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William Blake's "Fourfold Vision": A Practical Antiquary's Visionary
Contemplations among the "Couches of the Dead"

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This essay argues that the artisanal problems of the "practical antiquary" shaped William Blake's physiological aesthetics and his experience of "fourfold vision." As a draftsman and engraver, Blake captured three-dimensional sepulchral monuments on the flat surface of the page, offering different perspectives on the sculptural object from changing points of view—from above, from the side, in horizontal or vertical orientations. In his time as an apprentice to James Basire, Blake produced drawings of the disinterment of Edward I (1774) and funerary monuments at Westminster for Richard Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments* (1786) and *Vetusta Monumenta* (II, 1789). Building on Abigail Zitin's and Ruth Mack's work on practical aesthetics, I will trace how the technical gaze of the draftsman resurfaces in Blake's writings, from the "couches of the dead" seen through the "eternal gates" of *The Book of Thel* (1789) to the visionary contemplations around the death couches in *The Four Zoas* (ca. 1796–1807) and *Milton* (1804–11). As an engraver-poet who invented a medium for self-publication, Blake sidestepped the division of labor between the empirical field worker and the gentleman author that Noah Heringman finds among the knowledge workers of antiquity. Yet the technical ways of seeing that Blake practiced during his antiquarian apprenticeship can be traced through his visionary contemplations. Thinking through technique, Blake crossed the threshold between engraver and poet and embraced a prophetic physiological aesthetics of "fourfold" vision.

He was employed in making drawings from old buildings and monuments, and occasionally, especially in winter, in engraving from those drawings. This occupation led him to an acquaintance with those neglected works of art, called Gothic monuments. There he found a treasure, which he knew how to value. He saw the simple and plain road to the style of art at which he aimed, unentangled in the intricate windings of modern practice. The monuments of Kings and Queens in Westminster Abbey, which surround the chapel of Edward the Confessor, particularly that of King Henry the Third, the beautiful monument and figure of Queen Elinor, Queen Philippa, King Edward the Third, King Richard the Second and his Queen, were among his first studies.

All of these he drew in every point he could catch, frequently standing on the monument, and viewing the figures from the top. The heads he considered as portraits; and all the ornaments appeared as miracles of art, to his Gothicized imagination.¹

For Benjamin Malkin, William Blake's apprenticeship among the sepulchral monuments of kings and queens in Westminster Abbey provided the foundation for a gothic style that departed from modern practice. The impact of Blake's training can be traced throughout his career. The linear techniques that he learned as an apprentice shaped his approach to bounding lines. His engagement with sepulchral monuments in the 1770s inspired early literary subjects such as *King Edward the Third* and "Fair Elenor" in *Poetical Sketches* (1783).² However, Malkin's account is an intervention in support of Blake's career after 1800: it was published a few months after a prospectus for an imperial quarto edition of Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743) with "twelve very spirited engravings by Louis Schiavonetti from Designs Invented by William Blake," and a preface authored by Malkin, listed as a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.³ This illustrated edition was promoted by H. R. Cromek, who engraved Blake's frontispiece for Malkin's *Memoirs*. Read in this context, Malkin's statement and his connection with the Society of Antiquaries, alongside the Royal Academicians listed among the subscribers, establish the antiquarian and artistic credentials for Blake's new sepulchral inventions, but the impact of Blake's antiquarian training goes much deeper.

Building on recent work on practical aesthetics, bodily knowledge, and artisanal ways of seeing, this essay explores Blake's creative response to the artisanal problem of the "practical antiquary," a term used by Richard Gough to describe the qualities of drawing, "distinguishing and comparing subjects of antiquity" that

characterized another draftsman he employed in the delineation of his *Sepulchral Monuments*, Jacob Schnebbelie.⁴ As an engraver-poet who invented a medium of self-publication, Blake does not fit the social dynamics between practitioner, patron, and author that shaped the sciences of antiquity studied by Noah Heringman, but much is to be gained from rethinking his trajectory from draftsman to author in terms of the knowledge workers employed in field drawing and empirical data gathering, who “reinvented themselves to some degree as authors.”⁵ Blake’s ways of seeing were shaped by his antiquarian apprenticeship and developed into an iconoclastic prophetic vision, which subverted his antiquarian training, its protocols of representation, and its division of labor.

As Blake crossed the threshold between engraver and author, he transcended the technical gaze of the practical antiquary and embraced a prophetic physiological aesthetics of “fourfold vision.” The history of his training surfaces in his writings, from the “Couches of the Dead” seen through the “eternal gates” of *The Book of Thel* (1789) to the late prophetic writings. Blake uses versions of this evocative image (“Couch of Death,” “Couches of the Dead”) numerous times in visionary contemplations around the death couches of Albion, the universal man, in *The Four Zoas*, and of Milton, in the eponymous prophetic work dedicated to the poet’s “second coming.”⁶ These “Couches of the Dead” offer a radical alternative to the monumentalization of kings and queens at Westminster Abbey. The essay concludes with an analysis of how the practical antiquary’s ways of seeing inform Blake’s antiquarian prophetic writing in *Milton*.

PRACTICAL ANTIQUARY

Malkin's account of Blake's apprenticeship to the engraver James Basire between 1772 and 1779 has been used as evidence to attribute to Blake a range of drawings and engravings of sepulchral monuments at Westminster Abbey produced for the Society of Antiquaries. All the monuments mentioned by Malkin, however, are associated with Richard Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments*, published in 1786 and 1796. Their attribution is disputed. Works attributed to Blake also include illustrations to Joseph Ayloffe's *Account of Some Ancient Monuments in Westminster Abbey*, which was read at the Society of Antiquaries on March 12, 1778, published as a pamphlet with engravings in 1780, and then collected in the second volume of *Vetusta Monumenta* in 1789.⁷ Ayloffe referred to the "accurate drawings taken under the inspection of Mr Basire," suggesting the involvement of workshop apprentices.⁸ The fact that these works were signed by Basire was considered "normal workshop practice."⁹ On the basis of the chronology of the engravings in relation to Blake's apprenticeship, Richard Goddard considers it likely that Blake was "responsible for many if not all of the preliminary drawings for the plates for Ayloffe's paper," but attributes to Basire himself the completion of watercolors and plates for Richard Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments* (1786, 1796).¹⁰ However, work on *Sepulchral Monuments* includes drawings from the time of Blake's apprenticeship, some dated 1777, when Blake was still apprenticed to Basire.¹¹ Whatever the extent of Blake's draftsmanship in Westminster Abbey, the experience shaped his ways of seeing.

When the Society of Antiquaries commissioned print reproductions of ancient monuments of Great Britain first as a series (1718–1906), and then gathered into volumes under the Latin title *Vetusta Monumenta*, it was animated by the patriotic aim to "preserve the memory of British things."¹² Repeated observation, measurement, and documentation formed the "patriotic habitus of the antiquary"

engaged in mediating the materiality of the past.¹³ The task of the practical antiquary involved tracing an object from as many sides as necessary to document its form and applying “a recognizable connoisseurial and scholarly idiom.”¹⁴ Disciplining documentary illustration was crucial for antiquarians and practitioners interested in preserving, restoring, or reinventing works of the past.¹⁵ In order to turn antiquarian specimens into objects of empirical study, draftsmen and engravers had to translate the volumetric experience of sculpture in the round onto the flat surface of the page. Specific protocols of description, measurement, and scale governed how multiple partial views should be drawn from different sides in order to offer a comprehensive record of the object and inscribe it within an emerging corpus.¹⁶ Yet despite the emphasis on accurate observation, at least some of the exercises in abstraction required to capture the object could only be carried out through acts of imagination.

Consider the reproductions of the sepulchral monument of “Aveline, first wife of Edmund Crouchback Earl of Lancaster” in the Blake collection at the Society of Antiquaries.¹⁷ One drawing (fig. 1) captures her from above, inscribed in a rectangle filled in with a darker tonality of gray to evoke the tomb slab, outlining and shading her form to suggest her body under the flowing drapery of her dress, her feet resting on dogs, with angels on each side of her head indicating her journey to heaven. Whether she is standing or lying is impossible to tell from the drawing. Whether the beholder looks at her face to face or from a position hovering in midair becomes clearer when we compare this drawing with the side view of Aveline’s sepulchral monument (fig. 2). While the comparison makes clear that making a frontal image of her body requires a bird’s-eye view, the impossible position of the practical antiquary hovering above her is compounded by the requirement of a gaze that can pierce through stone, for the drawing documenting the side view of the tomb includes the

architectural canopy in which her recumbent sculptural form is enshrined. Producing the vision from above, then, requires more than mere observation, given the simplifying work of abstraction involved in taking away the architectural framing that would obstruct the bird's-eye view. What appeared to be a flat slab behind or beneath her in the view from above acquires the volume of a sarcophagus complete with bas-relief detailing in the side view. More explicitly titled "Tomb of Aveline first wife of Edmund Crouchback Earl of Lancaster on the N. side of the Altar Westm.r Abbey," with measurements included underneath, this drawing integrates Aveline in the monumental complex of Westminster Abbey.¹⁸ Dated 1775, signed "Basire," engraved, and published in *Vetusta Monumenta* in 1780, the Aveline drawings reproduce the monument in two dimensions, as does a third capturing isolated ornaments and details from the canopy.¹⁹ Among the plates published in *Vetusta Monumenta* are other cases in which the orientation of drawings shifts from vertical to horizontal views, sometimes to fit more than one engraving on the same page,²⁰ while other monuments also include orthogonal projections to represent depth.

In presenting Blake "frequently standing on the monument," Malkin indicates the physical challenges involved in capturing sculpture on paper. Goddard concedes that "it is difficult to imagine the busy head of an engraving workshop, who was in his mid to late forties at this time, clambering over and around these and the other monuments in Westminster Abbey."²¹ Evidence of such division of labor, including the physical effort required to reach the positions from which to capture discrete views on a sculptural object, can be gleaned from the captions inscribed beneath drawings in Gough's extra-illustrated copy of *Sepulchral Monuments* in the Bodleian Library: the side views are often given spatial coordinates in relation to cardinal points, whereas views from above of the sepulchral monuments of King John and

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Edward the Black Prince are referred to as “birds eye,”²² and the work involved in obtaining them comes through manuscript captions such as John Carter’s “View of the tomb of Bishop Inglethorp (taken by standing on the Statue).”²³ Specifying the bodily experience of the draftsman demonstrates the eye-witnessing practices required to claim the authority of documentary evidence for specimens observed and drawn on the spot.

The positions required by seeing and drawing the monuments, and by leafing through the relevant plates, articulate different takes on the sculptural object. In an essay entitled “Painting and the Graphic Arts,” Walter Benjamin reflects on the orientation of artworks, noting how to look at pictures in contrast to floor mosaics: “A picture wants to be held vertically before the viewer. A floor mosaic lies horizontally at his feet.” Benjamin also differentiates the longitudinal orientation of painting placed on the easel or hanging on the wall from the horizontal position of a drawing or a book on a table.²⁴ The range of antiquarian views of sepulchral monuments reveals the complex negotiations involved in reproducing the orientation of sculptural works on paper. The medium redefines the work’s relationship with the viewer, the draftsman, and the reader. While individual drawings register discrete views, their orientation changes from vertical to horizontal when multiple views of the same object are rearranged and engraved to fit onto the same page, inviting the reader to peruse them at a glance and piece them together as parts of a whole. A further mediation involves the dynamics of leafing through drawings inserted into a bound book. Drawings on small slips of paper pasted one on top of the other on the page require the hand of the reader to lift them in succession and experience the sculpture’s viewing angle change. The layering can work like a flipbook, endowing the discrete views with an illusion of volume and movement. This is what happens in some of the

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Gough drawings. By contrast, when the dynamic handling of drawings pasted as layered scraps is substituted by a series of views of the sculptural object engraved on the same page, the tactile experience of lifting the layers is substituted by the trajectory of the reader's eye piecing together the different views and mentally reconstructing the object's three-dimensional properties so as to emulate on the flat surface of the page the original viewer's experience in three-dimensional space.²⁵

Malkin's comment that "the heads Blake considered as portraits" captures the critical and creative potential of reproduction. Looking at parts isolated from wholes trains the draftsman to see objects through the parameters of different genres. Drawings of Queen Philippa reference sculpture or portraiture depending on whether she is represented by a verticalizing closeup on the face, seen from the side, or through more horizontalizing views on her sepulchral monument seen from above with just the slab it is resting on. Both views abstract her body from its monumental context, unlike the later drawings by Schnebbelie and Carter, which frame the sepulchral monuments within a more comprehensive architectural setting.

Samuel Johnson argued that the mind of the artisan "is crippled and contracted by perpetual application to the same set of ideas."²⁶ What bodily ways of seeing were shaped by mental habits produced by the repeated physical exertion of the mechanical artist? Sam Smiles contrasted the documentary uses of visual evidence published by the Society of Antiquaries to Romantic antiquarianism as an approach that tends to use ruins as prompts to reimagine "a lost whole so that the imagination may recover what history has dispersed."²⁷ Such a distinction suggests a contrast between the reproductive work of the mechanical artisan and liberal artists' approaches to invention, whereas in what follows I reconstruct the physiological aesthetics of the practical antiquary that shapes the visionary techniques of the prophetic artist. While

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the detached observation associated with the emergence of aesthetics as a practice depends on the mind's control over the empirical multiplicity of sensations, the physiological experience of the artisan involves a dynamic apprehension of form shaped by physical effort and movement. Rather than reflecting a defective lack of abstraction, this embodied experience can be interpreted as an example of the expanded perception of the visionary when read through the lens of biblical prophecy and refracted through the ways of seeing of the prophet.

FOURFOLD VISION

In the early 1800s Blake drew on physiological aesthetics and Biblical prophecy to develop his prophetic world of "fourfold vision." What follows explores the hallucinatory possibilities afforded by the aberrations of the eyes, which open up visionary dimensions in the context of prophetic accounts of the multiform body of the supernatural in *Ezekiel* and its reelaboration in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667, 1674). Making sense of such visions and capturing them in artistic form called for the physiological aesthetics and epistemology of the artisan.

The term "fourfold vision" appears in November 1802 in a letter that Blake sent to Thomas Butts in London from the Sussex village of Felpham, where he resided from 1800 to 1803. In this letter, Blake advocates a manifold prophetic experience that frees the artist from the limitations of "single vision & Newtons sleep" (November 22, 1802, E722). Contemporary treatises on vision focused on the ability to harmonize the double image presented by each eye through the convergence of optic axes.²⁸ Blake reverses the process by which "man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (MHH14, E39), just like a beast of burden whose line of sight is kept focused on the goal ahead without lateral

distractions. In his letter to Butts, Blake details an opposite experience of divergent vision in which the contrast between inward and outward eye paves the way to the prophetic world of fourfold vision through the visionary effects of double vision. The appearance of visionary beings might be associated with the physiological experience of the violent stimulus, exertion, irritation, and contraction of the organ of sense. Erasmus Darwin discussed how contemporary science understood these phenomena under the heading of “ocular spectra.”²⁹ In Blake’s poetic invention, “double vision is always with me / with my inward Eye,” when an “old Man gray” appears in a thistle and Los in the Sun:

Then Los appeared in all his power
 In the Sun he appeared descending before
 My face in fierce flames in my double sight
 Twas outward a Sun: inward Los in his might

(E722)

In morphing the Sun into the body of Los, Blake suggests how the fourfold body of biblical prophecy might manifest itself to the senses through an experience of double vision. Los’s appearance as a “terrible flaming Sun” is presented as the prophetic call in Blake’s *Milton* (M 22, E116–17).

The limitations of scientific vision are contrasted to the prophetic experience of Ezekiel. Blake’s identification with Ezekiel is developed in another letter to Butts a few months later in which he compares his coming out of the Felpham period and his prophetic awakening from “three years slumber on the banks of the Ocean” (April 25, 1803, E728) to Ezekiel’s vision on the banks of the river Chebar (Ezek. 1:1).³⁰ David Sten Herrstrom argues that “Ezekiel’s Cherubim vision became the paradigm in Blake’s mind not only for the clarity and unity of vision but for the shape and method

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of his epic prophecy.”³¹ Ezekiel’s vision of the cherubim had informed John Milton’s representation of the son intervening in the war in heaven as a “fourfold-visag’d Foure” in *Paradise Lost*, 6.845.³² In Milton’s poem the fourfold body is mediated by the spiritual form of the son: “one Spirit in them rul’d” (6.848). The prophetic imagination’s visionary power to grasp “the unity of the manifold” harks back to the paradox of incarnation and the theological model of *multeitas*, which Coleridge captured with the term “multeity in unity.”³³ In *Jerusalem* Blake declared the “seven-fold” commingling of bodies as “incomprehensible to the vegetated Mortal Eye’s perverted & single vision” (J 53:11, E202).

In identifying “single vision & Newtons sleep,” Blake compounds the myth of the eternal body’s fall into division with an allegory of disciplinary dismemberment. If the body is dissected, reassembled, and redistributed into distinct parts by categories produced by the protocols of different sciences, the prophetic work of the artist consists in revoking categorical reason and restoring the fourfold dimensions of the eternal man.³⁴ Blake’s antiquarian training offered an analogy through the practice of dissecting a sculptural object into a series of partial views, which disintegrate its individual volume into multiple and shifting appearances of the object. This multiplicity might indicate how to reconcile the multiplicity of fourfold vision with the bidimensional surface of paper in different media.

The reconstructive work of the reader and of the visionary artist involves a contrary way of seeing. Cleansing the doors of perception from the fall into disciplinary divisions requires a physiological exercise that draws on the disarticulations of double vision and the afterimages produced by too much looking at the sun to blur the distinctions between partial views and piece their multiplicity back together, seeing the play of unity in multeity within a continuum of the imagination.

Like Ezekiel's, Blake's task is to join up the "four living creatures" into "the likeness of a man" (Ezek. 1:5, 10).

What visual schemata did artists have to capture such a multiform prophetic body on paper? The academic model of the Vitruvian man multiplies the human figure's limbs to present different poses captured in one view. An antiquarian record of a sculpture might capture the face through left and right profiles as well as a frontal view. In a watercolor representing Ezekiel's vision of the cherubim for Butts, Blake traced three views of a human face seen in profile and frontally attached to one body representing "the likeness of a man" walking forward towards the viewer.³⁵

VISIONARY CONTEMPLATIONS

"The British Antiquities are now in the Artist's hands; all his visionary contemplations, relating to his own country and its ancient glory, when it was as it again shall be, the source of learning and inspiration," Blake stated in the entry for his lost painting *The Ancient Britons* in the *Descriptive Catalogue* of 1809 (E542). Antiquarian research depended on the practical antiquary to document and preserve the remains of antiquity through observation and measurement, and by sketching illustrations to be engraved for publication in reports typically authored by more elite practitioners such as the fellows of the Society of Antiquaries. Blake's words mark the shift from documentation to contemplation as antiquarian subject matter is transferred into the hands of the artist. Instead of the documentary visual record produced by the antiquarian draftsman, Blake's terminology is closer to the conjectural speculation of the historian or the spiritual exercises that might inflame the imagination of the religious enthusiast. How did the method of the practical

antiquary inform the visionary experience of the prophetic artist? What is the method of Blake's "visionary contemplations"?

In his *Catalogue* entry for *The Bard, From Gray*, Blake advocates a practice of painting that is not "confined to the drudgery of facsimile representations of merely mortal and perishing substances." Casting aside the reproductive precision of the practical antiquary and the documentary function of illustration, he claims for painting a "proper sphere of invention and visionary conception" (E541). The trajectory from the practical antiquary to the visionary artist consists in moving beyond what is presented to the "mortal perishing organ of sight" (E541), from single to fourfold vision, from the artisanal protocols of division to the visionary work that enables "every honest man" (E617) to become a prophet.

Blake tested the visionary potential of antiquarian subject matter in a range of writing genres, from texts associated with his exhibition to his illuminated prophecies. For instance, he experimented with the possibilities of ekphrasis in the format of the advertisement and the catalogue entry. In his advertisement to the 1809 exhibition, Blake introduced his painting *The Ancient Britons* by way of a Welsh triad about "the most Beautiful, the most Strong, and the most Ugly" who survived the battle of Camlan (E542), in which the Welsh lost to the Saxons (E526). The text of this triad had been recently published in Welsh in *The Myvyrian Archaiology*, but Blake may have had access to a translation through Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg) or his patron William Owen Pughe, who commissioned the painting.³⁶ This is one of the British antiquities falling in the artist's hands. While the process of visual invention of this lost painting cannot be recovered, comparing the advertisement to the corresponding *Descriptive Catalogue* entry shows how the story of the Welsh triad is adapted from mnemonic verse into the prose text of an exhibition catalogue, in which

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the painting is presented as a specimen for the syncretic myth developed in the artist's forthcoming writings.

Blake's syncretic approach to druidical subject matter builds on William Stukeley's antiquarian work on Stonehenge and patriarchal Christianity, taking up his idea that Adam and Noah were druids and conflating religious and antiquarian narratives of origins.³⁷ While Blake's "visionary contemplations" of druidical subject matter were mediated by reproductions, the path from observation to contemplation and conjecture had also shaped experience in situ. Stukeley's *Stonehenge: A Temple Restor'd to the British Druids* (1740) presents the gap between the visible and the visionary through a shift in ways of seeing. Perambulation gives way to a moment of "exstatic reverie," represented in an illustration entitled *A peep into the Sanctum Sanctorum*, which "populates the miraculously restored stone circles with the figures of two ancient druids," as Katharina Boehm has pointed out.³⁸ No mention of this vision of the site's original inhabitants is recorded in the text. In defining the experience as an "exstatic reverie, which none can describe, and they only can be sensible of, that feel it," Stukeley appeals to the trope of ineffability, inviting readers to form their own mental image. While Stukeley's words guide them in reconstructing the ruin lying "like the haughty carcass of *Goliath*," so that they "fancy intire quarries mounted up into the air,"³⁹ the vision of the original inhabitants identifies the limits of Stukeley's antiquarian approach: it is seen, but not written about.

By contrast, the visionary experience of the ancient Britons is central to Blake's writing. In the twelve-page *Catalogue* entry for the painting, he took the Welsh triads as a point of departure for his syncretic myth about an original fourfold man:

The Strong Man represents the human sublime. The Beautiful man represents the human pathetic, which was in the wars of Eden divided into male and female. The Ugly man represents the human reason. They were originally one man, who was fourfold; he was self-divided, and his real humanity slain on the stems of generation, and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God. How he became divided is a subject of great sublimity and pathos. The Artist has written it under inspiration, and will, if God please, publish it (E543).

Blake's *Catalogue* entry becomes a blurb for a "voluminous" forthcoming work that "contains the ancient history of Britain, and the world of Satan and Adam" (E543). In Blake's "visionary contemplations" the ancient Britons take on the apocalyptic features of the great living beasts of Ezekiel's fourfold vision of the Merkabah, and their bodies are transfigured into the multiform collective body of the human form divine.

While Stukeley kept vision separate from writing, Blake wove his prophetic writing around representations of druidic stones in his illuminated book *Milton*, dated 1804, but etched in 1810–11 and again in 1818, in which the poet John Milton returns to restore Jerusalem on earth. The poem's prophetic geography extending "from Golgonooza to spiritual fourfold London eternal" was inscribed above an illustration of a druidic stone (trilithon) meant to exemplify the "stony Druid Temples" built on Jerusalem's ruins, marking the fallen state spreading from "Albions ancient Druid rocky shore" (M 6:20, E100). The artist's "visionary contemplations" populate images of Druidic stones inspired by reproductions of Stonehenge and other stone circles with his prophetic human creation story: "Three Classes are Created by the Hammer of Los & Woven by Enitharmons' Looms" (M 2:26, E96). In the mid- to late 1810s, Blake added to his account of fourfold human nature within the poem's druidical subject

matter.⁴⁰ The separation of the sexes occurs in the “looms of generation” (M 3: 28–36, 38, E97), where their “sexual texture” is woven in the Mundane Shell: “The Sexual is Threefold: the Human fourfold” (M 4:4–5, E97), “threefold in Head & Heart & Reins,” corresponding to “three Gates into the Three Heavens in Beulah which shine Translucent in their Foreheads & their Bosoms & their Loins” (M 5: 6–8, E98). The limitation of the senses is detailed in a plate only added to copy D, in which “The Daughters of Albion among the Rocks of the Druids” lament man “shut in narrow doleful form / . . . / The Eye of Man a little narrow orb closd up & dark, / scarcely beholding the great light conversing with the Void” (M 5:19, 22–23, E99).⁴¹ The illustration at the bottom of the plate presents a rural scene of sacrifice marked by druidic stones on a hill in the background, but the text situates this scene in an apocalyptic London located between Blake’s home in “South Molton Street & Stratford Place: Calvarys foot” (M 4:21, E98). The sacrifice is performed by the Cherubim; “their inmost palaces / resounded with preparations . . . mocking Druidical Mathematical / Proportion of Length Bredth Highth / Displaying Naked Beauty” (M 4: 27–28, E98). These coordinates are rounded up when “Mathematical Proportion was subdued by Living proportion” (M 5:44, E99) in a powerful visionary critique of the antiquarian focus on measurement characteristic of Stukeley’s reconstruction of *Stonehenge* and of Blake’s antiquarian training.⁴²

THE COUCHES OF THE DEAD

The sepulchral subject matter of the Couches of the Dead was a key ground for Blake’s experiments in technique. Working on the visual translation of literary sources, from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* to Robert Blair’s *The Grave*, he explored how to open up the spatiotemporal constraints of word and image. He returned to the

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Couches of the Dead as an engraver-poet, testing the possibilities of prophetic writing to translate the experience of the recumbent form in the round, integrating the range of changing points of view required to capture it on paper through narrative devices. Although his writing is far apart from the descriptive documentary protocols shaping antiquarian print culture, his approach to the textures of the Couches of the Dead revisits explorations of the decaying materiality of bodies exhumed by the Society of Antiquaries (discussed in detail below). The perceptual discipline of the practitioner supports his vertiginous use of perspective: his alternating views on the Couches of the Dead can be read as a prophetic transfiguration of the experience of the practical antiquary moving around and capturing different aspects of the object, revisited through different formats of visionary contemplation.

Blake's visual experiments on the Couches of the Dead stretched visual formats and techniques so as to capture different moments in time. In the mid-1790s Blake produced variations of "The House of Death" from the vision of the Lazar-House in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (9. 477-93). Where Milton brought the scene before the eyes of the reader by cramming his lines with a catalogue of illnesses and symptoms, Blake shunned Milton's overcrowded enumeration and focused instead on the pain of three recumbent figures, using a printing technique that could register changes in the stages of dying. Monoprinting involves blotting areas of color "printed from matrixes with fixed and thus reprintable outlines," then finishing in ink and watercolor. Each copy is unique because of the "extensive improvisation . . . involved in applying colors to the matrix, printing them, and finishing the impressions."⁴³ Through ink and watercolor interventions, the apparently static recumbent scene became more dynamic as each impression manifested different details of physical pain expressed through the contortions of muscles, the agony of an open mouth, a face

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turning, or an extended hand, as if capturing the experience of those dying of the plague in different points of time.⁴⁴

The format of the series offered an alternative approach to visual narrative in Blake's illustrations to Robert Blair's *The Grave*. Among Blake's twenty watercolors, the composition that is closest to the recumbent forms of the sepulchral monuments that Blake worked on during his apprenticeship is the gothic mise-en-scène of *The Counsellor, King, Warrior, Mother & Child, in the Tomb* (fig. 3). Robert Essick and Morton Paley associate the heads of the counselor and the king with the effigies of Edward III and Henry III, and conclude that the scene was inspired not by "Blair's poem, but Blake's time-improved memories of those days spent among the wonders of the Abbey."⁴⁵ Blake's juxtaposition of figures representing different walks of life shows how he adapted the visual schemata of the sepulchral monuments to represent a more inclusive social vision. In his deathbed scenes the use of watercolors departs from the static recumbent forms monumentalized in marble to evoke the ethereal form of the soul leaving the recumbent body of the Strong Wicked Man and the Good Old Man.⁴⁶

But Blake's visionary contemplations around the Couches of the Dead take on apocalyptic agency in his illuminated prophecies. The plot of *Milton* reverses the vertical aspiration of deathbed scenes in which the soul is captured departing from the body, following the model of the resurrection. When Milton says "Tarry no longer; for my soul lies at the gates of Death" (M 14:19, E108), he is ready to cross a threshold back to life, rather than toward eternity, adopting a route associated with the classical journey to the world of the dead, Christ's harrowing of hell, and Dante's *Commedia*. Milton's death couch is a focal point for his descent: "Eternity shudder'd / for he took the outside course, among the graves of the dead" (M 14:34, E108). Later, *Modern Philology*, 120, no. 1 (August 2022), 1-25.

Blake maps alternative inner routes for sleeping Humanity turning on its couch through the gates opening “in brain and heart and loins” (M 20:38, E114). Laura Quinney sees the inward route as evidence of Blake’s Plotinian internal dilation, a form of introspection toward the expanding center of divine vision.⁴⁷ The way of seeing mobilized by such theological anatomy corresponds to the perceptual discipline of the practical antiquary.

Crystal B. Lake has analyzed antiquarian approaches to the “vexed materialities” of sovereign power in the Society of Antiquaries’s exhumation and investigation of the disinterred bodies of Edward I in 1774, Edward IV in 1789, King John in 1797, and Charles I in 1813.⁴⁸ The first of these exhumations took place when Blake was apprenticed to Basire. Of the two designs documenting the opening of Edward I’s tomb in the Collegiate Church of Saint Peter at Westminster attributed to Blake at the Society of Antiquaries, the rough sketch must be the one that Gough himself drew on the spot, given he had not arranged the presence of engravers.⁴⁹ While this initial image is flat, the volumes of the king’s body are fleshed out in the more finished drawings that were probably completed on the basis of the paper read by Ayloffe to the Society in 1774. Lake notes the stages of Ayloffe’s description, starting from its architectural setting, proceeding to the opening of the tomb, perusing the body from the outer layer of the sudarium to the cerecloth beneath it, then probing the body’s texture through touch, the whole cross-referenced with historical sources and speculations about rituals and practices of preservation.⁵⁰ However, the later report on the exhumation of King John proceeded in the opposite direction, from the body outward to the coffin.⁵¹ Imagining the body from within its outer shell was a form of virtual habitation practiced by antiquarians unwilling to lift the sudarium and cerecloth enveloping the dead.

Such a way of seeing applies a thought experiment recommended by William Hogarth's *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753), which Abigail Zitin takes as a "mental discipline of formal abstraction" at the heart of artisanal aesthetics.⁵² Hogarth invites the artist to imagine a surface "as from a center, view the whole form within, and mark the opposite corresponding parts so strongly, as to retain the idea of the whole, and make us masters of the meaning of every view of the object, as we walk around it, and view it from without."⁵³ Antiquarian investigations dissected artifacts by recording each of the steps identified in Hogarth's exercise. How might such different aspects of the object be translated into prophetic narrative?

Blake's writing follows Milton's descent into his death couch from multiple points of view, encouraging the reader to take up the viewing positions of the practical antiquary. The work of the draftsman involved recording each view in a discrete drawing. Once traced on paper, the horizontal form of the sleep of death seen through a bird's-eye view from above might acquire a vertical orientation when the drawing is held up or hung. As Lessing argued, drawing places bodies one beside the other in space, while writing develops actions through time. As an engraver-poet, Blake uses both visual and verbal techniques of composition in his writing. To make sense of multiple views and bodies in the prophetic world of the illuminated book, he distributes to different prophetic agents the discrete views that the practical antiquary would need to capture from different positions: the view of Milton's death couch from within is mediated by "the Seven Angels of the Presence," the view from above is enjoyed by "those who dwell in immortality." Blake's language also operates in the opposite way, unifying visionary multiteity by means of analogies and similes, which associate the experience of what might appear as different selves with different states

of animation of the same being. These analogies convey the difference between form and sensation:

As when a man dreams, he reflects not that his body sleeps,
 Else he would wake; so seem'd he entering his Shadow: but
 With him the Spirits of the Seven Angels of the Presence
 Entering; they gave him still perceptions of his Sleeping Body:
 Which now arose and walk'd with them in Eden, as an Eighth
 Image Divine tho' darken'd; and tho walking as one walks
 In sleep; and the Seven comforted and supported him.
 Like as a Polypus that vegetates beneath the deep!
 They saw his Shadow vegetated underneath the Couch
 Of death: for when he enterd into his Shadow: Himself:
 His real and immortal Self: was as appeard to those
 Who dwell in immortality, as One sleeping on a couch
 Of gold; and those in immortality gave forth their Emanations
 Like Females of sweet beauty, to guard round him & to feed
 His lips with food of Eden in his cold and dim repose!
 But to himself he seemd a wanderer lost in dreary night.

(M 15[17]: 1–16, E109)

The visionary contemplation around Milton's Couch of Death produces a form of virtual habitation and animation of the poet's body. The Hogarthian exercise that prompts the artist to imagine the volume of a body from within is mediated by the gift of sensation imparted by the "Spirits of the Seven Angels of the Presence." The analogy between death and sleep supports the double manifestation of the poet's

horizontal dead body and his animation from the sleep of death. Blake's syntax links together the multiple selves in which Milton's manifestation is refracted: the shadow, the real and immortal self, the sleeper, the lost wanderer. While the repetition of the same agent performing different actions within the same composition or distributed across different scenes in a series is a familiar trope of visual narrative, Blake's writing explains such multiple views of the same agent through a comparison with the simultaneous double agency of the sleeper lying in bed and acting in a dream, or sleepwalking.

The distinction between single and fourfold vision defines boundaries of perception marked by thresholds between different states: after the first multiperspectival view on Milton's Couch of Death, Blake explains how the traveler going through eternity, passing through the vortex, perceives the world "roll backward behind / his path, into a globe itself infolding," then sees from multiple sides the earth as "one infinite plane," the "rising sun & setting moon," and the earth encompassed all round (M 15[17]: 22–35, E109). Later in the poem, the limits of perception in the world of generation are marked by the figure of the polypus (M 35[39]:20–25, E135). This threshold form defines Milton's descent into his vegetated body: "Like as a Polypus that vegetates beneath the deep! / They saw his Shadow vegetated underneath the Couch / Of death" (M 15[17]: 8–10, E109). In Buffon's *Natural History* (1749–88) the polypus marked "the line where the animal creation ends and that of the plants begins." This point of transition bridges the difference between animal and vegetable kingdom: "Nature descends, by degrees, imperceptibly from an animal, which is the most perfect, to that which is the least, and from the latter to the vegetable."⁵⁴ In comparing Milton's vegetated body to a polypus, Blake recycled lines he had written about Albion lying on the rock surrounded by "the sea of

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Time & Space" in *The Four Zoas*.⁵⁵ The marine context in which Blake compared man to "a Polypus that vegetates beneath the Sea" (FZ 4:265–8, E337) is transferred to "the deep" beneath Milton's Couch of Death, where the vegetating body can be imagined through the decaying corpses analysed in antiquarian exhumations. The association with the grave makes sense since the polypus was classified among worms in the Linnaean system.⁵⁶ Blake's analogy brings out the polypus's symbolic potential in the cycle of death, decay, and regeneration.⁵⁷ In *Milton*, the polypus acts as a two-way threshold between different ways of seeing Golgonooza, "the spiritual fourfold London eternal" (M 6:1, E99):

For Golgonooza cannot be seen till having passd the Polypus
It is viewed on all sides round by a Four-fold Vision
Or till you become Mortal & Vegetable in Sexuality
Then you behold its mighty Spires & Domes of ivory & gold

(M 35[39]: 22–25, E135)

While prophetic vision sees it fourfold from all sides, from the material world of division it appears as an architectural cityscape that recalls the heavenly Jerusalem.

Lake notes the "empiricist tenor" of Ayloffe's description of the body of Edward I, which keeps the matter of the king's body inert by careful use of the passive voice.⁵⁸ By contrast, Blake's prophetic mode embraces the apocalyptic possibilities of reanimation. The supernatural agency of the Seven Angels of the Presence, looking after Milton like mourners, endows him with perceptions of his sleeping body as he rises and walks with them, adapting a scene from Revelation (Rev. 8:2–6). While the division of labor assigns to the apprentice draftsman the fatigue of scrambling on top of the sculpture to sketch the bird's-eye view from above, in the prophecy that position belongs to "those who dwell in immortality,"

who can see him “as One sleeping on a couch / of Gold” (M 15[17]: 11:13, E109). Where other practical antiquaries made the transition from draftsman to author by publishing series of prints and associated letterpress, including treatises or excerpts from relevant antiquarian correspondence, Blake claims the visionary position of the prophet. In mastering “the bounding line and its infinite inflexion and movements” (E550), the artist’s tools pierce through surfaces and reveal the infinite that was hidden. While the tool used for the illuminated book was an etching needle rather than a graver, an allegory of making might also be shadowed in references to Milton’s grave.⁵⁹

In entering “his Shadow vegetated underneath the Couch / Of death,” Milton’s “vegetated body” evokes the consistency and wasting decay of the physical remains of kings brought into view by the exhumations performed by the Society of Antiquaries. The most immediate precedent for Blake’s engagement with Milton’s death couch certainly was the disinterment and desecration of the poet’s grave in 1790, when hair and teeth were taken out and sold as reliques. William Cowper wrote about it in “Stanzas on the late indecent Liberties taken with the Remains of the great Milton,” which was published in the edition of his posthumous works edited by William Hayley in 1803 with engravings by Blake.⁶⁰ Blake’s work on Cowper’s Milton and Cowper’s collected works was part of a push to raise a subscription “to erect a Monument to the Memory of Cowper in St Pauls or Westminster Abbey.”⁶¹ However, the solemn tone of Blake’s prophetic engagement with the poet’s dead body is far apart from the actual episode of desecration. The “vegetated shadow” under Milton’s Couch of Death activates Blake’s recurrent engagement with the “vegetated body” in the late prophetic writings, from the need for weaving a material body in

which the specters might repose before the awakening of the dead in *The Four Zoas* to the work of the anatomist/sculptor Antamon in *Milton*.⁶²

Blake's radical antiquarian counterculture comes into its own through a different kind of visionary contemplation among the Couches of the Dead, the prophetic conversation, a genre that Blake had experimented with in the memorable fancies of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel join the poet for conversation over dinner (E38–39). Writing about *The Ancient Britons* in the *Descriptive Catalogue*, Blake advocates the supernatural vision required to animate the Couches of the Dead in visionary conversation: "Happy is he who can see and converse with them above the shadows of generation and death" (E543). This prophetic possibility is realized in a plate added to copies C and D of *Milton*, where Milton sits up on his Couch of Death in visionary conversation with Hillel/Satan and the Seven Angels of the Presence. While in the *Descriptive Catalogue* the narrative of division from the human form divine is presented as a syncretic universal myth, here it is voiced in the first person by the Angels of the Presence reacting to Milton's account of his need to turn his back on "these Heavens builded on cruelty," repudiating the plot of his specter following his emanation. Their response follows: "We were the Angels of the Divine Presence: & were Druids in Annandale / compell'd to combine into Form by Satan, the Spectre of Albion / who made himself a God & destroyed the Human Form Divine" (M 32[35]:1–13, E131). Their account of division is explained by hierarchical usurpation, the desire to take up the position of God, which subverted the sovereignty of the human form divine, a "combination of individuals ... combined in Freedom & holy Brotherhood" (M 32[35]:10 and 15, E131). Blake's visionary conversation among the Couches of the

Dead repudiates the ideology of kingship embodied in the monumental tombs of kings in Westminster Abbey, which Blake had sketched when he was apprenticed to Basire.

Antiquarian enquiries could be used to test genealogical claims to power, but could also inform a countercultural critique of the politics of monumental forms. In contrast to the genealogical claims to Britain's monarchical body politic made by the sepulchral monuments in Westminster Abbey, the Seven Angels of the Presence, whom Milton joins as an eighth one, offer a conjectural history in which monarchy by divine right is held responsible for the fall into division that resulted from Satan raising himself above the "holy Brotherhood" of the "Human Form Divine."

Thus they converse with the Dead watching round the Couch of Death.
For God himself enters Death's Door always with those that enter
And lays down in the Grave with them, in Visions of Eternity
Till they awake & see Jesus & the Linen Clothes lying
That the Females had Woven for them, & the Gates of their Fathers
House

(M 32[35]:39-43, E132)

Blake's visionary conversation animates the figures lying in the Couches of the Dead to speak out a form of radical sovereignty that works against the monumentalization of kings and queens that had shaped his antiquarian training. As Blake concludes the scene, he adds evidence of divine assent by indicating that their visionary conversations take place in the company of God, whose presence sanctions the universal brotherhood of the human form divine.

Blake's contemplations among the Couches of the Dead bridge the generic and disciplinary boundaries between the antiquarian, the draftsman, and the poet.

Blake shares his subject matter with a body of sepulchral literature, from Robert

Blair's *The Grave* and Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742–45) to James Hervey's *Meditations and Contemplations* (1748), all of which he illustrated. But his inventions stand out as prophetic experiments shaped by the physiological aesthetics of the artisan and the ways of seeing of the practical antiquary, the engraver, and the illustrator. The engraver's visionary contemplations take shape in the act of etching prophetic writing around antiquarian objects such as the stones of the druids abstracted from their original antiquarian context and transposed into a prophetic "fourfold London eternal." Blake's poetic practice generates a prophetic structure in which prophetic characters experience the multiple perspectives produced by the practical antiquary taking in the Couches of the Dead from different angles and framing them into a series of discrete views. The eternal enjoys the practical antiquary's bird's-eye view from above, while the experiment in virtual habitation that enables him to see the dead from within is transferred to the consciousness of the dead man himself, simultaneously lying horizontally, standing, and seeing himself walking. Such a vertiginous act of splitting into multiplied selves becomes more comprehensible when it is compared to the narrative tools of the artist. Imagine representing the action around Milton's death couch as a polyscenic narrative, a device that dissects the continuum of an action into scenes that capture its subsequent moments in time. Multiply the figure of the agent and place, so that each is shown in one of its isolated moments in time; then you see the composition as a series of bodies simultaneously placed one beside the other in space. This visual approach to composition lies behind Blake's contemplations and inventions around Milton's death couch. The problem of the engraver-poet consists in bringing this vertiginous experience home to the literary-minded reader through the use of genre, metaphor, comparison, and literary analogy. In relief etching Blake celebrates a method that can

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unify the painter and the poet. His experience as a practical antiquary resurfaces in visionary contemplations across visual and verbal media, demonstrating how the methods of composition of the engraver-poet shape his thinking through technique.

¹ Benjamin Heath Malkin, *A Father's Memoirs of His Child* (London, 1806), quoted in Michael Phillips, *William Blake: Apprentice and Master* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2014), 39. After Blake died, Thomas Stothard praised his “remarkably correct and fine drawing of the head of Queen Philippa, from her monumental effigy in Westminster Abbey, for Gough’s Sepulchral Monuments, engraved by Basire” (J. T. Smith, *Nollekens and His Times*, 2 vols. [London, 1828], 2:471).

² Mark Crosby, “William Blake in Westminster Abbey, 1774–1777,” *Bodleian Library Record* 22, no. 2 (October 2009): 173–78.

³ The prospectus is dated November 1805. See British Museum, Add. MSS 33,397, fol. 144, reproduced in G. E. Bentley, “The Promotion of Blake’s *Grave Designs*,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (April 1962): 345–48; and Susan Matthews, “Blake’s Malkin,” in *Re-envisioning Blake*, ed. Mark Crosby, Troy Patenaude, and Angus Whitehead (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 115–16.

⁴ Richard Gough, *Sepulchral Monuments in Great Britain* [. . .], 2 vols. (London, 1786–96), 2:9; see also “Biographical Memoirs of Mr Gough,” *Gentleman’s Magazine* 79, no.1 (1809), 195–97 and 317–22. On Schnebbelie as “practical antiquary,” see Noah Heringman, *Sciences of Antiquity: Romantic Antiquarianism, Natural History, and Knowledge Work* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 238–80.

⁵ Heringman, *Sciences of Antiquity*, 6, 13–14, 16.

⁶ William Blake, *The Book of Thel* (1789), plate 6, lines 1–4, in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David Erdman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 6. Blake’s poems are cited parenthetically hereafter using the *Modern Philology*, 120, no. 1 (August 2022), 1–25.

conventional form (T 6: 1–4, E6). Blake's first use of the term "The Couch of Death" appears in *Poetical Sketches* (1783), E441–42. For apocalyptic uses of the term in the late prophetic works, see *The Four Zoas*, Night II, 23:1, E313, and Night VIII, 99: 12, E372; and *Milton* 15[17]: 9–10, E109; 20: 44, E113; and 32: 8, 39, E131–32.

⁷ This includes engravings published between 1748 and 1789; see also the copy of *Sepulchral Monuments*, extra-illustrated by the author, with his MS. additions and corrections. Imperf. With drawings for the plates, additional drawings, proof pages of plates and letterpress, and correspondence connected with the work, Bodleian Library, Gough Maps 225, fol. 133 ("Bird's eye view of Aveline's monument" engraved, but not signed; pen drawing of the front of the monument signed "Basire. Del," with a pen caption below the frame in different ink and larger hand).

⁸ Joseph Ayloffe, *An Account of Some Ancient Monuments in Westminster Abbey... read at the Society of Antiquaries March 12, 1778* (London, 1780), 4.

⁹ Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 2 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 1:13.

¹⁰ Richard Goddard, *"Drawing on Copper": The Basire Family of Copper-Plate Engravers and Their Works* (Universitaire Pers Maastricht, 2017), 151–53. See also Butlin, *Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 2:14; Crosby, "William Blake in Westminster Abbey"; Robin Hamlyn and Michael Phillips, *William Blake* (London: Tate, 2000), 38–41; and Phillips, *Blake: Apprentice and Master*, 42–44.

¹¹ Gough Maps 225, fol. 155. Analysis of the range of signatures might identify different apprentices or date some of the undated drawings. The signatures under the oval portraits correspond to the 1770s signatures under the drawings at the Society of Antiquaries. Side and top views of the monument to Queen Philippa are signed B.d (Gough Maps 225, fol.189 and 190), as are the bird's-eye view of Richard II and his *Modern Philology*, 120, no. 1 (August 2022), 1-25.

queen (Gough Maps 225, fol.211) and the side view of their monument (Gough Maps 225, fol.215). Compare ink and signature style of the Blake drawings in the Society of Antiquaries. The drawing of Edward III (Gough Maps 225, fol.204) is unsigned.

¹² Thus indicates the title page: *Vetusta Monumenta: Quae ad rerum Britannicarum memoriam conservandam societas antiquariorum londini sumptu suo edenda curavit* (1747). The formula adds the adjective “British” to the agenda to “preserve the memory of things” advocated by William Stukeley, first secretary of the Society of Antiquaries, in *Itinerarium curiosum* (London, 1724), 3, quoted in Martin Myrone, “The Society of Antiquaries and the Graphic Arts: George Vertue and His Legacy,” in *Visions of Antiquity: The Society of Antiquaries of London, 1707–2007*, ed. Susan Pearce (London: Society of Antiquaries, 2007), 102.

¹³ Katharina Boehm and Victoria Mills, “Introduction: Mediating the Materiality of the Past, 1700–1930,” *Word and Image* 33, no. 3 (2017): 237.

¹⁴ Noah Heringman, “*Vetusta Monumenta*, an Introduction,” *Vetusta Monumenta: Ancient Monuments*, a Digital Edition, <http://vetustamonumenta.org>.

¹⁵ On the evolution of visual paradigms of description, see Sam Smiles, *Eye Witness: Artists and Visual Documentation in Britain, 1770–1830* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

¹⁶ Susan Pearce, “Antiquaries and the Interpretation of Ancient Objects, 1770–1820,” in Pearce, *Visions of Antiquity*, 153.

¹⁷ Society of Antiquaries, London, shelf mark 236D.

¹⁸ *Vetusta Monumenta*, vol. 2 (1789), plate 29. See Bernard Nurse, “Three Monuments in Westminster Abbey,” plates 2.29–2.35, *Vetusta Monumenta: Ancient Monuments*, a Digital Edition.

¹⁹ *Vetusta Monumenta*, vol. 2 (1789), plates 29–31.

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²⁰ See, e.g., *Vetusta Monumenta*, vol. 1 (London, 1780), 36 and 49, and vol. 2, 7 and 15, reproduced in *Vetusta Monumenta: Ancient Monuments, a Digital Edition*.

²¹ Goddard, "Drawing on Copper," 149.

²² "Birds eye view of the statue of King John on his tomb, before the high altar of Worcester Cathedral. Taken 1784. (The holes or hollows on the crown, collar, gloves, belt, cuffs, & sword, are were jewels were formerly enlaid. –)," Gough Maps 225, fol.92; "Birds eye view of Edward the Black Prince. Canterbury," Gough Maps 225, fol.164.

²³ Gough Maps 225, fol.123.

²⁴ Walter Benjamin, "Painting and Graphic Arts" (1917), in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008), 219.

²⁵ For an example of different views of a sculptural object engraved on the same page, see T. Cook after John Carter, *Two Monuments of Bishops in Rochester Cathedral* (Lawrence de St Martin 1274, Thomas de Inglethorpe 1291), Gough Maps 225, fol.124.

²⁶ *Rambler*, no. 173 (November 12, 1751).

²⁷ Sam Smiles, "British Antiquity and Antiquarian Illustration," in *Producing the Past: Aspects of Antiquarian Culture and Practice, 1700–1850*, ed. Martin Myrone and Lucy Peltz (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 58.

²⁸ Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, 1765), 226–32, 242, 258; William Charles Welles, *An Essay upon Single Vision with Two Eyes* [. . .] (London, 1792); George Adams, *An Essay on Vision* [. . .] (London, 1792). See also Sibylle Erle, "Shadows in the Cave: *Modern Philology*, 120, no. 1 (August 2022), 1-25.

Refocusing Vision in Blake's Creation Myth," in *Blake and Conflict*, ed. Sarah Haggarty and Jon Mee (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 144–63.

²⁹ Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia, or The Laws of Organic Life*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1796), 1:62, 70, 538–70.

³⁰ Blake's embattled sense as a biblical prophet identified with Ezekiel also comes through another letter to Butts on July 6, 1803, E730. For a Jungian interpretation of the fourfold in Blake, see Ross Greig Woodman, "Blake's Fourfold Body," *Sanity, Madness, Transformation: The Psyche in Romanticism* (University of Toronto Press, 2005), 86–109.

³¹ David Sten Herrstrom, "Blake's Transformations of Ezekiel's Cherubim Vision in *Jerusalem*," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (Fall 1981): 64–77,

<https://bq.blakearchive.org/pdfs/15.2.herrstrom.pdf>

³² John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 6.845 (London, 1674), *Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flanagan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 533-4.

³³ See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols. (Princeton University Press, 1983), 2:256, 1:187, and *Shorter Works and Fragments*, ed. H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson, 2 vols. (Princeton University Press, 1995), 1:510, where Coleridge acknowledges reliance on the Scholastic concept of *multeitas*.

³⁴ See George Berkeley, *Siris* (Dublin, 1744), 217: "Aristotle maketh a threefold distinction of objects according to the three speculative sciences. Physics he supposeth to be conversant about such things as have a principle of motion in themselves, mathematics about things permanent but not abstracted, and theology about being abstracted and immoveable, which distinction may be seen in the ninth book of his metaphysics." Around 1820 Blake commented, "God is not a *Modern Philology*, 120, no. 1 (August 2022), 1-25.

Mathematical Diagram,” see Blake’s annotations to George Berkeley’s *Siris* (1744), 217, now in Trinity College Library, Cambridge, transcribed in E664.

³⁵ William Blake, *The Whirlwind: Ezekiel’s Vision of the Cherubim and Eyed Wheels* (ca. 1803–5), Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 90.108, reproduced in Butlin, *Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 2:468; see Ezek. 1:4–15.

³⁶ Arthur Johnston, “William Blake and ‘The Ancient Britons,’” *National Library of Wales Journal* 22, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 304–20; G. E. Bentley Jr., “‘The Triumph of Owen’: William Owen Pughe and Blake’s ‘Ancient Britons,’” *National Library of Wales Journal* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1985): 248–61; Jason Whittaker, *William Blake and the Myths of Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 12–14, 106–11. Jon Mee argues that Blake is likely to have been aware of the triads when Iolo was showing them to publishers, including Joseph Johnson, the likely point of mediation in Autumn 1793: see “‘Images of Truth New Born’: Iolo, William Blake, and the Literary Radicalism of the 1790s,” in *A Rattleskull Genius: The Many Faces of Iolo Morganwg*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins (University of Wales Press, 2005), 173–93.

³⁷ Noah Heringman, “Antiquarianism,” in *William Blake in Context*, ed. by Sarah Haggarty (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 251.

³⁸ See William Stukeley, *Stonehenge: A Temple Restor’d to the British Druids* (London, 1740), 12, quoted in Katharina Boehm, “Empiricism, Antiquarian Fieldwork and the (In)Visibilization of the Past in the Early Eighteenth Century,” *Word and Image* 33, no. 3 (2017): 263–64.

³⁹ Stukeley, *Stonehenge*, 12.

⁴⁰ On the history of its composition, see Joseph Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 315–29.

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⁴¹ William Blake, *Milton*, copy D, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, PR4144.M6 1815, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. On copies C and D, see Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book*, 325–29.

⁴² Whittaker, *William Blake and the Myths of Britain*, 157.

⁴³ Joseph Viscomi, "On Not Reading William Blake's Large Color Prints," *Wordsworth Circle* 49, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 3.

⁴⁴ William Blake, "The House of Death Milton," Tate, N05060, sent to Thomas Butts in July 1805, Butlin 320; British Museum, 1885,0509.1616, Butlin 321; Fitzwilliam Museum, PDP, 1769, Butlin 322. This is an example of visionary dating. On the basis of the 1804 watermark on the Tate monoprint *Newton*, Martin Butlin established that some of the color prints were printed in the mid-1800s ("The Physicality of William Blake: The Large Color Prints of '1795,'" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 52, no. 1 [Winter 1989]: 6–8. Based on signatures, Joseph Viscomi assigned all three versions of "The House of Death" to 1795–96; see his "Signing Large Color Prints: The Significance of Blake's Signatures," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (Autumn 2017): 378.

⁴⁵ Robert N. Essick and Morton D. Paley, *Robert Blair's "The Grave" Illustrated by William Blake: A Study with Facsimile* (London: Scolar Press, 1982), 59; Gough Maps 225, fols. 204 and 117.

⁴⁶ *The Grave, A Poem. Illustrated by twelve Etchings Executed by Louis Schiavonetti, from the Original Inventions of William Blake* (London, 1808), facing 11, 12, 16, 31.

⁴⁷ Laura Quinney, "Milton: The Guarded Gates," *William Blake on Self and Soul* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 126–27.

⁴⁸ Crystal B. Lake, *Artifacts: How We Think and Write about Found Objects* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), 165. *Modern Philology*, 120, no. 1 (August 2022), 1-25.

⁴⁹ Richard Gough to Thomas Pennant, May 11, 1784, quoted in Nurse, "Plates 2.29–2.35: Three Monuments in Westminster Abbey."

⁵⁰ Joseph Ayloffe, "An Account of the Body of King Edward the first, as it appeared on opening his Tomb in the year 1774. By Sir Joseph Ayloffe, ... Read at the Society of Antiquaries, May 12, 1774. Printed in the year, 1775," published as an autonomous pamphlet, and also in *Archaeologia* 3 (1775): 376–413; Lake, *Artifacts*, 166–71.

⁵¹ Lake, *Artifacts*, 180–81.

⁵² Abigail Zitin, "Thinking Like an Artist: Hogarth, Diderot, and the Aesthetics of Technique," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46, no. 4 (Summer 2013): 556; on Hogarth's thought experiment, see also Ruth Mack, "Hogarth's Practical Aesthetics," in *Mind, Body, Motion, Matter: Eighteenth-Century British and French Literary Perspectives*, ed. Mary Helen McMurrin and Alison Conway (University of Toronto Press, 2016), 28.

⁵³ William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, ed. Ronald Paulson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 21.

⁵⁴ Joseph Fletcher, "Ocean Growing: Blake's Two Versions of *Newton* and the Emerging Polypus," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (Winter 2015–16), ¶¶ 5, 21.

⁵⁵ Paul Miner, "The Polyp as a Symbol in the Poetry of William Blake," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1960): 198.

⁵⁶ For the Linnaean connection with worms, see Fletcher, "Ocean Growing," ¶ 5, quoting from Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* (London, 1786–88).

⁵⁷ For the polypus's promise of regeneration, see Denise Gigante, "Blake's Living Form," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 63, no. 4 (March 2009): 473.

⁵⁸ Lake, *Artifacts*, 169–70.
Modern Philology, 120, no. 1 (August 2022), 1-25.

⁵⁹ On the grave/graver imagery in *Milton*, see Jared Richman, "Milton Re-membered, Graved and Press'd: William Blake and the Fate of Textual Bodies," *European Romantic Review* 19, no. 4 (2008): 385–401.

⁶⁰ William Cowper, "Stanzas on the late indecent Liberties taken with the Remains of the great Milton" ([August] 1790), in *The Life, and Posthumous Writings, of William Cowper*, ed. William Hayley, 3 vols. (Chichester, 1803–4), 2:91–93; Samantha Matthews, *Poetical Remains: Poets' Graves, Bodies, and Books in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 48–49.

⁶¹ William Blake to Thomas Butts, July 6, 1803, E730.

⁶² Blake, *Four Zoas*, Night VIII, 100:17–24, E372-3; 104:37, E378, *Milton* 28:13–20, E126.