate Milton's full realization of his Humanity with his participation as Bridegroom in the apocalyptic Marriage, while still wondering what the critique has to do with the Milton who celebrated (apparently without Error) the blissful marriage of Eden. Surely Blake would recognize that by the time Milton had completed *Paradise Lost* the annihilation of his Selfhood was complete? But not so; for, as Blake informs us, Milton in Eternity had appeared to him and warned him not to be misled by *Paradise Lost*! If Milton in that poem had realized the union of Self and Emanation in the marriage of man and woman, he had still not effected to Blake's satisfaction the marriage of Reason and Energy, of God and Man, of Heaven and Hell; and all of this was needed before Milton could become the Awakener of Albion, the true Champion of strenuous liberty and the Inspired Poet, the Builder of Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land.

This is, of course, the gist of the criticism of Milton in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, as well as the clue to Milton's role in the later epic. As for the passage in the *Marriage*, Wittreich makes the point that it is not *obiter dicta* but germane to the work, the whole of the *Marriage* being a kind of Miltonic exercise on Blake's part, or, more precisely, an exercise in which he pits Milton against Swedenborg in dialectical opposition. Along the way, Wittreich produces a remarkable series of quotations from Milton's prose which do indeed provide the theme and even much of the vocabulary for the *Marriage*. Milton the Divorcer had defended the natural sexual energies against the false constraints of the merely legal marriage bond, an "opposite both to marriage and to Christianitie"; Milton the radical Protestant had defended the spiritual energy that resulted in the proliferation of sects against the great negation that was Prelacy. Indeed, the very phrase "struggle of contraries" is Milton's own, his description of the mental and spiritual processes that are necessary to the reintegration of Truth pending "her Masters second coming"—and the apocalyptic Marriage.

Like the rest of the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, the specific comments on Milton, Wittreich reminds us, are to be read dialectically or at least dramatically. They are made, after all, by the Devil in his debate with the Angel, and though of

the two it is the Devil whom Blake favors, he too has at best a partial truth. It was Blake himself who wrote, in his Annotations to Swedenborg's *Treatise concerning Heaven and Hell*, "You might as well quote Satans blasphemies from Milton & give them as Miltons Opinions." Here, too, the Devil is blaspheming, accusing Milton according to what Blake elsewhere calls a "most Pernicious Falshood" that "Poets & Prophets do not know what they write or Utter"—the Devil's falsehoods being not the less pernicious or stimulating for being half-truths.

But to the extent that Milton *was* of the Devil's party and knew it, he was bound to repudiate, as Satan did, the casuistical, punishing, self-vindicating God of *Paradise Lost*—and hence the poem made to justify the ways of such a God to man. To Blake's mind, the separation of Father and Son, of Reason and Energy, has resulted in the enervation of Godhead and Humanity; and when Christ after his death assumed the function of Judgment, and thus "became Jehovah," this was an ironic inversion of what the Incarnation would have effected. If, moreover, in Milton's portrayal of the prelapsarian world the Divine remained something exterior to the Human, then, whatever Milton's claim to prophetic inspiration, his unfallen man was fallen after all, just as his God was fallen. And this—to the consternation of Blakeans and Miltonists—is about as much as Blake was prepared to say about the poem which he can be presumed to have admired beyond all others.

It is one of Wittreich's major contributions to insist that Blake saw the defects of *Paradise Lost* redeemed in *Paradise Regained*. Here one supposes that Blake took his cue from his intellectual enemies. If Deists and Tories who applauded the longer epic found the short one theologically unsound, or at least incomplete, then Blake, the republican and antinomian, had only to read black where they read white to recognize that it was in the second poem that the real Milton (also a republican and antinomian) was emancipated. The Jesus of *Paradise Regained* is Milton's ultimate Hero—one who in the course of Mental Warfare with his Spectre achieves his Humanity, and becoming fully Human becomes by the same token fully Divine. The difference between the two poems, then, is the one that Blake delineated in his verse:

God appears & God is Light
To those poor Souls who dwell in Night
But does a Human Form Display
To those who Dwell in Realms of day.

Accordingly, Wittreich's account of Blake's illuminations for *Paradise Regained* stresses Jesus' realization of the Human Form Divine which, for Milton and Blake, is the true significance of the act of Baptism with which the poem begins. And here the Miltonist does not feel (as earlier with *Paradise Lost*) a sense of disparity between the poem that he knows and the poem that Blake reads; for, while Milton and Blake may have been far apart on the issue of the mode of God's existence which is central to *Paradise Lost*, they are surely at one on the meaning of Baptism and the necessity of retrieving it from a mere Sacrament and Urizenic form to its power as the realization of full Humanity and Christian Heroism. Wittreich's interpretation is therefore most valuable, even if he is inclined to overstate the case by talking of John's Baptism of Jesus as itself a Urizenic thing.

There are many other rewarding insights and pieces of information in the book, such as an explanation of the Hecate-like figure in the fourth design of Blake's first set of illuminations for *Comus* in some cancelled lines which were reproduced in editions of 1798, 1801, and 1809. Throughout the book there is a healthy insistence that Blake's championship and critique of Milton must be understood in terms of the late-eighteenth-century context, where Milton had become a kind of totem for republican politics, liberal theology, and inspired art. Anyone who writes hereafter of Blake's idea of Milton will have to be as well acquainted as Wittreich is with Fuseli's and Lowth's views on the Sublime, with William Hayley's *Life of Milton*, and with Charles Dunster's 1795 edition of *Paradise Regained*.

But Wittreich's chief concern is to correct the distortion in the current presentation of Blake's relationship to Milton as a prime exhibit of the "Anxiety of Influence." As he reminds us, Blake himself wrote (surely with Milton chiefly in mind): "The worship of God is. Honouring his gifts in other men each according to his genius. and loving the greatest men best." When Blake wrestles with Milton, the quality of the struggle is not anxiety at all, but a fierce joy of recognition, a discovery of spiritual brotherhood, as when Enkidu wrestles with Gilgamesh. Nor is it ominous that Milton had died a hundred years before Blake wrote, since Milton is obviously as alive in the Imagination as Jesus himself. In his account of Blake's *Milton*, Wittreich rightly emphasizes the visionary act by which the relationship between the two poets is consummated: the clouds of Error having been dispersed, and "Milton entering my Foot," Blake places that foot into the bright sandal of the Vegetable World: "I stooped down & bound it on to walk forward thro' Eternity." No psychological cripple this.

With all this, *Angel of Apocalypse* has much to commend it. It would be less than candid, however, not to point out that the book has its inequalities and limitations. There are places where the interpretation of a Blakean passage or design seems forced, as when the Rintrah who roars in the Prologue to the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is transformed (on that clue alone) into an unfallen prophet and simultaneously into the Canaanite fertility god, Rimmon, waving his pudendic pomegranate over the whole affair. There is also a rather heavy-handed case made for Copy D of *Milton* as being more optimistic than the other versions—this chiefly on the strength of splashes of yellow paint on the rocky couch of Plate 42 and the robe that Milton holds on Plate 16. In the latter, Wittreich argues, the robe cannot be (as in the other versions) the robe of election which, in accordance with the text, Milton must put off; instead, it must be the robe of redemption (not mentioned in Blake's text) which Milton is putting on. And, as his argument proceeds, Wittreich assumes that we see Milton wearing white, like the throng of saints in the Book of Revelation. But if Milton, as Redeemer, were to be shown wearing white, that would pose a problem for the symbolism of the poem, since one of the chief connotations of the white robe in the Book of Revelation and elsewhere is chastity—exactly the sexual error which Milton in the poem is asked to repudiate. For the aspect of redemption that is sexual freedom only nudity is appropriate—and nude therefore Milton appears in all of the full-page designs. As for Plate 10 of Copy D, so far is Milton from donning his robe

at that point that he is actually treading it underfoot—something that does not happen in the other versions of the design. Hence, the splash of yellow notwithstanding, it can hardly be the robe of redemption, even if such a thing were mentioned in the poem.

There are other local lapses, such as the odd assertion that the collar with which Blake provides Milton in his portrait *Head* “reinforces the posture of radicalism, political and theological,” the collar “being associated with the rebellious soul and defiant imagination”—the authority for this statement being Herbert’s “The Collar”! Here the problem is not simply an outright inversion of the connotations of the word, but an anxiety (which crops up often in the book) not to let the obvious alone but to complicate it with symbolism and paradox, not all of it well fitted.

More serious is the limitation of the methodology of the book—as Wittreich explains it, a methodology of “contexts.” The establishment of the particular context for Blake’s reading of Milton is one of the most interesting problems of scholarship. One can suspect that Blake’s antinomian style is inherited directly from Milton’s more radical contemporaries, Muggletonian, Ranter, or whatever, while admitting that the exact line of continuity still evades the best informed of historians, even apparently E. P. Thompson with the Muggletonian archives in hand. In the circumstances, Wittreich, as literary critic, can afford to side-step that issue and concentrate, as he does, upon an English tradition of prophetic poetry which has Milton and Blake as its chief exponents in their generations.

But to define prophecy as a literary genre is no easy matter, especially if nearly everything that Milton and Blake wrote is to be fitted into the category. Wittreich provides some interesting suggestions: the literary model with its characteristic imagery and its series of sevens is provided by the Book of Revelation; prophecy includes all other genres, including epic, drama, and lyric; it pursues a psychological rather than a narrative continuity. But this is still rather vague. One needs a systematic structural and rhetorical analysis, and this is not provided. We still have no basis for judging whether *Jerusalem* is more or less “prophetic” than *Paradise Lost*, or whether both are equally “prophetic,” despite the wide divergence of artistic method.

To add to the difficulties, Wittreich admits to the discussion many sub-literary materials which, if they are to be helpful at all, require careful discrimination. Prophecy, after all, is notorious for including the trivial along with the momentous, the naively superstitious as well as the boldly original, the utterances of self-delusion and the manipulations of political propaganda as well as the infusions of the Poetic Genius. What do the “prophecies” of Mother Shipton, William Lilly, and a certain “Mr. Truswell” have to do with the prophecies of Milton and Blake—unless it is to show why, long before the publication of *Paradise Lost*, “prophecy” had fallen into well-deserved disrepute, so that Milton and Blake, if they were to consider themselves prophets, faced a serious epistemological, not to mention rhetorical, difficulty? That, one would think, is a relevant part of the prophetic “context,” though in the present book the problem is overlooked.

The failure to discriminate among levels of sophistication in the understanding of prophecy results in some implausible interpretations of the poems. Wittreich argues, for instance, that Blake would have recognized Samson's "rouzing motion" to accompany the Philistine officer and destroy the Philistine temple as a false inspiration, for, "student of prophecy that he was," he knew that "the test employed to determine the credibility of a prophet is whether his inspiration comes at night or noon"! Not only does the attribution to Blake of such a mechanical notion of prophetic validity undermine the case for taking him seriously as a prophet, but the recourse to extraneous prophetic lore overlooks exactly that "context" which the book is pledged to consider. For the immediate context of *Samson Agonistes* is *Paradise Regained*, the climactic moment of Samson's inspiration to tear down the Temple of Dagon being matched in the companion poem by Jesus' inspiration to stand above the Temple of God in Jerusalem to signify its transcendence in the "Temple of his Body." A criterion which is definitive for one of these inspirations could hardly be irrelevant to the other, but are we to think that Blake assumed that Jesus' inspiration also was false because it did not occur at night? The idea is untenable.

Assertion of "context" is misleading again just where the book comes to score its last point. Having discussed *Milton* as a thoroughly revolutionary epic, it asks where, in Blake's context, there was an equally revolutionary theory of epic to match it. And the startling answer proposed is: in William Hayley's *Essay on Epic Poetry*. It would be splendid to see the tables turned, with Hayley, who used to be regarded as the villain of the piece, emerging as intellectual hero and mentor. But the argument doesn't hold. When the precepts of Hayley's *Essay* are presented, they read, as one would expect, like the utterances of late-eighteenth-century aristocratic liberalism, conversant with Whig politics and Hartleian psychology: the epic should take on more sophistication in characterization; there should be more scope for women characters; celestial machinery and allegory should be shorn away in the interests of tightening narrative structure; new mythologies might be introduced; and the epic should champion freedom and republicanism. Hayley's *Essay* is certainly interesting, and it calls for close scrutiny of the way in which Blake was challenged and exasperated by the liberal program to go beyond it to a radical practice. But, whatever the relationship between Hayley's *Essay* and Blake's *Milton*, it is not one of identical outlook, any more than Blake's verse with "variety in every line" is identical with Hayley's heroic couplets. One cannot have it both ways: if *Milton* is Haylean, then it is not revolutionary; or, if revolutionary, then it is not Haylean.

All this is not to disparage the argument of "context"; rather, it is to ask for a more rigorous and systematic application. If, as Wittreich hopes, there is to be a new methodology of "context," then it will need to be fitted up with its own tests for determining different degrees of contextual relevance, and it will need to take account not only of affinities but also of differences which are equally important to meaning. At the present stage, the argument of "context" produces erratic results.

But the good things in *Angel of Apocalypse*—and they are many—come from the operation of context at its closest, that is, from a thorough absorption in

Blake's work and thought. In Wittreich's mind, Blake's innumerable sayings and designs play off against each other to produce coherence, intensity, and amplitude. Wittreich has had the perceptiveness to take seriously Blake's depiction of Milton as his own and Albion's Awakener, and to see this leading idea as illuminating all of Blake's work. It illuminates also Milton's work; for, through Blake's reading of him, one can see clearly Milton's antinomian tendencies carried to their extreme conclusion. Miltonists may well protest that the historical Milton would not have agreed with Blake's diagnosis of his error and achievement, but that is another story. Blake was interested in his own fiction, the Eternal Milton.

A certain risk attaches to assuming definitive interpretation of Blake who may himself appear at any time from Eternity to warn us not to be misled by *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. But, short of that prospect, Wittreich's sympathetic account establishes a perspective on Blake's idea of Milton that deserves to find wide acceptance.

Florence Sandler/*University of Puget Sound*

Poetic Form in Blake's *Milton*

Susan Fox/Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976. Pp. 242; 6 black-and-white illustrations.

It is a sign of the good health of Blake studies that a book like Susan Fox's has come to be written and published. An earlier generation of critics led by Northrop Frye, S. Foster Damon, and David Erdman demonstrated the intellectual integrity of Blake's work, absolving it of the charges of eccentricity, fanaticism, and incoherence. Now Susan Fox has made an important contribution to the task of showing the artistic integrity of Blake's later poems by examining in exhaustive detail the rhetorical and narrative patterns of Blake's penultimate major prophecy, *Milton: A Poem*. It is a book which will not satisfy everyone: it seems designed mainly for internal consumption by Blake specialists, and will do little to convert or persuade outsiders. It has little to recommend it in the way of theoretical sophistication: the method is doggedly formalist, and the paucity of contextual material (either from social history or literary tradition) makes it seem at times almost a parody of what the New Criticism might have done with Blake. The characteristic direction of the commentary is inward, explaining Blake primarily in terms of Blake. Thus, difficult notions from Blake's own system are often transformed into explanatory adjectives for critical discourse ("Beulaic" and "Ulroic"), and questions about this system are referred back to the system itself: Rahab and Tirzah "are 'twofold' or 'Double-sexed' because they are children of Generation and incapable of the threefold marriage of Beulah or of Eden's fourfold mental strife" (p. 84).

But the book does have a number of significant virtues, not the least of which is its very existence as a serious, extended commentary on the form of *Milton*. It will be very difficult for subsequent critics to treat this poem as unexplored