The Look of Forgiveness

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A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

University of Virginia
August 2019

Jerome J. McGann
Kevin J. Hart
Thomas Pfau
Herbert F. Tucker

For my parents

Acknowledgments

Thanks go first to my director, Jerome McGann, and then to my other readers: Kevin Hart, Thomas Pfau, and Chip Tucker. At UVa, Paul Cantor, Johanna Drucker, Elizabeth Fowler, Walter Jost, Clare Kinney, Michael Levenson, Victoria Olwell, Andrew Stauffer, Michael Suarez, SJ, David Vander Meulen, Cynthia Wall, and Maurice Wallace provided crucial support, alongside Sarah Arrington, Colette Dabney, and Randy Swift. Catherine Abou-Nemeh, Maud Ellmann, Peter Fenves, Mary Finn, Paul North, and Margaret Sinclair at Northwestern offered the initial impetus. I am also grateful to Sherri Brown, Patrick Coleman, Warner Granade, Sandra Hicks, Tony Hiserman, Chris Ruotolo, Barbie Selby, and the rest of the staff at Alderman Library; to Nia Mai Daniel and other members of the staff at the National Library of Wales; to Ted Jackson and Scott Taylor at Georgetown University's Lauinger Library's Booth Family Center for Special Collections; to Katherine Fox and Andrew Isidoro at Boston College's John J. Burns Library; to the Kularatne family, my hosts in Aberystwyth; to Richard Cappuccio and Ann Marshall, my hosts in Charlottesville; to my English-department colleagues Sherif Abdelkarim, Kiera Allison, DeVan Ard, Stephanie and Bessie Bernhard, John Bugbee, Tim Duffy, Ashley Faulkner, Cristina Richieri Griffin, Walt Hunter, Margaret Marshall, Ann Mazur, Lara Musser, Sarah Storti, Elizabeth Sutherland, Jess Swoboda, Annie Thompson, Lindsay Turner, and Grace Vasington; to fellow Benjaminians in Eli Friedlander's seminar at the School of Criticism and Theory, summer 2015; to Jonesians Oliver Bevington, Francesca Brooks, Jamie Callison, Sarah Coogan, Thomas Dilworth, Jasmine Hunter Evans, Thomas Goldpaugh, Brad Haas, Paul Hills, Anne Price-Owen, John David Ramsey, Paul Robichaud, Joseph Simmons, Kathleen Henderson Staudt, Jeremy Stevens, Anna Svendsen, Luke Thurston, Erik Tonning, Tom Villis, and Sarah Williams; to my students; to my parents, Ann and Dan Berenato; and my sister, Cate Berenato.

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Introduction: The Look of Forgiveness

This study of one of poetry's weaker powers arises from an itch at the prose of three poets whose work hovers in the margins of the argument. The first is W. H. Auden, who declares in *The Dyer's Hand* (1962) that

> Every poem...is an attempt to present an analogy to that paradisal state in which Freedom and Law, System and Order are united in harmony. Every good poem is very nearly a Utopia.[1] Again, an analogy, not an imitation; the harmony is possible and verbal only.[2]… [A] poem is beautiful or ugly to the degree that it succeeds or fails in reconciling contradictory feelings in an order of mutual propriety. Every beautiful poem presents an analogy to the forgiveness of sins; an analogy, not an imitation, because it is not evil intentions which are repented of and pardoned but contradictory feelings which the poet surrenders to the poem in which they are reconciled.[3]

The sense in these lines that this poet regards a poem as something endowed with life—Auden calls it a "pseudo-person" earlier in the essay—should make the would-be critic of poetry uneasy.[4] If the work of art were the artist's cherished child, if in it "meaning and being are identical," the critic would do well to write in fear and trembling, careful to avoid maiming or murdering it.[5] If it were true that "unless the poet sacrifices his feelings completely to the poem so that they are no longer his but the poem's, he fails," then unless the critic analogously immolates his judgment, he stands in danger of failing to do the poem the justice due to those who demand it.[6] Auden gives his reader a choice between identity and analogy, but it is possible that literature stands to life in other relations as well.[7] A poem may be, and not just seem to be, a body of death, for instance. And then persists the question whether Auden speaks analogously here of reconciliation as well as of forgiveness. Does reconciliation occur inside or outside a

poem? Once the poet has surrendered to the poem, who or what remains the agent of unity and reconciliation?

Similar ambivalences attend Geoffrey Hill's well-known contribution to the defense of poetry in a lecture of 1977.[8] Auden's "sacrifice" receives from the younger poet a menacing rearticulation: "the technical perfecting of a poem is an act of atonement, in the radical etymological sense—an act of at-one-ment, a setting at one, a bringing into concord, a reconciling, a uniting in harmony."[9] Hill draws a distinction between the "formal acknowledgement" of guilt in or by language—everyday guilt-discourse—and "'the empirical guilty conscience'" of which language itself is the manifestation.[10] It is natural to, probably salutary for, writers, especially poets, to believe in original sin and in language as its fallen medium. But by taking his atonement and at-one-ment together Hill waters down both. "When the poem 'comes right with a click like a closing box,' what is there effected is the atonement of aesthetics with rectitude of judgement."[11] Hill leaves in shadow the mechanism by which two become "at-one" while implying that judgment judges itself the straight man in this double act. Hill recognizes that "in the act of 'making' we are necessarily delivered up to judgement," but like Auden he invests too much authority in the passive voice.[12] The judges and the poets share just one unjust language between them.

Hill says of the prose of one soldier-poet (Charles Sorley) that it "redresses and redeems" the prose of a soldier-politician (Winston Churchill).[13] Seamus Heaney dedicated his five years as Oxford's Professor of Poetry to redeeming the first of these words in the currency of literary criticism. His inaugural lecture (24 October 1989) rifles the *OED* for a linguistic counterweight equal to the task of "tilting the scales of reality towards some transcendent equilibrium."[14] But "redress," he decides, must first direct its attention to the redress, in the sense of uprightness, of

"poetry *as* poetry," the better to make it "a match for the complex reality which surrounds it and out of which it is generated."[15]

But why set limits to poetry by assigning to it a "counterweighting function"?[16] Who today can stand to read, let alone write, poetry "of this totally adequate kind" whose "coordinates…correspond to those of the world that we live in and endure?"[17] At the end of his lecture Heaney unearths another obsolete definition of "redress" that permits him to imagine a less restricted economy of life and art: "*Hunting*. To bring back (the hounds or deer) to the proper course."[18] The poet discerns in this "redress" not an "ethical obligation" but rather the license to set "a course for the breakaway of innate capacity" that bears its limits within itself.[19] The hypothesis of this study is that "forgiveness" in its many metaethical registers has offered to modern poets the "unhindered, yet directed" resource that Heaney sought in "redress" and did find there, but only after he redressed its definition along a proprietary course.[20] The poets under discussion here do not define, let alone redress a definition of, forgiveness as a term of art. Of the three only Blake even strikes the word as a keynote. But for them all forgiveness serves at once as "course" and "capacity" for breaking up, if not away from, the poetic institutions they inherit. Forgiveness is the religious institution their individual talents bring to bear on poetic tradition.

Non-identical by tradition, forgiveness need not submit itself to vetting by the analogical imagination, nor to etymological dismemberment, in order to escape the identity with the fallen world that would disqualify it for a poetic apprenticeship. Rather than assisting them to atone for, redeem, or redress reality, forgiveness offers artists an image of happiness firm yet flexible enough to survive repeated trials by the deformative imagination.[21] The happiness of forgiveness differs from the "over-balance of pleasure" or "enjoyment" Wordsworth speaks of in his preface to *Lyrical Ballads* as accompanying, to "the end of Poetry," the "excitement" or "passions"

poetry produces. In the happiness of forgiveness Nature is not "cautious in preserving" the enjoying mind but itself passes away, taking the impassioned poet, reader, and their deeply interfused passions with it.[22] William Blake, the first of the three poets of forgiveness in view here, imagines forgiveness as a *cor ad cor* for which his art would arrange the encounter: "If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought if he could Enter into Noahs Rainbow or into his bosom or could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder which always intreats him to leave mortal things as he must know then would he arise from his Grave then would he meet the Lord in the Air & then he would be happy."[23] Gerard Manley Hopkins, who unlike Blake does not take forgiveness as an explicit theme of his verse, seeks its promise of happiness in memory, in the default of which he makes bold with a "happy memory" not his own.[24] David Jones skirts the edge of Hill's "at-one-ment" on the way to a forgiveness more akin to Heaney's "breakaway." In a note for the eyes of his doctor he confides in himself: "Painting odd in that one is led partly by what evolves as the painting evolves, this form suggesting that form—happiness comes when the forms assume significance with regard to this juxtaposition to each other—even though the original 'idea' was somewhat different."[25] Purely formal happiness, a happiness without content, could be his working definition of forgiveness.[26]

This study takes pains to isolate such formality in the interest of displacing forgiveness for a fragile moment or two from ethics religious or otherwise. Hannah Arendt's refounding of action upon forgiveness in *The Human Condition* inspires this procedure, which finds its consummation in her friend Walter Benjamin's brief but blistering exposition of forgiveness as a storm that blasts the contents of the past to a place beyond all remembering and forgetting.[27] Because incomplete, the masterful images of Benjamin's early writings, many fragmentary, on

the unity of art and theology do not so much guide as prompt and spur the progress of the argument, which in enlisting them respects their weak power, as the rags and bones of a half-created poetic corpus, to kindle light from other poetry hardly more luminescent or less opaque.[28]

Other studies of literature and forgiveness reveal the latter's drama mirrored in the former's grammar, or vice versa, often by correlating the fits and starts in each of narrative momentum as it drives and takes impetus from fictional or quasi-fictional human actors.[29] The best of these studies open channels between theology or philosophy and cultural or personal history. In the heat of this effort most of them allow the critical eye to wander from the poetical aspect of its paired objects, literature and forgiveness, in their formal and material consistencies. Paul Robichaud's recent account of the kenotic dynamics of a poem-sequence by Geoffrey Hill, for instance, says this much at the start about the poetry: "*The Triumph of Love* dramatizes the search for forgiveness through a process of self-emptying. The difficulty of the task is reflected in the poem's form, which comes full circle, leaving Hill (or the poem's lyric self) hovering uneasily before the possibility of self-forgiveness."[30] Robichaud's essay finds its end in its beginning: "The circular form of *The Triumph of Love* begins and ends with the question of forgiveness, specifically the speaker's ability or inability to forgive himself."[31] It may be that the "form" of Hill's poetry lends itself to "circular" summary of the kind this critic performs. But how does a critic square the circle of a form like "thóughts agaínst thoughts ín groans grínd," or "He doth sit by us and moan," or "These few lines are fragments of a fragment abandoned in *c.*1938. They are quoted not because I think they are of much intrinsic worth but because they may perhaps further indicate those dilemmas which occasioned their composition, dilemmas which show themselves to underlie some of the problems discussed in this present essay of enquiry"?[32] How, as Hopkins scores it, are readers to recite that sonnet's last clause aloud, as

Hopkins insists they do? How are readers to interpret—or are they meant simply to sit and moan with?—the piping figure Blake etches to the left of the stanza that this line concludes? How are readers to take the quotation marks with which Jones surrounds the seventeen lines he rescues from the "abandoned" poetic fragment of his own he all but disowns in this prose postscript? Like Hopkins and Blake, Jones abandons his readers to the dispossession of language that stands as his own last possession, catching them in a crouch between standing judged and sitting in judgment. "Self-forgiveness" survives exposed as an illusion, alienated as a figment of the ethical imagination, in the dust these poets raise in the course of collapsing reader and writer alike into the poem on the page. Each encounter of the reader's eye with the poem on the page constructs the conditions anew for a fresh collapse. That is what forgiveness in poetry looks like.

Seeking the center of forgiveness everywhere in poetry (seeking a form of forgiveness coextensive with poetry), this study finds its circumference nowhere. The image, or "look," of forgiveness it constructs comprises color, in the chapter on Blake; rhythm, in the chapter on Hopkins; and prose, in the chapter on Jones. The concluding chapter, devoted to Benjamin's elusive thought-figure the "dialectical image" and Henry Adams's account of education as an embrace of failure, sketches a method of poetry criticism that would proceed from the poetical execution of forgiveness. The "scarred discourse" of Blake's self-mutilated plate 3 of *Jerusalem*, the poet's preface to the public, offers an analogue of the method pursued here.[33] There Blake gouges out his demand that his no longer "Dear" (another excised word) readers "forgive" what they "do not approve."[34] This study discovers the bids for forgiveness by poets of their readers that leave those readers in the difficult position of reading what the poet never wrote in order to interpret what the poet works to withdraw from interpretability.

Such dearly unendeared readers find themselves forced to follow a course of bad faith for which they themselves must seek forgiveness.[35] The textual condition is an image of—it prompts a look from, and in turn gives one to—the human condition in which all are indebted to, and all seek redemption from, all.[36] Such dearly unendearing poets seek redemption in a construction of poetic impersonality—authorial effacement—whose consummation depends on their interpreters' self-effacement. Hopkins calls for his readers to cast themselves into the pit of his poems' rhythm body and soul, archiving in his interpretive apparatus (curt prefaces, idiosyncratic and indeterminate diacritical systems, elaborate demonstrations in letters and lectures) all means necessary to complete the leap. But the rhythm remains unrealizable; any human reading goes awry. "The only just judge, the only just literary critic, is Christ, who prizes, is proud of, and admires, more than any man, more than the receiver himself can, the gifts of his own making."[37]

Jones names the "Zone" through which the forgiveness of poetry prowls after a different sacrament: "the baptism by cowardice which is more terrible than that of water or blood."[38] On his account poets seek forgiveness for suspending their work "on strings of analogy" tied tenuously to that of the private soldier in the trenches and the sovereign God in the heavens.[39] Readers, too, stand caught between the beasts and the angels as they confront Jones's cowardly confounding of prose and verse. Their "baptism" entails a brave forgiveness of the difference, in which act, always beginning and never concluding, poetry occurs.

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[1] This sentence did not appear in this essay as Auden originally published it, under the title "Nature, History and Poetry," in Fordham University's quarterly journal *Thought* in 1950. Auden added it to the version of the essay he published under the title "The Virgin & The Dynamo" in *The Dyer's Hand*. "Nature, History and Poetry" is available in W. H. Auden, *The Complete*

Works of W. H. Auden, Volume III: Prose: 1949-1955, ed. Edward Mendelson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 226-233. Hereafter cited as *CW* III.

[2] In revising "Nature, History and Poetry" as "The Virgin & The Dynamo" for publication in *The Dyer's Hand,* Auden deleted the following phrase that originally appeared at this point in the text: "a poem is a natural, not an historical object." See Auden, *CW* III, 233.

[3] W. H. Auden, *The Complete Works of W. H. Auden, Volume IV: Prose: 1956-1962* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 504. Hereafter cited as *CW* IV. See the discussion of this passage in Lucy McDiarmid, *Auden's Apologies for Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1990), 19, and Matthew Mutter, *Restless Secularism: Modernism and the Religious Inheritance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017), 262, n. 112.

[4] Auden, *CW* IV, 502.

[5] Auden, *CW* IV, 502.

[6] Auden, *CW* IV 504.

[7] Auden, *CW* IV, 503.

[8] "Poetry as 'Menace' and 'Atonement'," in Geoffrey Hill, *Collected Critical Writings*, ed. Kenneth Haynes (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3-20. This volume hereafter cited as *CCW*. The title of Hill's lecture consciously or unconsciously echoes that of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. See Piers Pennington, "Reparation, Atonement, and Redress," in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 676-693, for a succinct summary of the issues Hill's lecture raises in the context of Seamus Heaney's lecture discussed below. A valuable related study is David Antoine-Williams, *Defending Poetry: Art and Ethics in Joseph Brodsky, Seamus Heaney, and Geoffrey Hill* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[9] Hill, *CCW*, 4.

[10] Hill, *CCW*, 8.

[11] Hill, *CCW*, 12. Hill is quoting Yeats in his correspondence.

[12] Hill, *CCW*, 16.

[13] Hill, *CCW*, 13.

[14] Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1995), 3. Hereafter cited as *Redress*.

[15] Heaney, *Redress*, 6, 8.

[16] Heaney, *Redress*, 8.

[17] Heaney, *Redress*, 8.

[18] Heaney, *Redress*, 15.

[19] Heaney, *Redress*, 15.

[20] Heaney, *Redress*, 15. Most studies of poetics and forgiveness read philosophical or theological accounts of forgiveness into and out of literary narratives, treating both the theory and the "text" as stable entities ripe for correspondence. See for instance Jill Scott, *The Poetics of Forgiveness: Cultural Responses to Loss and Wrongdoing* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and Richard Hughes Gibson, *Forgiveness in Victorian Literature: Grammar, Narrative, and Community* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016). This study, by contrast, discerns the mutual deformations wrought on literature and theology by their conjunction in forgiveness understood as an ongoing event, not a discrete act. Forgiveness leaves its traces on poetry in the form of what Gerard Manley Hopkins in a journal entry of spring 1870 called "graphic writing." See Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Volume III: Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, ed. Lesley Higgins (Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 2015), 483. Poetry, in turn, implicates poets in the very guilt-context from which they look to poetry for redemption.

[21] For a working definition of "happiness," see Walter Benjamin, "Theological-Political Fragment" (written 1920-1921 or 1937-1938), trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 3, 1935-1938*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 305-306: "The secular order should be erected on the idea of happiness. The relation of this order to the messianic is one of the essential teachings of the philosophy of history. It is the precondition of a mystical conception of history, encompassing a problem that can be represented figuratively. If one arrow points to the goal toward which the secular dynamic acts, and another marks the direction of messianic intensity, then certainly the quest of free humanity for happiness runs counter to the messianic direction. But just as a force, by virtue of the path it is moving along, can augment another force on the opposite path, so the secular order—because of its nature as secular—promotes the coming of the Messianic Kingdom. The secular, therefore, though not itself a category of this kingdom, is a decisive category of its most unobtrusive approach. For in happiness all that is earthly seeks its downfall, and only in happiness is its downfall destined to find it.—Whereas admittedly the immediate messianic intensity of the heart, of the inner man in isolation, passes through misfortune, as suffering. The spiritual *restitutio in integrum*, which introduces immortality, corresponds to a worldly restitution that leads to an eternity of downfall, and the rhythm of this eternally transient worldly existence, transient in its totality, in its spatial but also in its temporal totality, the rhythm of messianic nature, is happiness. For nature is messianic by reason of its eternal and total passing away."

[22] William Wordsworth, "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802)," in *The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 609, 606, 604, 611. Forgiveness is not an "emotion," least of all one "qualified by various pleasures" (611). It is a general passion—the world's passing away—caught for the poetic instance as a tension or intensity shared by the poet and the reader. The tension arises between poetry's formative and deformative powers, in the arrest of whose dialectic forgiveness takes place, its power as weak as happiness is fleeting. On a related dynamic in Matthew Arnold's preface to his *Poems* (1853) see Jerome J. McGann, "Matthew Arnold and the Critical Spirit: The Three Texts of *Empedocles on Etna*," in *Victorian Connections*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 146-171.

[23] William Blake, *[A Vision of The Last Judgment]*, in William Blake, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, commentary by Harold Bloom, revised ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 560. This edition hereafter cited as "E."

[24] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Norman H. MacKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 119. This phrase appears in the dedication of "The Wreck of the Deutschland."

[25] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat: A Self-portrait of David Jones in his Letters*, ed. René Hague (London: Faber & Faber, 1980), 137.

[26] Before the eyes of all three poets happiness shimmers as something longed for, never seen. Poetry for them is a happiness slot machine, a game of chance.

[27] See chapter 33, "Irreversibility and the Power to Forgive," and chapter 34, "Unpredictability and the Power of Promise," in Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, second edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 236-247. For a brief summary in Arendt's own words, see

Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, ed. with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 2005): "What was lost by the tradition of political thought, and survived only in the religious tradition where it was valid for *homines religiosi*, was the relationship between doing and forgiving as a constitutive element of the intercourse between acting men, which was specifically political, as distinguished from the religious, novelty in Jesus' teachings. (The only political expression forgiveness found is the purely negative right to pardon, the prerogative of the heads of state in all civilized countries.) Action, which is primarily the beginning of something new, possesses the self-defeating quality of causing the formation of a chain of unpredictable consequences that tend to bind the actor forever. Each one of us knows that he is both actor and victim in this chain of consequences, which the ancients called 'fate,' the Christians called 'providence,' and we moderns arrogantly have degraded into mere chance. Forgiving is the only strictly human action that releases us and others from the chain and pattern of consequences that all action engenders; as such, forgiving is an action that guarantees the continuity of the capacity for action, for beginning anew, in every single human being who, without forgiving and being forgiven, would resemble the man in the fairy tale who is granted one wish and then forever punished with that wish's fulfillment" (58-59).

[28] This study also enters an implicit quarrel with J. H. Prynne, who in an interview of 2016 made the hard case against mercy, which he says he has conducted in his poetry. See J. H. Prynne, "The Art of Poetry No. 101," *Paris Review*, number 218 (Fall 2016): 207: "The argument is that mercy is a serious disruption of the moral order. Mercy abates the use of law to regulate consistently in accordance with judgment about what is right and true and necessary. With godlike condescension, mercy destroys consistency of the human order and human law. And we live within the human ambit, and therefore we need consistency—what Shakespeare in *A*

Midsummer Night's Dream calls 'constancy.' We need to defend and promote it, and that means or should mean that mercy is an extravagant extra. It also means that ruthlessness, for all that it sounds inhumane and violent and destructive, is a consequence that is hard to avoid. And I don't like this argument very much. I'm not sure I could conduct it for a long way. At the final end, I'm going to dodge it by some means, because I'm human, and that's the weak but necessary ending to the strong argument that prevails, almost ultimately, at the final point." The present study proposes that the look of forgiveness is the aspect of "constancy" under the strain of mercy as Prynne defines those terms here.

[29] See especially Sarah Beckwith, *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011).

[30] Paul Robichaud, "Forgiveness and Form in Geoffrey Hill's *The Triumph of Love*," *Literary Imagination*, volume 20, issue 2 (July 2018): 128.

[31] Robichaud, "Forgiveness and Form in Geoffrey Hill's *The Triumph of Love*," 139.

[32] These are the last words, respectively, of Hopkins's late sonnet "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" (l. 14), Blake's song of innocence "On Anothers Sorrow" (l. 36), and the postscript to Jones's essay "Art and Sacrament," which explains the appearance just above of a quotation of some lines from his abandoned poetic manuscript *The Book of Balaam's Ass*, lines which by 1966 Jones would incorporate into a separate, much shorter poem under the title "A, a, a, DOMINE DEUS." See plates 476 and 477 in Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Later Poetic Manuscripts of Gerard Manley Hopkins in Facsimile*, ed. Norman H. MacKenzie (New York and London: Garland, 1991), 300-301; E 17; and David Jones, "Art and Sacrament: An Enquiry Concerning the Arts of Man and the Christian Commitment to Sacrament in Relation to Contemporary Technocracy," in *Catholic Approaches*, ed. Elizabeth Pakenham (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1955), 181-

182. For a fuller treatment of Hopkins's "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" along these lines see Thomas Berenato, "Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Mystery of Forgiveness," *Victorians Institute Journal* 43 (2015): 217-244.

[33] The phrase is Jerome McGann's in his *Towards a Literature of Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 10.

[34] *Jerusalem*, plate 3; E 145.

[35] See Kevin Hart's essay "Guilty Forgiveness," in his *Kingdoms of God* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 247-264.

[36] See Jerome McGann's essay "Laura (Riding) Jackson and the Literal Truth," *Critical Inquiry* 18, number 3 (Spring 1992): 454-473.

[37] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Volume I: Correspondence 1852-1881*, ed. R. K. R. Thornton and Catherine Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 306 (letter of 13 June 1878 to Richard Watson Dixon).

[38] David Jones, *The Book of Balaam's Ass*, in Jones, *The Roman Quarry and Other Sequences*, ed. Harman Grisewood and René Hague (New York: Sheep Meadow Press, 1981), 207, 201.

[39] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 205.

1. William Blake's Vision of Forgiveness

Approaches to Blake's work in word and image that seek to present it under the rubric of "composite art" obscure the look in and from it of forgiveness, this artist's greatest theme. Taken together, words and images in Blake amount to neither the sum nor more than the sum of their parts.[1] As an angel says in a dream that "Joseph the Carpenter in Nazareth" recounts to "Mary / His espoused Wife" in one of the "Visions of Jehovah Elohim" that the "Divine Voice" of the "Divine Lamb" bids Jerusalem behold near the center of her eponymous poem, forgiveness of sins is "without Price."[2] "To open one of Blake's books is" not, in fact, "to be confronted with two equally compelling art forms, each clamoring for primary attention."[3] In Blake's Printing house the matrix that nurtures the sister arts loves both of her children equally. They are not analogous "forms" but siblings related to each other through an affinity neither psychological nor physical, subjective nor objective. Each is a vision of the other as well as of the total vision that comprehends them. "Every Poem must necessarily be a perfect Unity…But when a Work has Unity it is as much in a Part as in the Whole."[4] Joseph is to Mary is to Jesus is to Jerusalem is to *Jerusalem* in a vision of thoroughgoing self-similarity. "To Me This World is all One continued Vision of Fancy or Imagination," Blake writes to John Trusler in 1799.[5] "Imagination The Divine Vision" in this world of Creation and Generation does not form but rather deforms what God has formed.[6] Such deformation, which is not destruction, reveals the world "distorted in the state of similarity."[7] The Divine hand in Eternity invents according to no canon. Having fled Eternity—the first fall—human life is subject to "Two Limits: first of Opacity, then of Contraction."[8] Under these conditions—in time and space—human imagination works unconstructively.[9] Its acts are purely negative, driving all it imagines along with the one who

imagines to "Eternal Death."[10] "Eternal Death," being eternal, is a death in the sense not of an ending but rather of an unending undoing. The "great task" of the imagination is to articulate the connectedness of all things in ephemerality.[11] Under the aspect of their perpetual deformation all forms resemble each other. "Imagination has nothing to do with Memory."[12] It is beyond all remembering and forgetting. "Forgiveness of Sins which is Self Annihilation" overcomes the antithesis of remembering and forgetting by constituting the world as a continuum of similarities.[13] "To learn the Language of Art Copy for Ever. is My Rule."[14] The artist who follows this rule—mimes the canon "for Ever"—eventually merges into the copied canvas and becomes similar to himself. He steps out of the ranks of the "Copiers of Nature"—those who see into the life of things—to take his place among the "Copiers of Imagination."[15] Annihilating his selfhood on entering art, he looks out at the world from within the canon.[16] Those who hold his—now its—gaze "put off Self" in turn.[17] Forgiveness in Blake consists in the mutual deformation of subject and object in their continual beholding of each other. "When in Eternity Man converses with Man they enter / Into each others Bosom (which are Universes of delight) / In mutual interchange."[18] Identity of subject and object, with its concomitant unbuilding of the structure of desire, occurs only in Eternity.[19] When in Ulro, which is to say "for Ever," art offers a picture of bliss whose existence in space and time distorts it into a state of similarity, not identity. Art sets up a tension between time (and space) and Eternity that it relaxes all too readily: "Eternity is in love with the productions of time."[20] To this state of rest Blake gives the name Beulah. Because art satisfies too soon—because, from the perspective of those it would console, its timing is always off—it fails "for Ever" to redeem the time of the world.[21] "If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought if he could Enter into Noahs Rainbow or into his bosom or

could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder which always intreats him to leave mortal things as he must know then would he arise from his Grave then would he meet the Lord in the Air & then he would be happy."[22] Blake can't help but lodge this image of happiness in the conditional mood; its mood conditions everything his art illuminates.

"The Little Black Boy," a song of innocence, serves Blake as a syllabus for the course of forgiveness in a world of impoverished experience.[23] Some essays and prose fragments by a young Walter Benjamin throw Blake's critique of forgiveness into relief.[24] Benjamin writes in the teeth of turn-of-the-century Neo-Kantianism, Blake at the turn of Kant's own century.[25] Both Blake and Benjamin wish to give what Benjamin calls "a higher context to experience" than was available to Kant, who, according to Benjamin, took his principles of experience from Newtonian physics.[26] Kant set himself the task of justifying, not deepening, knowledge. He sought to establish between knowledge and "experience" a relationship of "certainty," and, operating under the "horizon" (Blake's Urizen) of his times, he settled for an experience, as the object of knowledge, "unique and temporally limited."[27] But there is a way to "do justice to a higher experience" than the one with which Kant worked.[28] It lies in an attempt not to extend the scope of experience directly but to reconceive the relationship of knowledge to experience. Experience is not the object of, not "placed before," a knowing subject—Benjamin calls this scheme a "mythology"—but rather "a systematic specification of knowledge" that affords both unity of and continuity between knowledge and experience.[29] In Benjamin's words: "Experience is the uniform and continuous multiplicity of knowledge."[30] He elucidates this formulation with an image: "if a painter sits in front of a landscape and 'copies' it (as we say), the landscape does not occur in the picture; it could at best be described as the symbol of its artistic context."[31] Benjamin draws a distinction—which he says Kant elides—between the concept of "experience"

(or "the immediate and natural concept of experience") and the concept of the "knowledge of experience" (or "the concept of experience in the context of knowledge").[32] He defines experience as the "symbol of the unity of knowledge."[33] By the term "symbol" he means to designate "experience as knowledge," for "the 'experience' we experience in reality is identical with what we know in our knowledge of experience."[34] Taking one step further, Benjamin defines "knowledge of experience" as "teachings" (*Lehre*).[35] "Teachings" are knowledge of experience expressed in "language."[36] Conceiving knowledge of experience as teachings relates knowledge "immediately" to "the concrete totality of experience," to "a unity of experience that can by no means be understood as a sum of experiences."[37] To "the concrete totality of experience" as the object and the content of teachings Benjamin gives the names "religion" and "art."[38] Religion and art afford an encounter with experience as an integrated continuity and unity of experiences, as "existence."[39] Knowledge and religion, knowledge and art, and religion and art relate to each other in a "virtual unity."[40]

In this "virtual unity"—teachings handed down in and as language—religion and art take place on a continuum of experience. Blake's plates are a site of this virtual unity of art and religion. Works of art differ from religious forms of life in that unlike the latter they have no share in redemption. Not themselves created, but rather sprung from Blake's imagination, the *Songs of Innocence,* for instance, take creation, and its redemption, as their theme. Works of art that make creation their content—as all works of art do more or less—take on what Benjamin calls a "punched-out" form: "These are forms that seem to contain as much shadow and chaos as the hollow punched-out or hammered-out inner side of metal relief-work."[41] Such forms are distinguished by a high degree of what Benjamin calls the "expressionless" (*das Ausdrucklose*) in them.[42] In Blake the expressionless goes by the name of "forgiveness," and in the *Songs,* at

least, that name goes unexpressed. Art and morality meet in forgiveness, which is what Benjamin calls a mode of "utopian perception."[43] Utopian perception sees creation with the Creator's eyes, as "good." To some extent all artworks "break through the realm of art" and become utopian perceptions of creation.[44] To this extent they become subject to the moral categories to which creation is subject and so receive "the stamp of the expressionless."[45]

One of Benjamin's metaphors for this mode of perception is the child's view of color.[46] Children, possessed of "pure vision," perceive not objects organized in space but colors, which are pure content without form.[47] Color is "something spiritual," and in contemplating colors children perceive the world as a multiplicity of nuances, a continuum of discontinuities, or what Benjamin in the afterword to his doctoral dissertation designates a "unity in plurality," as opposed to an "infinity in totality."[48] Children's drawings capture this way of seeing. In them creation appears as a vision of minute particulars in transition, the sun always about to burst into something quite different, say a company of angels.[49] This is thanks to children's innocent adherence to what Blake called the "bounding line and its infinite inflexions and movements."[50] According to Blake the "great and golden rule of art, as well as of life" is that "the more distinct, sharp, and wirey the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art."[51] Benjamin would concur in the case of books for children, as well as that of "the life in art" to which the rainbow—in which "color is wholly contour"—refers, for crisp delineation tempts the child to color in.[52] The sharper the outline the more compelling the invitation to describe the picture, even to scribble on it.[53] This conviction lies behind Blake's high valuation of the "drawing"-character of his own paintings: "The distinction that is made in modern times between a Painting and a Drawing proceeds from ignorance of art. The merit of a Picture is the same as the merit of a Drawing. The dawber dawbs his Drawings; he who draws his Drawings draws his Pictures."[54]

The best children's books, Benjamin writes, display a non-synthesis of color and line that corresponds to what W. J. T. Mitchell finds in Blake's illuminated poetry: a tendency to independence of text and design. Discussing "The Little Black Boy," Mitchell warns against taking what seems an obvious instance of "literal illustration" too literally. The second plate of this poem contains a design that Mitchell says "is not simply an imitation of the text, but introduces its own symbolic dimensions," which the expert interpreter goes on to adduce.[55] Unfortunately this critical procedure obscures the pedagogical function of a book like *Songs of Innocence*, which addresses its audience in the fullness of their innocence and the poverty of their experience. In an essay of 1933 Benjamin defines this innocence—his word here is "barbarism," whose pejorative connotations he means to neutralize—as "a total absence of illusion about…and at the same time an unlimited commitment to" the present.[56] Modern "barbarians"—little black boys among them—long not for new experience but a world in which they might make "pure and decided use" of their poverty.[57] In the terms of Blake's poem, they seek "a little space" in which to "learn to bear the beams of love."[58] For Benjamin the role of children's books is to allow their readers very gradually to discover their meaning in the world outside their pages, "but only in proportion as they [the contents of these books] are found to correspond to what children already possess within themselves."[59] Children learn not from experience but from imagination, the "utopian perception" that transforms the meaning, if not the significance, of their memories, "without thereby sacrificing the world."[60] Through illustrated children's books the child's imagination roams free "so that it can produce in its own medium what the spirit of the drawing has in mind."[61]

All readers who make an unlimited commitment to the meanings of the *Songs* become similar to children; Blake's book is for children in that if no other sense. The little black boy of

his eponymous poem longs for the monochrome kingdom in which Benjamin says "children awaken, just as they dream their dreams in the realm of color."[62] "The Little Black Boy" is a "radically unchromatic" if not at all "achromatic" picture.[63] This distinction, which Benjamin makes in a letter to Gerhard (later Gershom) Scholem of October 1917 on "the problem of cubism," permits him to isolate the color of pictures in which "linear shapes dominate."[64] The linear shapes that dominate Blake's plates include his script, which is seldom printed in black ink. For Benjamin script is an archive—language writ large is a "canon"—of "nonsensuous similarity" in a world in which the human "mimetic faculty" is growing increasingly fragile.[65] Primitive man could produce similarities—children's play is still "permeated by mimetic modes of behavior"—but modern adults struggle just to see them.[66] This gift for seeing similarities has migrated into language, both speech and script, but especially clearly in the latter, which is the "medium in which objects encounter and come into relation with one another…in their essences."[67] Nonsensuous similarity binds what is meant to what is said and to what is written. Each reading, or singing, ties sign and signified together "in a completely new, original, and underivable way."[68] This kind of reading—a communion in "unchromatic" similarity—is what the little black boy figures as leaning "in joy" on the knee of Jesus with the little English boy at a time when he can "be like him."[69] This time is not a time out of time but the instant of forgiveness in which the utopian perception of similarity flashes up. "It flits past, can possibly be won again, but cannot really be held fast as can other perceptions. It offers itself to the eye as fleetingly and transitorily as a constellation of stars."[70] Forgiveness is the moment of reading what was never written: "unchromatic" colors between the lines. It relies on neither empathy nor example. The little black boy's mother teaches him by tradition, a learning that in his own person evolves into a teaching, the "shade" he casts on the little white boy.[71] Forgiveness in Blake is not

an act but the simultaneous reception and transmission of an "implicit instruction to a life of the spirit."[72] The tradition of forgiveness teaches that "everyone is an educator and everyone needs to be educated and everything is education," as Benjamin puts it in a letter to Scholem of September 1917.[73] As a tradition of education renewed in each moment of instruction, forgiveness survives in the memory of forgiveness. "Anyone who has not learned cannot educate, for he does not recognize the point at which he is alone and where he thus encompasses the tradition in his own way and makes it communicable by teaching. Knowledge becomes transmittable only for the person who has understood his knowledge as something that has been transmitted. He becomes free in an unprecedented way."[74] In "The Little Black Boy" this moment of recognition—of the boy's pure receptivity to the sun-God's beams of love—comes at the turning of the page from the first to the second plate, when the boy and the reader with him see the cloud for what it is, the "body" of "Falshood," and in that moment regard each for the first time "thro the Eye."[75]

"In his obscure way he was always hurrying into the van of some forlorn hope of ethics."[76] This is how, in 1868, Algernon Charles Swinburne characterizes the moral aesthetics at large in the life and work of William Blake. Late in his "critical essay" Swinburne sums up Blake's poetic faith by designating its two "leading sides": "belief in vision and belief in mercy."[77] From 1800, during his residence at a cottage in Felpham, Sussex, under the patronage of William Hayley, and especially after his trials for sedition in late 1803 and early 1804, Blake increasingly bent his artistic energies to the production of visions of mercy in ink and paint. This decades-long project culminated in *Milton a Poem in 2 Books* (c. 1804-1818), *Jerusalem The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (c. 1804-1821), and *The Ghost of Abel* (1822), his final prophetic works. In connection with an exhibition of his works planned for the year 1810, in the midst or

immediate aftermath of the failure of his London exhibition of 1809, Blake drafted in his notebook a description of a monumental painting, perhaps the large tempera reported by contemporary eyewitnesses but now lost, depicting the Last Judgment or Second Coming of Christ. These notebook prose fragments comprise Blake's most concentrated, if still hardly straightforward, statement of the poetics of forgiveness evolved and involved in his later work. Blake's vision of divine mercy emerges from his vision of divine judgment, and Swinburne's talk of Blake's "hurrying" into hope catches well the relation of both of these visions to time and space. As Morris Eaves has emphasized, forgiveness for Blake is a mental act, an act of the imagination, and so, for him, at last an artistic act that, undertaken on earth by "the human form divine," takes time in a particular place to complete.[78] But what begins in time must end in time, and until the end of time the completion of the imaginative act of forgiveness must always be provisional.

In *Jerusalem* Blake calls its readers to practice "the Continual Forgiveness of Sins."[79] Thus phrased, the demand to live a life in art presents to its aspirants the problem of deciding where one act ends and another begins. Perhaps this challenge is what Swinburne had in mind when he associated Blake's ethics with "some forlorn hope." Judgment, especially one figured as final, would seem to promise a solution: Art will end when eternity begins. The flipside to a forgiveness would be a forgetting. But perhaps out of a horror of oblivion, born in part of painful personal experience, or of his deeply held disbelief in "any damnation of the individual," Blake resists even the ultimacy of judgment: "whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth," he writes in his notebook, "a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual."[80] Earthly life in this vision is one of both continual forgiveness and continual judgment. Artwork—poetry, painting, and music represented in Blake's vision, as he indicates here, by the figures of Noah

and his sons Shem and Japet canopied by a rainbow—is the one means left to man after the Flood of "conversing with Paradise."[81] The tension between forgiveness and judgment as the condition of salvation falls first on the working artist. An exchange included in Alexander Gilchrist's 1863 biography of Blake hints at the strain under which Blake labored and expected others to embrace: "Do you work in fear and trembling?" he asked a student who came to him for advice. 'Indeed I do, sir.' 'Then you'll do,' was the rejoinder."[82] David Jones, a twentieth-century heir to Blake's charged confrontation of art and mercy, liked to retail this anecdote, and he may have had it in mind when he wrote to a friend in 1935: "I've always felt…that my own real life...was that of judgement, judgement of the work to be made—line by line—and to be unfettered when about that work."[83]

Gilchrist's *Life* goes on, however, to record Blake's idea of the duration, even dilation, entailed by the artistic process: "All the grand efforts of design, he thought, depended on niceties not to be got at once. First put in the action, then with further strokes fill up. So, he believed, worked the great masters."[84] Blake appears to understand forgiveness to follow immediately in the wake of a judgment whose force it, forgiveness, restrains. The artistic act, and the interpretive act allied to it, set up a rhythm of conception and reception in which a human judgment, continually refreshed, infinitely defers the divine Last Judgment. This rhythm unfolds in what might be called the Time of Justice, a period that conversation with Paradise fills. Gilchrist's next remark charts the activity as it unfolded in Blake's studio: "He felt his way in drawing, notwithstanding his love of a 'bold determinate outline,' and did not get this at once. Copyists and plagiarists do that, but not original artists, as it is common to suppose: they find a difficulty in developing the first idea. Blake drew a rough, dotted line with pencil, then with ink; then colour, filling in cautiously, carefully. At the same time he attached very great importance

to ‘first lines,’ and was wont to affirm;—‘First thoughts are best in art, second thoughts in other matters.’”[85]

Blake can judge first thoughts as best thoughts because he believes justice to be the order of the world already, an order that remains obscured to what he calls the “Corporeal Vegetative Eye.”[86] Creation, Blake holds, was “an act of mercy.”[87] In nature, space (Enitharmon in Blake’s mythology) and Time (Los) wed, the better to provide for man as he works out his salvation. As Swinburne summarizes the story: “of all the minor immortal and uncreated spirits Time only is the friend of man; and for man’s sake has given him Space to dwell in, as under the shadow and within the arms of a great compassionate mother, who has mercy upon all her children, tenderness for all good and evil things. Only through his help and her pity can flesh or spirit endure life for a little, under the iron law of the maker and the oppressor of man.”[88] But the face Nature displays to man is one of “cruel holiness,” as Blake puts it in *Milton*.[89] Only by taking up a particular stance with respect to time, “Which is the swiftest of all things,” according to Blake, can we experience Nature as anything but “eternal torment.”[90] This stance is that of the prophet, whose continuing office it is to hurry down the Last Judgment by predicting not the future but eternity as it already exists in the present. “Prophetism is the prediction of the eternal present,” Gerhard (later Gershom) Scholem observes in some notes of 1919 on the Book of Jonah.[91] Blake’s poems are prophetic in the sense that they offer their readers the impetus to suspend not judgment, but judgment’s executive power, the undivinized vision that apprehends human folly *with* rather than *through* the eye.[92]

Forgiveness is both an obsession and a poetic principle of Blake’s late illuminated books.[93] *Jerusalem,* the longest of these, begun around 1803, is the work in which forgiveness comes most fully into its own as both epic theme and formal constraint. “The spirit of Jesus is

continual forgiveness of Sin:" This is the doctrine Blake announces in his opening address "To the Public."[94] To develop this doctrine in the Imagination of his auditors is the task the bard sets for his book. To recognize forgiveness as the essence of Christianity is already a supremely imaginative act, a drastic distillation, verging on deformation, of the New Testament. "The Gospel is Forgiveness of Sins & has No Moral Precepts" is how Blake puts it in his annotations, made in 1798, to Bishop Richard Watson's *An Apology for the Bible*.[95] Christ's message is at once indicative and deprecative of forgiveness. On Blake's understanding mutual forgiveness is neither a recommendation nor a requirement made by Jesus but precisely his "spirit," the inspiration of those who follow him. But Blake's conception of the gospel of forgiveness is not matched by his perception of its working out in the everyday world he calls Albion, asleep in Ulro. But for this disparity the poem *Jerusalem* would, strictly speaking, amount to a tautology with respect to the Testament, an over-egged gloss on the gospel which forgives as soon as it speaks of forgiveness. Because the good news of continual forgiveness goes largely unheard, however, the poem fulfills a function, finds a vocation. This is to awaken its readers to their own imagination of the forgiveness already given to them, whether they know it or believe it or not. If it is to live up to the ends Blake has set for it, the poem must in some sense forgive its readers even as it tells them of the gospel of forgiveness. Much of the poem's surface strangeness arises directly from the formal innovation on epic conventions that such a program encourages. The poem must be, like the gospel, identical to the forgiveness of sins, and it must achieve this identity without recourse to moral precepts. Blake's great ethical insight is that forgiveness is an antinomian operation that assumes to itself the force of the moral law; his corresponding aesthetic insight is that the poem of forgiveness must elude established laws of poetry while

nevertheless appropriating the authority that has traditionally accrued to the poet. This is what it means, in the words of *Jerusalem*'s plate 12, to "pierc[e] Apollyon with his own bow."[96]

Blake radicalizes Christianity by reducing it to forgiveness. This is easier said than done because forgiveness itself is an auratic word that does not yield itself readily to formulation. A working definition, worked out of Blake, could run: To forgive is to "preserve the presence of the past while retaining the representation of an unrealized future."[97] It is clear, if not quite clear just how, that forgiveness combines, in the present, a decision to acknowledge the burdens of the past with a decision to accept the risks of the future. Blake's startlingly simple qualification is that forgiveness be "continual." This stipulation lifts forgiveness out of any straightforward means-ends relationship with the conduct of human life and launches it into an apocalyptic register eminently suited to the techniques of representation on offer in art as Blake practices it. Thanks to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, forgiveness continues on humanity's behalf up to the Judgment Day that dawns in *Jerusalem*'s final plates. But the inaugural address "To the Public" sends the sheep to the top left corner and the goats to the top right corner of the same plate on which the gospel of forgiveness is first proclaimed. This suggests that Blake does not oppose forgiveness to judgment, or that if he does he understands them to be "contraries" in his special sense, both equally true at one and the same time and space.

Forgiveness for Blake is the continual deferral of the execution of the Last Judgment by means of the artistic spatialization and temporalization of it. Forgiveness, the nonexecution of God's judgment, is accomplished by the execution of another judgment, "As cogs are formd in a wheel to turn the cogs of the adverse wheel."[98] The space of a single etched plate, and the time it takes to find a foothold amid a hundred etched plates, afford Blake the scope to produce an experience of reading and looking whose fruit is a unique configuration of mercy and justice. A

grasp of the relationship between God's mercy and God's justice is also the upshot of hearing the gospel. The gospels present the truth parabolically. Blake appreciated the parables—Samuel Palmer reports that the paradigmatic parable of forgiveness, that of the prodigal son, brought tears to Blake's eyes—but biblical parables depend for their effect on the trace of a narrative arc, which is rarely forthcoming in Blake and all but entirely elusive in *Jerusalem*.[99] The most notable reference to the parables in *Jerusalem* comes only at "The End of The Song," on the poem's penultimate plate 99, in the form of a highly ambiguous depiction of an embrace between an elderly male figure, probably Albion, and a youthful female figure, probably his emanation Jerusalem.[100] Because it sets up a tension between the remembrance and the forgetting of the law of justice, forgiveness carries an amoral charge, a whiff of indifference to the difference between good and evil.

Los finally masters his Spectre on plate 91 of *Jerusalem*, once he realizes how to sidestep the moral abstractions that the Tree of Judgment has thrown up as stumbling-blocks in his path to spiritual freedom: "I care not whether a Man is Good or Evil; all that I care / Is whether he is a Wise Man or a Fool, Go! put off Holiness / And put on Intellect"[101] The spectre is a figure in Blake for, among other things, the artwork. Los, builder and blacksmith, "alters" his shadowy double, "time after time, with dire pain & many tears / Till he had completely divided him into a separate space."[102] As he shapes his spectral self on his anvil Los is forging a relationship of self-forgiveness, which requires just the moment of self-alienation Blake embodies in his allegory.

Self-forgiveness in turn is a prerequisite of mutual forgiveness, and since shame and self-righteousness, the two largest obstacles to self-forgiveness, are the constant companions of man in the state of Satan, what Blake calls "self-annihilation" of "Self-hood" must also become habitual. "It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend," a voice thunders at the top of

plate 91.[103] It is easier because a relationship with an enemy is by definition neither mutual nor continual. Self-forgiveness, Blake suggests, is forgiveness's limit case, because one's relationship to oneself is absolutely mutual and continual. Forgiveness happens under the skin, almost too close to the bone. It may be that in order to bear the "dire pain" of forgiveness, Blake suggests, humans invented art, in order to get some distance on its nihilistic side-effects. "[T]he swing of my Hammer shall measure the starry round," Los cries on plate 88.[104] Art takes the measure of man by giving him the means to situate himself in the cosmos. This measurement does not yield a reading, as with a pair of metaphysical calipers, of the distance between good and evil within a man's soul but rather of the distance between his state of his soul and the very notion of good and evil. In this sense art can justify man even as it forgives him. Of Los it is said further down on this plate: "The blow of his Hammer is Justice. the swing of his Hammer Mercy / The force of Los's Hammer is eternal Forgiveness."[105] A forcefield of forgiveness is the upshot of artistic activity. It is the setting of what Blake calls, at a critical moment in his poem *Milton*, a "Moment": "there is a Moment in each day that Satan cannot find, / Nor can his watch-fiends find it; but the industrious find / This Moment & it multiply. And when it once is found / It renovates every moment of the day if rightly placed."[106] This is not a messianic moment, although the Messiah might well be characterized as its impresario. It is a moment seized as such not by the Saviour or the Lamb but by the artist in every person who snatches it from oblivion. God in his mercy has so configured infinity, Blake explains in *Milton*, "That every thing has its / Own Vortex."[107] So does every moment, which, like every thing for Blake, is something eminently human. But at the same time an intensive mutuality abides among the vortices of the world. Everything earthly, all time and all space, exists on "one infinite plane."[108] "[A]ll that has existed…[is] / Permanent, & not lost," according to Blake on plate 13 of *Jerusalem*.[109] "For

everything exists, & not one sigh nor smile nor tear, / One hair nor particle of dust, not one can pass away."[110] Another name for this infinite plane might be memory. Another might be the English language, which Blake calls "the rough basement" at the foundation of all art.[111] This single surface is the translucent theater in which the drama of forgiveness unfolds, if only it is staged. The city of Golgonooza and the region of Beulah are its rehearsal spaces. Blake's prophetic books mount a production.

The "moment" of *Milton* returns in the second chapter of *Jerusalem* on the initiative of a female emanation named Erin, the spirit of revolutionary Ireland, who makes a benevolent intervention upon the separation of Jerusalem from Albion after the latter has fallen asleep: "With awful hands she took / A Moment of Time, drawing it out with many tears & afflictions / And many sorrows oblique across the Atlantic Vale…Into a Rainbow of jewels and gold, a mild Reflection from Albion's dread Tomb, eight thousand and five hundred years / In its extension…She also took an Atom of Space, with dire pain opening it a centre / Into Beulah."[112] The "dire pain" with which Erin performs this topological deformation of spacetime is the same with which Los will alter his spectre at the end of the poem. Like Los's, Erin's intervention is an artistic act, and here its issue is a rainbow, symbol of God's covenant of forgiveness, that bears a "mild" reflective relationship to Albion in his tomb. Erin supervenes for a moment, dilating space and time against the laws of Newtonian physics, but Blake suggests that this is only possible by virtue of some earlier adumbrated faculty for forgiveness innate in Albion, who in the first chapter of the poem had rejected Jerusalem herself as an unforgivable "Sin!" and the Lamb of God as a delusion.[113] Forgiveness, like the rainbow, materializes out of the atmosphere on hand, however dreary. An emergent relationship of forgiveness exists between God and world

even when the world is awash in self-righteousness, self-denial, shame, and spiritual sleep. The *deus ex machina* in the theater of forgiveness is also *in machina*.

Forgiveness arises from the crossing of the divine will with the human will: "And Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," runs the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer in the gospel of Matthew (Matthew 6:12; KJV). A moment occurs in the next chapter of *Jerusalem*, the third, addressed 'To the Deists," in which the conjunction of those two clauses is thrown into question. The "Divine Vision" appears to Jerusalem, separated from Albion in the last chapter and now carried off to Babylon at the behest of the harlot Rahab. Like Albion in the first chapter, Jerusalem, his emanation, is consumed by sexual shame. Just as the Lamb appeared to Albion in chapter one, here in chapter two, over two plates, the Divine Vision, later named Jesus, appears to Jerusalem, to give her the gospel of forgiveness. But unlike the divine intervention of chapter one, this one in chapter three is itself interrupted by an editorial interpolation in Blake's own hand of an extra plate, which, like Erin's production of the rainbow out of thin air in chapter two, pauses the narrative for a moment and dilates time and space to give forgiveness an occasion to emerge artistically.[114] On this interpolated plate, plate 61, appears a retelling of Matthew's account of the backstory of Christ's nativity. In the gospel, of course, Mary's pregnancy, the virgin birth, is explained away by a visitation of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:20). But Blake insists that Mary has broken the commandment against adultery with human flesh. And for this sin Blake has Joseph, authorized by the angel of the Lord, forgive his wife wholeheartedly. It is perhaps impossible and unnecessary to decide whether this is an artistic or a theological decision on the part of Blake, who takes advantage here of the material flexibility of his method to forgive Jehovah for his prudishness.

The ambition that Blake sets for his later work is to reveal a form of justice that is not the contrary of mercy. The name that Blake gives to this state of non-contrariety, beyond the contrary states of mercy and justice, is forgiveness, and in *The Ghost of Abel*, his drama of 1822, forgiveness goes by the double-barreled name of "Elohim Jehovah."[115] Forgiveness for Blake is a mode of perception. In *The Ghost of Abel* forgiveness appears as the mode of perception attributed to Jehovah upon his unification, but not identification, with Elohim—what the work's subtitle specifies as "A Revelation in the Visions of Jehovah": the perception of life in what to fallen perception presents itself as death.[116] Where Adam and Eve see the ghost of the slain Abel, what Eve calls here a "Visionary Phantasm" and Blake elsewhere calls a "spectre," Elohim Jehovah sees "the real Abel."[117] What presents itself as "real" to the vision of Elohim Jehovah, to perception in or as forgiveness, is to the vision of Adam and Eve what they call "a vain delusion."[118] The difference between "delusion" and "vision" is slight but crucial; it is the difference between death and life. Death, for Blake, is simply life lived in vain. The vanity of a life lived out as the nightmare life-in-death lies in the relation it bears to justice on the one hand and mercy on the other. Namely, a vain life is one that has strayed into the double delusion of taking retribution for justice and reconciliation for mercy. That is, one that has, after the manner of the ghost of Abel, taken the Covenant of the Forgiveness of Sins in vain by falling under the delusion of identifying justice with the meting out, and mercy with the withholding, of punishment, particularly capital punishment. Blake's two-plate tragicomedy shows up the tragedy that inevitably issues from this twofold confusion.

The tragedy may be summed up by a phrase that Blake quotes ironically from the end of Psalm 51 near the top of plate two: "a Broken Spirit / And a Contrite Heart."[119] And the comedy may be summed up in a phrase that Blake quotes sincerely from elsewhere in his own work near

the bottom of plate two: "Self Annihilation."[120] "Such is My Will," Jehovah "Thunders" there, "that Thou Thyself"—he is addressing Satan in the aspect of the ghost of Abel—"go to Eternal Death / In Self Annihilation even till Satan Self-subdud Put off Satan / Into the Bottomless Abyss whose torment arises for ever & ever."[121] Whatever Blake means by "Self Annihilation" here, it becomes clear in the lines that follow—the lines that end the play—that it bears an intimate relation to forgiveness and, moreover, lies equidistant from the operation of justice on the one side and of mercy on the other. "Self Annihilation" may be said to be the form that forgiveness takes in Blake's work, of which *The Ghost of Abel*, his final illuminated book, may be said to be the epitome. The form that "Self Annihilation" takes in this pair of plates may be summed up by the concept of conversion. Conversion here takes the form of a thoroughgoing re-vision. In a single stroke, or what he strives to condense into as few strokes as possible within the limits of his chosen form—here, relief-etching—Blake "revises" the tradition of "justice" as it has passed to him from the Old and New Testaments and, as of December 1821, in Byron's drama *Cain. A Mystery*. Blake's revision of the Cain myth converts it from comedy to tragedy, which revival Blake offers as an instance of forgiveness beyond the contraries justice-injustice and mercy-retribution.

Essential and indispensable to the venture of Blake's revision is its visual embodiment. "Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth," goes one of the Proverbs of Hell.[122] At the top of the second plate of *The Ghost of Abel* a revived Eve asks Adam the rhetorical question: "were it not better to believe Vision / With all our might & strength tho we are fallen & lost."[123] This is a revision of the definition of "faith" that opens the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1; KJV). In Blake's account of the aftermath of the first murder, Abel's parents have neither "hoped

for" nor "not seen" the resurrection of their son as a spectre precisely because they have misplaced their "faith" in the ghastliness of this substance they never hoped to see and cannot now seem to drive from sight. Their mistake is to take the author of the epistle at his word when he writes, in the next verse but one, that "things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3; KJV). That is, Adam and Eve doubt the "reality" of their own vision.

"Thou Visionary Phantasm thou art not the real Abel," Eve addresses the ghost.[124] She has grown susceptible to such doubt of her own sense of vision, Blake implies, under the not inconsiderable pressure of the New Testament's typological identification of Abel with Christ, which is prepared for in the same chapter of Hebrews: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4; KJV). Abel's "righteousness," according to the epistle's reading of Genesis 4, consists in a "faith" whose witness is borne by a flesh offering, the spilling of blood, which, it is implied, is to be regarded as more "excellent" than Cain's bloodless vegetable sacrifice. Whatever the reasons for the higher value placed by the author of Hebrews on a blood offering, it is clear that they are connected with the afterlife as an audible phenomenon that bloodletting affords of the blood it sheds: "by it," the blood of a lamb he has shed, Abel "being dead yet speaketh." The blood of Abel's firstling proves to harbor a vocal power that Abel's blood "voices" shortly after it is shed by Cain: "the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground," the Jehovah of Genesis reports (Genesis 4:10; KJV). Hebrews will transfer this voice of blood to "Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24; KJV).

New Testament or Old, Blake objects to the gore. An entry of December 1826 in Henry Crabb Robinson's diary records a pertinent impertinent remark of Blake's in conversation: "He

spoke of the Atonement[,] Said—[‘]It is a horrible doctrine—If another man pay your debt I do not forgive it—[’].”[125] Blake’s task in *The Ghost of Abel* thus becomes: to envision a bloodless atonement. By taking Byron’s *Cain* as his point of departure, Blake gives himself the occasion to wash the Savior’s hands. At the point where Blake takes up Byron’s version of the story Cain has already committed the crime and left the scene. In Blake’s telling the Self Annihilation of Satan, the spirit of accusation and embodiment of the *lex talionis* in the person of Abel’s ghost, occurs in a momentous event akin to the destruction of “Korah and all the men that appertained unto him” in the Book of Numbers, where they are said to have been “swept away in all their sins” when at Jehovah’s behest the ground beneath them suddenly opened and swallowed them up (Numbers 16:26; KJV). In the middle of the block of script on plate two of *The Ghost of Abel* Blake gives the following stage-direction: “Abel sinks down into the Grave from which arises Satan / Armed in glittering scales with a Crown & a Spear.”[126] This, then, is how Blake pictures the Covenant of Jehovah, that “Forgiveness of Sins which is Self Annihilation”: as an instantaneous re-presentation of one aspect of reality for another, which aspects, by the flash of intuition that accompanies the transition, are in the same stroke unmasked with clean lethality as the lurking spirit of vengeance.[127]

Blake gives a foretaste of this shock of re-cognition, all the more forceful for its being at first almost imperceptible, at the bottom of the first plate and the at top of the second plate of his play, when Eve, now fully revived from her fit of anguish over Abel’s corpse, appears to identify, correctly now, “the real Abel” with Jehovah: “I see him plainly with my Minds Eye, I see also Abel living: / Tho terribly afflicted as We also are. yet Jehovah sees him // Alive & not Dead.”[128] It is in the moment of this utterance that Eve savingly arrives at what Blake’s subtitle specifies as “A Revelation in the Visions of Jehovah.”[129] The antecedent of “him” whom Eve

sees plainly with her "Minds Eye" is ambiguous: Either "Abel" or "Jehovah" could apply. And precisely in this ambivalence lies Blake's sleight of hand with respect to forgiveness, which for him is another word for ambivalence's arrest. Adam, earlier, has shut his ears to Jehovah's address: "I will not hear thee more thou Spiritual Voice," he replies when called by name.[130] But now Jehovah's voice has taken "Form Divine," appearing to Adam's "Spiritual Vision."[131] As soon as Eve ratifies Adam's vision in her "Minds Eye" she finds herself able to see for the first time according to Jehovah's lights: in, so to speak, the light of life that mercy sheds. What is revealed to her according to, or "in," the vision of Jehovah is a vision of Jehovah himself, which is to say a vision of mercy: "Abel living," where before, in the vision of "Life for Life," she had only seen red: a corpse and then a ghost, visions of vengeance colored by her bloodlust.[132]

As the mode of perception alters, so does its object: The couple who as the curtain rose were seen kneeling at the side of their murdered son now turn away from the tomb and genuflect before Jehovah and are not seen or heard from again.[133] But their conversion is thus left incomplete, precisely insofar as it is an aversion from justice in the act of their adverting to mercy. Adam and Eve have merely exchanged the contraries available to them, and this does not for Blake amount to the achievement of forgiveness. For that, "Self Annihilation" is called for, and it occurs in short order with respect to Abel's ghost in an utterly unbloody event of transcendence of self, in depth and out of the depths.

Blake's exchange of Abel's ghost for Satan in this moment reveals itself as more than just an instance of death-for-death when set, in deep focus, against the contrary of Byron's *Cain. A Mystery,* whose presence in the background of his project, as its object of his simultaneous commendation and critique, Blake signals in his dedication at the top of plate one: "To LORD BYRON in the Wilderness."[134] "Can a Poet doubt the Visions of Jehovah?" Blake asks Byron

here in his playlet's curtain-raiser.[135] This is a rhetorical question. For Blake the answer is no; any whisper of doubt would end the quest for forgiveness at its point of departure. Doubt is precisely the quality that constitutes the vision of Byron's character Cain, and so consistently that it colors every object of his senses, whether divine or demonic. As Byron's Abel notes, to his annoyance, Cain wears gloom upon his brow, so the "interminable gloomy realms / Of swimming shadows" that Cain visits on his guided tour of Hades he might as well have regarded from the comfort of his own home.[136] This trip to the otherworld avails him nothing he couldn't have found on earth near Eden without the help of Lucifer—except precisely "nothing," which, in the course of a running pun on the word, Lucifer lets on is the "leaven of all life, and lifelessness."[137] Cain's infernal flaw is that since, as he himself admits, his "dust," which is to say, in particular, his sense of sight, is "Unworthy what" he sees, he sees "nothing save a mass / Of most innumerable lights" wherever he looks, from wherever he looks.[138]

In a famous letter to his publisher John Murray of November 1821, Byron traces Cain's crime to "the rage and the fury against the inadequacy of his state to his conceptions."[139] What Byron presents as a physical defect of fallen flesh Blake re-presents as a failure of imagination and thus opens a prospect onto self-reform—the reform of the imagination—that Byron never raises as a possibility for his protagonist. Blake shifts the emphasis of the problem from the eye to the object it beholds: namely, Nature. "Nature has no outline: / but Imagination has, Nature has no tune, but Imagination has! / Nature has no Supernatural & dissolves. Imagination is Eternity."[140] It comes as no surprise to Blake that Byron's Cain surprises himself by introducing the world to death in the act of murder in Act III. Byron's Cain had always lacked the ability to see things other than they are *not*, which for Blake is no better, or worse, than the ability, which belongs to Byron's Abel, to see things other than they are, or are said to be. The vision of the one

is just as blurry as the other's. Shown everything in this world and the one beyond by Lucifer, Byron's Cain allows himself to be persuaded to see "nothing." His own consistency, not Lucifer, is his hobgoblin. He "thirsts" in spite of himself after knowledge of Nature, and it leads him directly to a thirst for blood, a dead end, or what would be a dead end except that his murder of Abel begets a vicious cycle of bloodletting, still in force, sanctioned by Eve's curse: "May the Grass wither from thy feet! the woods / Deny thee shelter! earth a home! the dust /A grave! the sun his light! and heaven her God!" Eve cries.[141] This has at least the virtue, by Blake's lights, of making of Nature the utter desolation it should always be taken for, but this damnation of dust doesn't go far enough for Blake because it ripples without break straight through the maternal line, which Blake believed connected Cain directly to Christ, without provision for the breakthrough of forgiveness.

Hannah Arendt defines forgiveness as an intervention in an action already underway—the legacy of a mother's curse, say—"in a direction that was not inherent to it."[142] Blake's critique of Byron centers on Byron's, and Byron's Cain's, refusal to entertain the possibility of self-forgiveness. Byron's Cain renounces this act at the end of Act III, pinning his hopes rather belatedly on Abel's posthumous ability to follow through on the Christ-like prayer for God's forgiveness of Cain to which he had devoted his last words. With *The Ghost of Abel* Blake will intervene at just this point, demonstrating somewhat perversely the necessity, and possibility, that Abel, the victim, forgive *himself* if the *lex talionis* is to have a chance of liquidation. Blake is inclined to turn his sights on the spirit of accusation personified by Abel's ghost because he senses something fundamentally mendacious in the reflexive association of victimhood with forgiveness. Such an association he associated with the genre of tragedy, which he regarded as an affair of the "selfish affections…pitying & weeping" while "The soul drinks murder &

revenge, & applauds its own holiness."[143] Byron's Cain, like Byron himself, shares Blake's dim view of the orthodox account of the Atonement, offered to Abel's ghost by Jehovah on plate two of *The Ghost of Abel*: "Lo I have given you a Lamb for an Atonement instead / Of the Transgresor. or no Flesh or Spirit could ever Live."[144] Blake implies with this rebuke that Jehovah, who is, according to him, supposed to stand for the principle of unalloyed mercy, not justice, fatally misconceives of the Lamb as Cain, whom he identifies with Christ, who is an all-virtuous transgressor in Blake's view by virtue of the fact that, as explained in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Jesus "acted from impulse: not from rules" and broke all of the commandments.[145]

Byron's Cain grows impatient with his wife Adah, who, anticipating a little in Act III, tries to cheer up her husband by suggesting that one day the sacrifice of a single victim might well redeem the race: "By sacrificing / The harmless for the guilty? what atonement / Were there?" Cain snaps back.[146] His sentiment is predated by a decade by a letter from Byron to his friend Francis Hodgson, who was about to be ordained in the Church of England:

> …the basis of your religion is *injustice*; the *Son of God*, the *pure*, the *immaculate*, the *innocent*, is sacrificed for the *guilty*. This proves *His* heroism; but no more does away *man*'s guilt than a schoolboy's volunteering to be flogged would exculpate the dunce from negligence or preserve him from the Rod. You degrade the Creator, in the first place by making Him a begetter of children; and in the next you convert Him into a Tyrant over an immaculate and injured Being, who is sent into existence to suffer death for the benefit of some millions of scoundrels, who, after all, seem as likely to be damned as ever.[147]

Blake seeks a sacrifice that breaks the master-slave relationship that otherwise abides between what he calls "Humanity" and its "Spectre," not one, such as the one that is instantiated in the

orthodox Atonement, that simply shifts the burden of the "Spectre," the spirit of accusation, from one person to another. The mirror-writing on a scroll depicted on Plate 37 of *Jerusalem* reads: "Each man is in / his Spectre's power / Untill the arrival of that hour, / When his Humanity / awake / And cast his Spectre / into the Lake."[148] To designate a scapegoat is to keep the spirit of accusation alive, if comfortably out of sight and out of mind.

The goal of Blake's work is to awaken Humanity to the sight of its spectre as a first step toward the latter's annihilation. It is for this reason that Blake would have recoiled from the rationale that Byron puts in the mouth of the Angel who applies God's mark to the brow of his Cain: "To mark upon thy brow / Exemption from such deeds as thou hast done."[149] Byron's Cain, readers learned at the beginning of Act I, wears gloom upon his brow; this mark at the end of Act III thus looks suspiciously like the ratification of gloom, as if the Angel, like a photographer in a darkroom, were just developing a negative. Blake's account of the story omits any mention of the mark.[150] Instead of making the mark a point of the plot, a matter of remark, Blake introduces it as an event on the plate. The mark of Cain appears in *The Ghost of Abel* as "The Voice of Abels Blood."[151] This is the voice that Jehovah reports hearing when he informs Cain: "the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10; KJV). On plate one of Blake's play the voice cries out to Adam and Eve: "O Earth Cover not thou the Blood of Abel."[152] Blake heeds this cry by refusing to "cover" it, even as he sets up its speaker, the ghost of Abel, for Self Annihilation. The "ground" of Blake's pair of plates, it is revealed at the bottom of the second, is nothing other than what has been labeled "The Voice of Abels Blood." This phrase, inscribed on the body of a spectral male figure hovering open-mouthed in midair, stands as a caption, at once in the work and about it. It serves to indicate that everything that has gone before and above is to be understood as the utterance of Abel's blood. A halo of

un-inked paper circles the figure's head and bleeds into the background of the text-block on this and the previous plate. *The Ghost of Abel* is what blood would say if it could speak, Blake is saying. And its voice cannot be picked out in the chorus of angels that rings down the curtain.

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[1] See W. J. T. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art: A Study of the Illuminated Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 3. Mitchell names Jean H. Hagstrum, in his *William Blake: Poet and Painter: An Introduction to the Illuminated Verse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), as the coiner of the phrase "composite art" with respect to Blake's work. See the debate by Mitchell and Hagstrum in *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, ed. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970). Mitchell's essay for that volume is entitled "Blake's Composite Art," Hagstrum's "Blake and the Sister Arts Tradition." See also the discussion in Sarah Haggarty and Jon Mee, *William Blake: Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 157. *The William Blake Archive*, ed. Morris Eaves, Robert N. Essick, and Joseph Viscomi (www.blakearchive.org) presents digital reproductions of the illuminated works discussed in this chapter. For a detailed primer for the delicacies of writing about Blake's composite art, see Robert N. Essick, "William Blake, William Hamilton, and the Materials of Graphic Meaning," *ELH*, volume 52, number 4 (Winter 1985): 833-872. The essential book-length discussions of this topic are Robert N. Essick, *William Blake, Printmaker* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980) and Joseph Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[2] William Blake, *Jerusalem The Emanation of the Giant Albion*, plate 60, ll. 50-65, and plate 61, ll. 1-22, in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, commentary by Harold Bloom, revised ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 211-212.

Erdman's edition hereafter cited as "E," with plate (pl.) and line (l.) numbers where appropriate. *Jerusalem* hereafter cited as *J*.

[3] Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art*, 13.

[4] Blake, "On Homers Poetry"; E 269.

[5] Blake, letter to Trusler of 23 August 1799; E 702.

[6] Blake, "Annotations to Wordsworth's *Poems*"; E 665.

[7] See Walter Benjamin, "On the Image of Proust" (June-July 1929, revised 1934), trans. Harry Zohn, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 2, Part 1: 1927-1930*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 240: "He lay on his bed racked with homesickness, homesick for the world distorted in the state of similarity, a world in which the true surrealist face of existence breaks through."

[8] Blake, *Milton a Poem in 2 Books*, pl. 13, l. 20; E 107. *Milton* hereafter cited as *M*.

[9] See Walter Benjamin, "Imagination" (1920-1921), trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 280: "Genuine imagination…is unconstructive, purely de-formative—or (from the standpoint of the subject) purely negative." This volume hereafter cited as *SW* I.

[10] Blake, *M*, pl. 14, l. 14; E 108.

[11] Blake, *J*, pl. 5, l. 17; E 147.

[12] Blake, "Annotations to Wordsworth's *Poems*"; E 666.

[13] Blake, *J*, pl. 98, l. 23; E 257.

[14] Blake, "Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*"; E 636.

[15] Blake, "[Public Address]"; E 575.

[16] Walter Benjamin, "Some Remarks on Folk Art" (1929), trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 255.

[17] Blake, *M*, pl. 38, l. 49; E 139.

[18] Blake, *M*, pl. 88, ll. 3-5; E 246. On "mutual interchange," see Charles Williams's remarks on what he calls "co-inherence" in the course of his discussion of Blake and forgiveness in his *The Forgiveness of Sins* (1942), reprinted in Charles Williams, *He Came Down from Heaven and The Forgiveness of Sins* (Berkeley, CA: The Apocryphile Press, 2005), 177-189, and Williams's essay "Blake and Wordsworth," reprinted from the *Dublin Review* of April 1941 in Charles Williams, *The Image of the City and Other Essays*, ed. Anne Ridler (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 59-67.

[19] On the meaning of identity in Blake see Jeanne Moskal, "Alterity and the Spectre of Urthona," chapter 4 of her important study *Blake, Ethics, and Forgiveness* (Tuscaloosa, AL, and London: University of Alabama Press, 1994), 104-135. Except in her book's brief concluding chapter, "Forgiveness and Literary Form," 169-177, Moskal does not attempt to investigate the way in which Blake's "literary form" might "mediate forgiveness," as she puts it (169).

[20] Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, pl. 7, l. 10; E 36. This work hereafter cited as *MHH*.

[21] Compare T. S. Eliot, "Gerontion" (1919), ll. 33-47 ("After such knowledge, what forgiveness?" through "These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree."). This last line contains an echo of Blake's poison tree. Blake's tyger puts in an appearance in the next line: "The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours" (l. 48). See T. S. Eliot, *The Poems of T. S.*

Eliot: Volume 1: Collected and Uncollected Poems, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press and Faber & Faber, 2015), 32. Eliot reviewed Charles Gardner's *William Blake the Man* (London: Dent, 1919) in *The Athenaeum* for 13 February 1920. See T. S. Eliot, "William Blake," in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919-1926*, ed. Anthony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press and Faber & Faber, 2014), 187-192.

[22] Blake, *[A Vision of The Last Judgment]*; E 560. This work hereafter cited as *VLJ*.

[23] Of the many valuable discussions of this poem in its contexts see especially Zachary Leader, *Reading Blake's* Songs (Boston, London, and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), Heather Glen, *Vision and Disenchantment: Blake's* Songs *and Wordsworth's* Lyrical Ballads (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), and Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 153-166. See also Louise Joy's chapter "Education and Childhood," in *William Blake in Context*, ed. Sarah Haggarty (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 254-261.

[24] See Michael Ferber, *The Social Vision of William Blake* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 160: "Had Benjamin been English, he might have chosen Wordsworth instead of Proust as the vehicle for reintroducing the recollection of the past as a measure of the redemptive power of a future revolution, and he might have measured his own ideas of *apocatastasis* against Blake's." Earlier in his study Ferber achieves the crucial insight that "Blake's hatred of atonement rests in part on his critique of orthodox religion, with its transcendent external deity and its historical literalness. Blake admits of no salvation from outside, no imputation of grace

(or sin, for that matter) from a unique historical deed; Jesus and Adam are states of our own soul, and there is no 'outside' from which salvation might come" (77).

[25] On Blake and Kant, see Jerome J. McGann, "Blake and the Aesthetics of Deliberate Engagement," in his *Social Values and Poetic Acts: The Historical Judgment of Literary Work* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 32-49, and "William Blake Illuminates the Truth," in his *Towards a Literature of Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 9-37. On Benjamin and the Neo-Kantians, see Peter Fenves, "The Paradisal *Epochē*: On Benjamin's First Philosophy," in his *Arresting Language: From Leibniz to Benjamin* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 174-226, and his *The Messianic Reduction: Walter Benjamin and the Shape of Time* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

[26] Walter Benjamin, "On the Program of the Coming Philosophy" (1918), trans. Mark Ritter, in *SW* I, 101. On Blake and Newton see Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Newton Demands the Muse Newton's* Opticks *and the 18th Century Poets* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1946) and Donald Ault, *Visionary Physics: Blake's Response to Newton* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

[27] Benjamin, *SW* I, 101.

[28] Benjamin, *SW* I, 102.

[29] Benjamin, *SW* I, 103.

[30] Benjamin, *SW* I, 108.

[31] Walter Benjamin, "On Perception" (1917), trans. Rodney Livingstone, *SW* I, 95.

[32] Benjamin, *SW* I, 95.

[33] Benjamin, *SW* I, 95.

[34] Benjamin, *SW* I, 96.

[35] Benjamin, *SW* I, 108. On this term (whose range of connotation comprehends "religious doctrine") see Thomas Pfau, "Introduction. Reading beyond Redemption: Historicism, Irony, and the Lessons of Romanticism," in *Lessons of Romanticism: A Critical Companion*, ed. Thomas Pfau and Robert F. Gleckner (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 25.

[36] Benjamin, *SW* I, 108.

[37] Benjamin, *SW* I, 109.

[38] Benjamin, *SW* I, 109.

[39] Benjamin, *SW* I, 109.

[40] Benjamin, *SW* I, 110.

[41] Walter Benjamin, "Categories of Aesthetics" (1919-1920), trans. Rodney Livingstone, *SW* I, 221.

[42] Benjamin, *SW* I, 221.

[43] Benjamin, *SW* I, 222.

[44] Benjamin, *SW* I, 222.

[45] Benjamin, *SW* I, 222.

[46] On the role of color in Benjamin's early writings see Peter Fenves's essay and monograph cited in note 25 above; Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin and the Colour of Experience* (London: Routledge, 1998); and Eli Friedlander's series of essays on the subject, including "Learning from the Colors of Fantasy," *boundary 2*, volume 45, issue 2 (May 2018): 111-137. For a helpful discussion of Blake's view of line and color see, in addition to the sources listed above, Leo Damrosch, Jr., *Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 115, note 116.

[47] Walter Benjamin, "A Child's View of Color" (1914-1915), trans. Rodney Livingstone, *SW* I, 51.

[48] Benjamin, *SW* I 50, 51, 183. Benjamin's doctoral dissertation is "The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism" (written in 1919, published in 1920 by Verlag von A. Francke), trans. David Lachterman, Howard Eiland, and Ian Balfour, in *SW* I, 116-200.

[49] Blake, *VLJ*; E 565-566.

[50] Blake, *Descriptive Catalogue, &C. &C.* (1809), item number XV; E 550. This work cited hereafter as *DC* with the accompanying catalogue number.

[51] Blake, *DC* XV; E 550.

[52] Benjamin, *SW* I, 51, 50.

[53] Walter Benjamin, "'Old Forgotten Children's Books'" (1924), trans. Rodney Livingstone, *SW* I, 411.

[54] Blake, *DC* XV; E 549.

[55] Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art*, 12.

[56] Walter Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty" (1933), trans. Rodney Livingstone, in Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2, Part 2*: *1931-1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 733. This volume cited hereafter as *SW* II.2.

[57] Benjamin, *SW* II.2, 734.

[58] Blake, "The Little Black Boy," pl. 9, ll. 13-14; E 9.

[59] Benjamin, *SW* I, 410.

[60] Benjamin, *SW* I, 51.

[61] Benjamin, "Notes for a Study of the Beauty of Colored Illustrations in Children's Books" (1918-1921), trans. Rodney Livingstone, *SW* I, 264.

[62] Benjamin, *SW* I, 412.

[63] Benjamin, letter to Gerhard (later Gershom) Scholem of 22 October 1917, in Walter Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910-1940*, ed. and annotated by Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 100. This volume hereafter cited as *C*. For an astute discussion of this letter see the first section of chapter 2, "Seeing and Speculating," in Annie Bourneuf, *Paul Klee: The Visible and the Legible* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 65-83.

[64] Benjamin, *C*, 100.

[65] Walter Benjamin, "On the Mimetic Faculty" (1933), trans. Edmund Jephcott, *SW* II.2, 696-697.

[66] Benjamin, *SW* II.2, 694.

[67] Benjamin, *SW* II.2, 697.

[68] Benjamin, *SW* II.2, 697.

[69] Blake, "The Little Black Boy," pl. 10, ll. 26, 28; E 9.

[70] Benjamin, *SW* II.2, 695-696.

[71] Blake, "The Little Black Boy," pl. 10, l. 25; E 9.

[72] Benjamin, *SW* I, 51.

[73] Benjamin, letter to Scholem of 17 September 1917, *C* 94.

[74] Benjamin, *C*, 94.

[75] Blake, *J*, pl. 12, l. 13, E 155; "The Everlasting Gospel," l. 100, E 520.

[76] Algernon Charles Swinburne, *William Blake: A Critical Essay*, ed. with an introduction by Hugh J. Luke (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 136. Luke reproduces the first edition of Swinburne's essay, published by John Camden Hotten, London, 1868.

[77] Swinburne, *William Blake*, 297.

[78] Morris Eaves, *The Counter-Arts Conspiracy: Art and Industry in the Age of Blake* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 131.

[79] Blake, *J*, pl. 61, l. 22; E 212.

[80] Albert S. Roe, "A Drawing of the Last Judgment," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, volume 21, number 1, Blake Bicentennial Issue (November 1957): 37-55, at 37; Blake, *VLJ*, E 562.

[81] Blake, *VLJ*, E 559.

[82] Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake, 'Pictor Ignotus,'* in two volumes (London: Macmillan, 1863), volume 1, 370.

[83] See Thomas Dilworth, *David Jones: Engraver, Soldier, Painter, Poet* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2017), 177.

[84] Gilchrist, *Life*, volume 1, 370.

[85] Gilchrist, *Life*, volume 1, 370.

[86] Blake, *VLJ*, E 563.

[87] Blake, *VLJ*, E 563.

[88] Swinburne, *William Blake*, 20.

[89] Blake, *M*, pl. 36, l. 25; E 137.

[90] Blake, *M*, pl. 24, l. 73; E 121

[91] Gershom Scholem, "On Jonah and the Concept of Justice" (1919), trans. Eric J. Schwab, *Critical Inquiry*, volume 25, number 2 (Winter 1999): 353-361, at 359.

[92] See Blake, *VLJ*, E 565-566: "What it will be Questiond When the Sun rises do you not see a round Disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea O no no I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight I look thro it & not with it."

[93] For background see chapter 2, "Blake's orthodoxy," in Robert M. Ryan, *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature, 1789-1824* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 43-79, especially 49-50, and Ryan's essay "Blake and religion" in *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake*, ed. Morris Eaves (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 150-168. For a relevant discussion of a work not treated here see P. M. S. Dawson's excellent "Blake and Providence: The Theodicy of the Four Zoas," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, volume 20, issue 4 (Spring 1987): 134-143.

[94] Blake, *J*, pl. 3; E 145. On Blake's mutilation of this plate see McGann, *Towards of Literature of Knowledge*, 9-12.

[95] Blake, annotations to *An Apology for the Bible* (London, 1797) by Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff; E 619.

[96] Blake, *J*, pl. 12, l. 14; E 155.

[97] "To preserve the presence of the past while retaining the representation of an unrealized future—this is what Judaism had done throughout its entire history, under the authority of a code of law, by the mediation of ritual and in the intimacy of a subjective time resistant to the natural flow of hours—which kept it from becoming a religion of the world." Pierre Bouretz, *Witnesses*

for the Future: Philosophy and Messianism, trans. Michael B. Smith (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 11.

[98] Blake, *M*, pl. 27, l. 10; E 124.

[99] See G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records*, second ed., (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Center for Studies in British Art, 2004), 392: "I can yet recal [sic] it when, on one occasion, dwelling upon the exquisite beauty of the parable of the Prodigal, he began to repeat a part of it; but at the words, 'When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him,' could go no further; his voice faltered, and he was in tears." This volume cited hereafter as *BR*.

[100] Blake, *J*, pl. 99; E 259.

[101] Blake, *J*, pl. 91, ll. 54-56; E 252.

[102] Blake, *J*, pl. 91, ll. 52-53; E 252.

[103] Blake, *J*, pl. 91, l. 1; E 251.

[104] Blake, *J*, pl. 88, l. 2; E 246.

[105] Blake, *J*, pl. 88, ll. 49-50; E 246.

[106] Blake, *M*, pl. 35, ll. 42-45; E 136.

[107] Blake, *M*, pl. 15, ll. 21-22; E 109.

[108] Blake, *M*, pl. 15, l. 32; E 109.

[109] Blake, *J*, pl. 13, ll. 59-60; E 157.

[110] Blake, *J*, pl. 13, l. 6-pl. 14, l. 1; E 158.

[111] Blake, *J*, pl. 36, l. 58; E 183.

[112] Blake, *J*, pl. 48, ll. 30-39; E 197.

[113] Blake, *J*, pl. 24, l. 54; E 170.

[114] "Interpolated" is the term that W. H. Stevenson employs in his note to pl. 60, l. 69, in his edition of the poem in his *Blake: The Complete Poems*, third edition (London: Longman, 2007), 793. See also his note to pl. 62, ll. 1-2, on p. 797.

[115] This collocation also occurs in the "interpolated" plate 61 of *Jerusalem*, l. 1. Stevenson notes that "The text of this plate is very much in the manner of *The Ghost of Abel*" (794). The most searching examination to date of *The Ghost of Abel* is the one Jerome McGann conducts in his "Blake and Byron; or, Art and Imagination after the Second Fall," *Christianity and Literature*, volume 66, issue 4 (September 2017): 609-630. See also his chapter "Byron" in *William Blake in Context*, ed. Sarah Haggarty (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 200-210.

[116] Blake, *The Ghost of Abel*, pl. 1; E 270. This work cited hereafter as *GA*.

[117] Blake, *GA*, pl. 1, l. 10, l. 9; E 271.

[118] Blake, *GA*, pl. 1, l. 6, ll. 17-18; E 271.

[119] Blake, *GA*, pl. 2, ll. 4-5; E 272. See Psalm 51:17 (KJV): "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

[120] Blake, *GA*, pl. 2, l. 20; E 272.

[121] Blake, *GA*, pl. 2, ll. 18-21; E 272.

[122] Blake, *MHH*, pl. 8 , l. 38 ; E 37.

[123] Blake, *GA*, pl. 2, ll. 1-2 ; E 271.

[124] Blake, *GA*, pl. 1, l. 9; E 271.

[125] Bentley, *BR*, 453.

[126] Blake, *GA*, pl. 2, between ll. 12-13; E 272.

[127] Blake, *J*, pl. 98, l. 23; E 257.

[128] Blake, *GA*, pl. 1, ll. 23-24 and pl. 2, l. 1; E 271.

[129] Blake, *GA*, pl. 1; E 270.

[130] Blake, *GA*, pl. 1, l. 1; E 271.

[131] Blake, *GA*, pl. 1, l. 21, l. 22; E 271.

[132] Blake, *GA*, pl. 1, l. 23 and pl. 1, l. 14; E 271.

[133] See Blake, "Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*": "As the Eye—Such the Object" (E 645).

[134] Blake, *GA*, pl. 1; E 270.

[135] Blake, *GA*, pl. 1; E 270.

[136] Lord Byron, *Cain. A Mystery*, Act II, scene ii, ll. 30-31. The text quoted here is *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, vol. 6 of 7, ed. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 260. This work cited hereafter as *CPW*.

[137] Byron, *Cain*, II.ii.240-241; *CPW*, vol. 6, 267.

[138] Byron, *Cain*, I.i.116, 118-120; *CPW*, vol. 6, 255.

[139] Letter to John Murray of 3 November 1821. *'In the wind's eye': Byron's Letters and Journals, volume 9, 1821-1822*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979), 54.

[140] Blake, *GA*, pl. 1; E 270.

[141] Byron, *Cain*, II.ii.238, *CPW*, vol. 6, 267; III.i.441-443, *CPW*, vol. 6, 291.

[142] Quoted in Marie Luise Knott, *Unlearning with Hannah Arendt*, trans. David Dollenmayer (New York: Other Press, 2014), 74. See Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch, 1950-1973: Erster Band*, ed. Ursula Ludz and Ingeborg Nordmann (Munich and Berlin: Piper Verlag, 2002), 312 (entry of February 1953): "Verzeihung, Erbarmen, Versöhnung machen nichts rückgängig,

sondern führen die begonnene Handlung weiter, aber in eine Richtung, die nicht in ihr lag." See the discussion in Roger Berkowitz, "Reconciling Oneself to the Impossibility of Reconciliation: Judgment and Worldliness in Hannah Arendt's Politics," in *Artifacts of Thinking: Reading Hannah Arendt's* Denktagebuch, ed. Roger Berkowitz and Ian Storey (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 9-36.

[143] Blake, *J*, pl. 37, ll. 29-30; E 183.

[144] Blake, *GA*, pl. 2, ll. 10-11; E 272.

[145] Blake, *MHH*, pl. 23-24; E 43.

[146] Byron, *Cain*, III.i.86-88, *CPW*, vol. 6, 279.

[147] Letter to Francis Hodgson of 13 September 1811. *'Famous in my time': Byron's Letters and Journals, volume 2, 1810-1812*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1973), 97.

[148] Blake, *J*, pl. 41; E 184.

[149] Byron, *Cain*, III.i.498-499, *CPW*, vol. 6, 293.

[150] But see the last illustration (leaf 11) in Blake's illuminated manuscript of the Book of Genesis (1827), on which Cain receives from God a mark on the forehead as a "kiss of forgiveness," according to the commentary by Robert R. Wark in *Genesis: William Blake's Last Illuminated Work*, ed. Mark Crosby and Robert N. Essick (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2012), 19. See also the editors' commentary on this leaf at 45-46. Blake's heading for Genesis chapter 4 is "Chap IV How Generation & Death took Possession of the Natural Man & of the Forgiveness of Sins written upon the Murderers Forehead" (E 688).

[151] Blake, *GA*, pl. 2; E 272.

[152] Blake, *GA*, pl. 1, l. 8; E 271.

2. "The Wreck of the Deutschland" as Critique of Violence

In a talk of 1998 Geoffrey Hill invited his Toronto audience to elaborate "a theology of language" from a pair of letters posted in January 1879 by Gerard Manley Hopkins to his friend the poet and physician Robert Bridges.[1] The subject of the correspondence is almsgiving, a practice that Hopkins, ordained a Jesuit priest less than two years before, urges the "unorthodox Christian" Bridges to take up even in default of faith or prayer.[2] Hopkins encloses for Bridges' regard the poems "The Silver Jubilee" (offered on the anniversary of the Bishop of Shrewsbury's twenty-sixth year of episcopate) and "The May Magnificat" (a sprung-rhythm showpiece for a community celebration of the month of Mary, 1878) in the second letter on alms, which opens: "Morals and scansion not being in one keeping..."[3] But the contents of the package confound this anxious distinction between art and prudence. Hopkins presses the poems on Bridges with the undisguised aim of converting him—"you told me something of your views about the deity, which were not as they should be"—not by preaching but in the course of bringing him, as Hopkins puts it, "up to the point of sensible inconvenience."[4] Writing these poems, a devotional exercise of his muse, had been for Hopkins a sensible sacrifice—on the order of curtailing his monthly book allowance, he suggests (although not, he is clear, to be equated with "the use of hairshirts")—and he means Bridges to pay in kind, by responding to them without prejudice.[5]

Hopkins taxes his readers' capacity to discriminate between morals and scansion—as a prelude to reconceiving the form of their interpenetration on the page and in the ear. Hopkins half-apologizes to Bridges for his presumptuousness in insisting to him that almsgiving is both "pure Christianity" and "pure sense."[6] Prioritizing his priestly duties over his poetic pleasures, Hopkins lives on the edge of their mutual encroachment. Yet sometimes one can be arranged to

enclose the other without damage to either. It is in this instance that the idea of almsgiving is called in to preserve the propriety of the enterprise. This poetry causes "sensible inconvenience" to both reader and writer one way or another, whether by wearing its doctrine on its sleeve or by enforcing what Hill calls "the abrupt, unlooked-for semantic recognition understood as corresponding to an act of mercy or grace."[7] Sometimes a poem by Hopkins will do both at once, often by virtue of the rhythm he dubbed "sprung"—because it springs on the reader an otherwise unheard distinction between mortification of the flesh and the giving of glory to God.

The stranding of the passenger steamer *Deutschland* on 6-7 December 1875 near the mouth of the Thames had illuminated for Hopkins the intimate terms on which sportulae consort with force—what he came to call in his great ode on the wreck "stress." That poem, begun immediately on a tip from the rector of Hopkins's theologate in North Wales, presents divine violence as a gift: the gift of God's forgiveness whose special property is its emptiness.[8] Sprung rhythm's initial public offering, "The Wreck of the Deutschland" emerges as an act of creative destruction, created to destroy in one stroke the "common rhythm" of English verse and the even commoner economy of exchange in which givers and takers find their gifts caught up.[9] Hopkins means his new music to wreck reciprocity as a model for charity and replace it with an intercourse at once more sensible and less convenient. This fresh relationship, forgiveness, is the most stressful gift going for all involved in its rhythm, which incorporates time into its "*reductio ad nihilum*" of the held-in-common contents of the past.[10]

Hill calls for a "theology of language" that would identify "the action of grace in one of its minor, but far from trivial, types" as a "shock" of recognition at once semantic and ethical.[11] Language, in this theology, would be the site of a second-order or reflexive recognition: the recognition that "semantic recognition" and "ethical recognition" coincide.[12] This "shock" to the

second power would be fatal in the sense that those who undergo it would find themselves caught up in "a memorializing, a memorizing, of the dead" the performance of which entails a species of self-mortification categorically different from yet answerable to the giving of alms.[13] On 11 May 1868, having resolved earlier in the month to become a priest, Hopkins had burned his poetic manuscripts (his journal records the "Slaughter of the innocents."), verses, as he explained ten years later to his former schoolmaster the (Anglican) Canon Richard Watson Dixon, "not belonging to my profession."[14] "I saw they wd. interfere with my state and vocation," he told Bridges at the time, in the next sentence promising to send him the latest versions of poems already in Bridges' safekeeping.[15] Hopkins enclosed in this letter some "Lines for a picture" of Saint Dorothea of Caesarea, hoping his friend would "master the peculiar beat" he had developed for them, he says here, from Shakespeare.[16] The four-foot lines include "Quinces, loók, whén not one" and "Whát the cóld mónth allows—," where the stress, not the syllable, makes the unit of measure.[17]

The "new rhythm" whiffed here is the one, Hopkins tells Dixon in October 1878, the "echo" of which had long been "haunting" his ear when the *Deutschland* wrecked in December 1875 and occasioned the ode in the course of whose composition he "realised on paper" its principle at length.[18] Sprung rhythm attends the points of tangency that relate Hopkins's poetic to his professional career, the moments of his recognition that these two tracks are doomed to diverge without ever quite quitting each other's company. It is an insight that registers in his correspondence as something of a shock entirely appropriate to "the word Sprung" which, Hopkins tells Dixon on 10 March 1879, "means something like <u>abrupt</u> and applies by rights only where one stress follows another running, without syllable between."[19] A two-part poem of October 1882 captures the dilemma Hopkins faces and the response to it he countenances. "How

to keep… / Back beauty…?" Saint Winefred's maidens sing in "The Leaden Echo."[20] In a diary entry of 6 November 1865 Hopkins, "by God's grace," had "resolved to give up all beauty until I had His leave for it."[21] "Keep" here, as elsewhere in Hopkins's verse, notably the sprung-rhythm sonnet of March/April 1877, "As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame," in which "the just man" of the sestet "Keeps gráce," carries the double sense of holding back and giving up.[22] "Keeping" mortal beauty in tension with God's grace is the burden, too, of the echo "Spáre!" that, as the first line of "The Golden Echo," completes the last line of "The Leaden Echo": "Despair, despair despair, despair."[23] Almsgiving—in which human and divine charity "meet," to recall the culminating action of a sonnet of August 1885—poises on this inflection point.[24] To give alms, as Hopkins had advised Bridges to do, is to "Give beauty back…to God beauty's self and beauty's giver."[25]

"Even Walt Whitman nurses the sick," Hopkins tells Bridges in January 1879, shaming his friend into charity by this unfavorable comparison with the man he, Hopkins, would deem in 1882 "a very great scoundrel."[26] In the latter letter Hopkins objects to Bridges' likening of "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo" to one of Whitman's poems. The distinction between his own "long lines" and Whitman's Hopkins locates in Whitman's refusal to recognize the regularities of his own rhythms: "In a matter like this a thing does not exist, is not done unless it is wittingly and willingly done; to recognise the form you are employing and to mean it is everything."[27] Although in "Spirit that form'd this scene" Whitman betrays "a preference for the alexandrine" (which Hopkins says he shares), he both means to and does write "rhythmic prose."[28] "His 'savage' [Hopkins is quoting Whitman's line 6] style has advantages, and he has chosen it; he says so. But you cannot eat your cake and keep it: he eats his offhand, I keep mine. It makes a very great difference."[29] The difference lies in the cake's final destination. To the

question “how meet beauty?” Hopkins would answer “Merely meet it.”[30] Whitman lets “rhythm run to seed,” whereas Hopkins “keeps” his lines “weighed and timed,” in keeping with the shapeliness of their beauty’s source and station.[31] If Whitman’s technique is unkempt, Tennyson’s keeps up its “chryselephantine” appearances too pointedly, sometimes to the point of preciosity. Hopkins faults the *Idylls* in particular for their “incorrect, uncanonical…keepings”: “Each scene is a triumph of language and of bright picturesque but just like a charade—where real lace and good silks and real jewelry are used, because the actors are private persons and wealthy, but it is acting all the same and not only so but the make-up has less pretence of correct keeping than at Drury Lane.”[32] Whitman devours his alms as fast as he flings them abroad; Tennyson makes a charade of charity by overearning his keep.

Among studies of charity those of the Catholic philosopher Jean-Luc Marion are perhaps the most carefully “weighed and timed.” His 1994 essay entitled “What Love Knows” ponders the exigencies of “the greatest” (1 Corinthians 13:13; KJV) of the theological virtues, starting with the inexorable stress love lays on the present, thanks, in Marion’s profound pun, to its present- or gift-character. Unlike past-based faith and future-oriented hope, love “commences right away, and is fulfilled without delay. Charity manages the present. And the present, seen from the point of view of charity, signifies also, and before all else, the gift. Charity renders the gift present, presents the present as a gift. It makes a gift to the present and a gift of the present in the present.”[33] Charity, Marion writes, hustles its operatives to “the site of an individual Judgment” where its commandment-character comes into the open. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34; KJV). Charity bends the commanding gaze of the other on those who, in loving him, grant him the space to step forward. Neither a mere passion (“making love”) nor a duty

("doing charity"), on Marion's reading of Paul love rises to a mode of knowledge "which passeth knowledge" because it "does not depend on knowledge of the other" taken as an object (Ephesians 3:19, KJV).[34] Christ compels his followers to take love as their point of departure and "always to do it the kindness of supposing it the first among the virtues and the instance of grace."[35]

Marion's approach to Christ's love-commandment complements Walter Benjamin's interpretation of the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" in his 1921 essay "Critique of Violence"; together Marion's and Benjamin's biblical exegeses suggest a possible response to Hopkins's directions for reading sprung rhythm. In an essay of February 1983 Marion compares Christ's instructions to a director's notes for the actors in a play: "Why perform the instructions? Not in order piously to execute a testament or the last wishes of one condemned to death, but—because it is a matter of one condemned to be resurrected—in order to live the same life that led him to die and be resurrected."[36] Christ did not issue a "moral injunction," Marion argues, but modeled behavior with respect to his disciples that they might imitate with respect to each other; in taking up the challenge in his absence "they themselves will play the role of Christ."[37]

Benjamin likewise resists seamless translation of "semantic recognition" into "ethical recognition."[38] If the coincidence of these terms (Hill's) occurs without a shock, it is a sign for Benjamin, as for Marion and as for Hopkins, that somewhere charity has gone underperformed, that someone's sensibility has been left to its own convenience. Benjamin's essay introduces the idea of a bloodless "divine violence" whose character is "expiatory": it purifies the guilty of law, not of guilt.[39] Benjamin defines it as "pure power over all life for the sake of the living."[40] As an earthly manifestation of this anarchic power, the injunction "Thou shalt not kill" eludes straightforward application *ex post facto*. Once the deed is done—once death is dealt—ethical

recognition of the commandment can render its semantic recognition unrecognizable, as happens when a killing in self-defense comes under retrospective consideration. Benjamin's solution: the commandment "exists not as a criterion of judgment but as a guideline for the action of persons or communities who have to wrestle with it in solitude and, in exceptional cases, to take on themselves the responsibility of ignoring it."[41]

"Only remark, as you say that there is no conceivable licence I shd. not be able to justify, that with all my licences, or rather laws, I am stricter than you and I might say than anybody I know," Hopkins writes Bridges in response to a send-up the latter had made of the rhythm of "The Wreck of the Deutschland."[42] Most appraisers of Hopkins's verse have agreed, and Bridges himself would recall his late friend as one than whom none "wrote words with more critical deliberation."[43] Hopkins does not employ sprung rhythm as an out. "Stress is the life of it," he tells Bridges, and it is strictly for the sake of the living word—"the native and natural rhythm of speech"—that he endures and inflicts prosodic violence.[44] When Bridges says he will not reread "The Wreck" for any money and its author replies that he might instead reread it out of love, Hopkins is asking for charity not in an access of self-pity but for charity's sake alone.[45] In the first of his two letters to Bridges on the subject of alms Hopkins recommends giving them as a help to feeling "the difference between paying heavily for a virtue and not paying at all."[46] He expounds the point in that letter's sequel: "I meant: everybody knows, or if not can guess, how it feels to be short of money, but everybody may not know, and if not cannot well guess, how it feels to be short of money for charity's sake."[47]

The "sake" of charity in whose *extremis* Hopkins wants Bridges to plunge—for the sake of his, Bridges', own soul—Jean-Luc Marion understands as the "givenness" of the gift, whose visibility from the point of view of the gift's recipient it is the business of sacrifice to reveal and

whose visibility from the point of view of the gift's giver it is the business of forgiveness to reveal.[48] Givenness, charity's sake, becomes visible in what Marion calls the "redounding" (*redondance*) of the gift, that is, its "regiving": "the forgiveness that the recipient puts into operation by regiving (by redounding) the gift and saturating it with givenness constrains, or at the least leads (for it does not force), the recipient to recognize, most often *for the first time*, this gift as such, as given. And, in finally seeing the gift as given, the recipient *for the first time* sees in the gift, as if backlit, its giver, because he sees him in the glory of the event of giving in operation."[49] The recognition of "the gift as such" induced, if not enforced, by forgiveness—conceived (by Marion) as the gift's regiving by its giver—entails (what Benjamin calls) the "expiation" or "annihilation" of (what Hill calls) "semantic recognition," but not necessarily, however, for the sake of (what Hill, once more, calls) "ethical recognition," since a system of ethics has too little, or perhaps too much, to work with given nothing but "givenness," just as a prosodic program whose principle (or principal: "Chríst's gift") is "stress" finds itself starved, or perhaps oversaturated, with syllables.[50]

The nearest "The Wreck" comes to issuing a commandment is in the penultimate line of the fifth stanza of the poem's first part: "His mýstery must be instréssed, stressed."[51] Semantic recognition of this commandment is the poem's argosy, but it is immediately recognizable in its context as a redundant justification for the poet's gesture in the face of the gift of "breath and bread," a kind of air kiss whose effect is to reduce the gift to its givenness:[52]

I kiss my hand
To the stars, lovely-asunder
Starlight, wafting him out of it; and
Glow, glory in thunder;

Kiss my hand to the dappled-with-damson west:

Since, thóugh he is únder the wórld's spléndour and wónder,

His mýstery múst be instréssed, stressed;

For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand.[53]

In some lecture notes for 1873-74 Hopkins defines poetry as "speech which afters and oftens its inscape," speech "only employed to carry the inscape of speech for the inscape's sake."[54] In an undergraduate essay on poetic diction Hopkins dwells on the tendency of "parallelism in expression…to beget or pass into parallelism in thought."[55] If Marion is right to reduce the phenomenon of forgiveness from the realm of "ethical recognition" to that of gift-recognition (that is, givenness, where re-giving the gift amounts to its re-cognition), a parallelism emerges with respect to Hopkins's impulse to "detach" inscape, for its own sake, "to the mind."[56] Parallelism invites form to "impose itself as content," violently, but bloodlessly, expiating or annihilating its "sense."[57] Sprung rhythm solicits parallelism (for instance, "instréssed, stressed") and so forgiveness as Marion conceives it—the act of rendering, in the course of regiving or redounding it, the gift transparent to itself, in the interest of bringing the process of its givenness to visibility. Verse written "for charity's sake" would then be better understood as "eventual" than occasional.

In the passing event of the gift's self-transparency the receiver catches a glimpse of its giver. The temporality of forgiveness is temporariness. In the transience of givenness, which, Marion says, "passes of itself," the gift loses what Benjamin calls its "possession-character."[58] Forgiveness is the act of "honoring" divine violence as a gift—and always in particular cases, never in general.[59] To honor God's gift is neither to justify nor to glorify it but merely to recognize it as violence.[60] In honoring the possessionless character of the gift of divine violence,

forgiveness renders each of its objects possessionless in turn, a condition that Benjamin calls "justice."[61] In paying homage to divine violence the forgiver manifests it as the gift of mundane "downfall," the eternal passing away of all that is earthly.[62] Forgiveness is "receptively spontaneous and spontaneously receptive" with respect to divine violence, earthly transience.[63] It turns on (*schalten*) what Benjamin calls the "expiatory power" (*entsühnende Kraft*) of violence (*Gewalt*), which "power" (or "force") remains both distinct from violence and "invisible to men."[64] Divine violence turns off (or "eliminates") (*ausschalten*) "the resistance of the present between the future and the past."[65] Forgiveness honors this action as a gift by at once receiving it and reactivating it as an expiatory power that recedes from appearances. Divine violence itself appears in this ("secular") world as unbloody annihilation.[66] Benjamin gives as an example of the latter the fate of Korah and his company in Numbers 16:31-33: to be swallowed up by the earth beneath their feet.[67] Divine violence, which presides over all life "for the sake of the living," according to Benjamin "accepts" rather than "demands" sacrifice.[68] Another image for divine violence, to which in a fragment of 1921 on "The Meaning of Time in the Moral Universe" Benjamin gives the name "forgiveness," is the storm:

> The Last Judgment is regarded as the date when all postponements are ended and all retribution is allowed free rein. This idea, however, which mocks all delay as vain procrastination, fails to understand the immeasurable significance of the Last Judgment, of that constantly postponed day which flees so determinedly into the future after the commission of every misdeed. This significance is revealed not in the world of law, where retribution rules, but only in the moral universe, where forgiveness comes out to meet it. In order to struggle against retribution, forgiveness finds its powerful ally [*mächtige Gestaltung*] in time. For time, in which Ate pursues the evildoer, is not the

> lonely calm of fear but the tempestuous storm of forgiveness which precedes the onrush of the Last Judgment and against which she cannot advance. This storm is not only the voice in which the evildoer's cry of terror is drowned [*untergeht*]; it is also the hand that obliterates the traces of his misdeeds, even if it must lay waste to the world in the process. As the purifying hurricane [*reinigende Orkan*] speeds ahead of the thunder and lightning [*Gewitter*], God's fury [*Gottes Zorn*] roars through history in the storm of forgiveness, in order to sweep away everything that would be consumed forever in the lightning bolts of divine wrath [*in den Blitzen des göttlichen Wetters*].[69]

"Retribution" (*Vergeltung*, here), as Benjamin defines it in the "Critique of Violence" (where the word is *Sühne*), is a manifestation of "fate" (*Schicksal*), which shares with the world of law a characteristic "ambiguity" (*Zweideutigkeit*) whose annihilation is the office of divine violence.[70] To illustrate the fateful ambiguity of law Benjamin cites from Anatole France a satirical remark: "Poor and rich are equally forbidden to spend the night under bridges."[71] The "mythic" quality of all lawmaking lies exposed here as a superficial principle of equality.[72] The law purports to pertain to everyone equally, but its application cannot help but be "ambiguous" insofar as it obscures, under Ate's blinding influence, the singular condition of each of its subjects. Meanwhile, "from the point of view of violence, which alone can guarantee law, there is no equality, but at the most equally great violence."[73]

Justice, on Benjamin's account, is "a guarantee [*Gewährleistung*] of the existent," and insofar as it is also, as he says, "the power [*Macht*] of virtue and the virtue of power," it stands in need of a critique that might distinguish it from retribution, divine from mythic (or legal) violence, and forgiveness (*Vergebung*) from "reconciliation" (*Versöhnung*).[74] The business of the critic—of justice, violence, and forgiveness—is to arrange a particular relationship of history to

time. Benjamin's brief critique of forgiveness presents the latter as time's "ally," or, to render *Gestaltung* less freely, its "formation," "configuration," "shaping." In Benjamin's thought-figure the time of forgiveness takes the shape of a storm, specifically a "hurricane" that at once heralds and defers a second storm (*Gewitter*), full of thunder and lightning, the heavy weather [*Wetter*] of God's "fury" (*Zorn*). The expiatory power of divine violence takes place in the time that this encounter of fury and forgiveness marks, and marks off from history. History's "highest category," for Benjamin, is "guilt" (*Schuld*).[75] "Every world-historical moment is indebted and indebting [*verschuldet und verschuldend*]," he writes in an early fragment (*GS* VI 92; *MR* 241). Guilt guarantees (here the verb is *verbürgen*) the "one-senseness" or "unidirectionality" (*Einsinnigkeit*) of history.[76] The process of history unfolds irreversibly in the world of law; the course (*Ablauf*) of time runs senselessly, in no direction (*Richtung*), through the moral universe.[77] The alliance of time with history incites the lawful or fateful violence of retribution, but this strives with another, the compact of time with forgiveness, which brings to bear on history another kind of violence, that of justice. The time of fate, Benjamin writes in a 1919 essay, is not "autonomous" (it is *unselbständige*) but "parasitically dependent on the time of a higher, less natural life."[78] There is "in" the former kind of time "neither present nor past nor future."[79] The latter time, "of redemption, or of music, or of truth," is that in which occurs what Benjamin will call an essay of March 1931 "moral presence of mind" (*moralische Geistesgegenwart*) or "tact."[80] The tact of forgiveness is to enlist time to return history, mired in guilt, to presence, where it might suffer to be "drowned." In "the economy of the moral universe," Benjamin writes, time both "extinguishes [*auslöscht*] the traces of all misdeeds" and, "by virtue of its [*in ihrer*] duration, beyond all remembering and forgetting," helps bring forgiveness, though not reconciliation, to term.[81] "Justice is the striving to make the world into

the highest good," Benjamin writes in his 1916 "Notes Toward a Work on the Category of Justice."[82] The highest good would be one that "cannot be a possession" and through their relationship to which all other goods would become "possessionless."[83] Forgiveness is the alliance with time—the temporality—in which this strife occurs. In the time of forgiveness forgiver and forgiven together eject the gift—the given crime—from the "order of possession" (*Besitzordnung*) into the order of justice, where the spatiotemporal order no longer limits it.[84]

In his commentary on Hannah Arendt's phenomenology of forgiveness Nicolas de Warren describes this movement as a "release of the past to the past through a release of the future from the past" such that the forgiven ends up "*not* fully coinciding" with his or her past.[85] For de Warren, following Arendt, the dislocation of the forgiven from his or her action permits a "recovery of agency," of *who* he or she was before the deed was done.[86] For Benjamin forgiveness does violence not to the link between agent and action but to the ground of action itself, the interface of time and history. Forgiveness, for Benjamin, is the gift of a thoroughgoing "historical time" (*historichen Zeit*) to give or receive which dispossesses "the past" of its possession-character, a loss that destroys the self-possession of the forgiver and forgiven as independent agents who act into history and progress through time.[87] In staging the confrontation of the world of law (*Welt des Recht*) with the moral universe (*moralische Welt*) forgiveness effects a complete, yet momentary, spatialization of time and temporalization of space, in which "perfect storm" of time and history time becomes shapeable and, reciprocally, history "happy": a field of opportunity whose every inch lies open to penetration by the present—the presence of mind that fallows it.[88]

Hopkins dedicates "The Wreck of the Deutschland" to the "happy memory" of five Franciscan nuns whom the world of law (Bismarck's *Maigesetze*) drove onto the field of history

only to founder on the Kentish Knock.[89] The sea for Hopkins is the site, in "The Wreck," of what Jean Améry called—and called for—in his 1966 essay in defense of *Ressentiments*: a "settlement" (*Austragung*) of "unresolved conflict in the field of historical practice."[90] In Hopkins's watery *Wirkungsfeld* the work of "actively settling," without justifying, the nuns' deaths depends on the distance the poet opens up between the wreck off the Essex coast and his perch at St. Beuno's "Away in the loveable west, / On a pastoral forehead of Wales."[91] Sprung rhythm structures this gap by enabling, in Hans Blumenberg's phrase, "the transformation of the spatial distance of the spectator of others' distress at sea into the temporal distance of looking back on one's own shipwreck."[92] Departing from Coventry Patmore's premise—his "great general law"—that isochrony governs the disposition of English feet, Hopkins theorizes a rhythm that functionalizes stress and time.[93] In sprung rhythm, Hopkins writes in his 1883 author's preface, "the feet are assumed to be equally long or strong and their seeming inequality is made up by pause or stressing."[94] Hopkins appears to accept that "the metrical constitution of ordinary English phrases" comes to light in a scansion, or in a recitation, that is careful to "sever accent from accent by equal measures of time," with the concession that these intervals bear to one another a "nominal equality," as Patmore puts it, "no more than general and approximate."[95] Accent, that is, indicates, not constitutes, the law of isochronous intervals; it indexes the ear of the poet, which lies at the origin of the nominal "law." Hopkins pounces on this ambiguity at the heart of Patmore's *Prefatory Study on English Metrical Law* in a letter to its author of 7-10 November 1883: "The treatment of English spoken accent here is unsatisfactory: you nowhere say what it is."[96] Hopkins then supplies the lack of definition: "the English accent is <u>emphatic accent</u>, is stress."[97] Stress, then, requires a gloss, which Hopkins gives at length:

> But perhaps one ought further to explain what stress is. Stress appears so elementary an

> idea as does not need and scarcely allows of definition; still this may be said of it, that it is the making a thing more, or making it markedly, what it already is; it is the bringing out its nature. Accordingly stress on a syllable (which is English accent proper) is the making much of that syllable, more than of others; stress on a word or sentence (which is emphasis) is the making much of that word or sentence, more than of others. Commonly and naturally what we emphasise we say louder, and the accented syllables, words, and so on are in fact what we catch first and lose last in a distant speaker; but this is not essential. Also what we emphasise we say clearer, more distinctly, and in fact to this is due the slurring in English of unaccented syllables; which is a beauty of the language, so that only misguided people say Dev-il, six-pence distinctly; still even this is not essential. The accented syllable then is the one of which the nature is well brought out, whatever may become of the others.[98]

This argument *ex negativo* recalls the one Hopkins conducted seven or eight years earlier in stanzas 25-29 of "The Wreck." There the question was what the Tall Nun, that unnamed "distant speaker," had meant by her cry "'O Chríst, Chríst, come quíckly'."[99] It turns out, in stanza 30, the she meant scarcely more than she had said: "But here was heart-throe, birth of a brain, / Wórd, that héard and képt thee and úttered thee outright."[100] The Nun's "héart right," her "single eye," had "Réad the unshápeable shóck níght" and "worded" the gift of stress, bringing out its giver, as Hopkins has done with her own stressful word and urges, with his blue-chalk stress-marks, his reader to do with his.[101]

Hopkins had assigned stress a place in his metaphysics of language since at least the autumn of 1867 or spring of 1868, when, after completing his undergraduate studies at Oxford, he made a set of notes on Parmenides among which occur such statements as: "The truth in

thought is Being, stress, and each word is one way of acknowledging Being and each sentence by its copula is (or its equivalent) the utterance and assertion of it."[102] A "stem of stress" extends between perceiver and perceived that guarantees grammatical copulation: "without stress we might not and could not say / Blood is red / but only / This blood is red / or / The last blood I saw was red / nor even that."[103] Hopkins's technique of rhythmic "'overreaving,'" first named in a letter to Bridges of 14-21 August 1879, leans on this "stem" even as it serves to sustain it by inducing the verse to "flow in one long strain to the end of the stanza and so forth."[104] Perhaps the clearest explanation of the effect is the one Hopkins includes in the metrical note to his second shipwreck ode, "The Loss of the Eurydice," a poem dated April 1878, a month after the versified disaster: "The scanning runs on without break to the end of the stanza, so that each stanza is rather one long line rhymed in passage than 4 lines with rhymes at the end."[105] The same note, however, also specifies the number of "beats" to mark in each line of the stanza (four, except for three in line three), a feat whose ease of execution in this case makes Hopkins's talk of "one long line" sound breathless at best. Hopkins's distinction, as he draws it for Richard Dixon in a letter of 22 December 1880, between "over-rove" and "'free-ended'" lines, corresponds to Patmore's between the divisions he calls, in his study, "section" and "cadence."[106] Patmore proposes as "*the elementary measure, or integer, of English verse*" a unit he designates as dipodic: "the space which is bounded by *alternate* accents."[107] In the eyes of the versifier, the chief virtue of such "sectional admeasurement" lies in its promise of rendering the task of scansion separable only abstractly from its fulfilment.[108] Any given dimeter (two "dipodes," or "sections," amounting, in "common cadence," to eight syllables—twelve syllables in "triple cadence"), trimeter, or tetrameter line need not, says Patmore, be visible as such to be counted as such.[109] The scanner may simply consider the line catalectic to one or another degree, and, as a

composer would manage an isochronous bar of music, interpolate its, so-to-speak, missing syllables with pauses of equal duration, which, for Patmore, usually congregate at the end of the line.[110] By aerating it with rests Patmore punctures the integrity of the line of verse as it has ordinarily been understood to hang together, offering up for analysis instead a concatenation of discontinuous "cadences," as he calls them, whose ultimate continuity it takes the whole poem to achieve.[111] Patmore's system would seem to stand or fall on the fact or fiction of "metrical isochronism in English and other accentual verse," but sensibility of the mere "tendency" to the latter suffices for his purposes:

> Not only may metrical intervals differ thus from their nominal equality without destroying measure, but the marking of the measure by the recurrent ictus may be occasionally remitted, the position of the ictus altered, or its place supplied by a pause, without the least offence to a cultivated ear, which rather delights in, than objects to, such remission, inversion, or omission, when there is an emotional motive, as indicating an additional degree of that artistic consciousness, to the expression of which, Hegel traces the very life of metre.[112]

The ictus or accent, "an acknowledged condition of all possible metre" and that which manifests the isochronous character of verse, may be, in other words, "mental" as well as "actual," and in fact tends more to the former: "all-important as this time-beater is, I think it demonstrable that, for the most part, *it has no material and external existence at all*, but has its place in the mind, which craves measure in everything, and, wherever the idea of measure is uncontradicted, delights in marking it with an imaginary 'beat'."[113] Accent's function is to mark isochronous intervals "*by whatever means*."[114] Accent, however, is a rule "*itself unmeasured*," at least by Patmore.[115] Hopkins adds to Patmore's "accent" a dimension, which he calls stress or "strength,"

that, weighting or curving rather than measuring time, stands as a supplement to rather than a substitute for it.[116] Hopkins recognizes, with Raymond Macdonald Alden a quarter century after his death, that "to fail to conceive of some fundamental rhythm as flowing ever underneath each poem" ever dooms its "right reading."[117] In poetic practice, Hopkins's "patterns," as Hannah Sullivan puts it, "are primarily strophic (phrasal) rather than stichic (line-based)."[118] Sprung rhythm is the "natural" home for a poetics that, without blurring the line, acknowledges "another dimension than the line itself"—that regards the stanza, and perhaps the whole poem, as "one long strain, though written in lines asunder."[119]

Patmore's most serious fault, Hopkins tells Bridges, is "a certain frigidity when, as often, the ~~form~~^feeling^ does not flush and fuse the language."[120] To flush his lyrics with formal feeling, to fuse them line by line, Hopkins resorts to overreaving, two clear examples of which occur in a non-sprung (and non-stanzaic) sonnet of 1879, "The Handsome Heart." Of the enjambed pentameter lines "'But tell me, child, your choice; what shall we buy / You?'—'Father, what you buy me suits me best':" and "He swung to, push what plea one might and ply / Him.—What the heart is! like cárriers let fly—," Hopkins tells Bridges he seeks "a particular effect, an effect of climax."[121] The line-end should carry a "rising inflection" that drops off over the line-break with a "fall-away or diminuendo," prolonged here by dashes that allow the voice to gather strength for a new trochaic thrust.[122] In a letter to Patmore of 15 December 1883 Bridges complains of Hopkins's "absolutely wrong notion of rhyme": "He does not consider that it makes necessarily any pause in the rhythm."[123] The "buy"-"fly" rhyme in this poem had struck Bridges' ear as an "offence": offensively smudged by Hopkins's insistence on treating the words either side of the line-break as a "proclitic" and an "enclitic" respectively.[124] But such "little graces" serve Hopkins's aim to lash—reeve over, in his nautical metaphor—the lines together.

Another grace occurs in the fourth (sprung) stanza of "The Loss of the Eurydice": "She had cóme from a crúise, tráining séamen— / Men, boldboys soon to be men:"[125] Hopkins's metrical note to the poem finds four "beats" in each of these lines.[126] In a letter to Dixon of 22 December 1880-14 January 1881 Hopkins scans the first line: "She had cóme | from a crúise | tráin | ing séa | men"; the last syllable, he says, is to be "counted to the first foot of the next line."[127] Running Hopkins's "rising" scansion into the second line yields the splayed foot "men— / Mén."[128] To Bridges in a letter of 26 January-8 February 1881 Hopkins shows the compatibility of his technique of overreaving with Patmore's dipodic theory. His example is the first two lines of "Spring and Fall" (or "Margaret," as he refers to it here): "whereas in my lyrics in sprung rhythm I am strict in overreaving the lines when the measure has four feet, so that if one line has a heavy ending the next must have a sprung head (<u>or begin with a falling cadence</u>) as — Márgarét áre you <u>gríeving</u> [/] <u>Óver</u> Góldengróve [<u>and not e.g.</u> Concérning Góldengróve] unléaving — When it has only three I take no notice of it, for the heavy ending or falling cadence of one line does not interfere with the rising cadence of the next."[129] His counterexample is the poem "Brothers," which in the same letter he suggests is "narrative," rather than lyric, verse.[130] A draft opening of this poem appears on the back of a draft letter to Bridges of 20-23 January 1881; it includes the three-stress lines: "Bróught our bóys' plays ón, / Why, a part was picked ~~a~~ for John, / Young Jóhn; then ~~j~~féar, jóy / Ran a rével in the élder bóy."[131] An earlier version, from late summer 1880, runs: "Our boys' plays brought on / Part was picked for John, / Young Jóhn; then fear, then joy / Ran rével in the élder bóy."[132] The revision effaces the "counterpointed" character of the first foot ("Part was") of the second of these four lines—the better to emphasize, by encouraging a longer pause (itself emphasized by the insertion of a comma after "on"), the "free-ended and not overrove" quality of the previous line.[133]

Concerning “Márgarét,” Harvey Gross accuses Hopkins of “the performative heresy”: “Hopkins could not distinguish between metrical pattern and highly idiosyncratic reading.”[134] The lines of “Spring and Fall” are not, to Gross’s ear, sprung, but fall into regularly alternating trochaic and dactylic trimeters and tetrameters:

Már ga ret, | áre you | gríev ing

Óv er | Gól den | gróve un | léav ing?

Léaves, like the | thíngs of | mán, you

Wíth your | frésh thoughts | cáre for, | cán you?[135]

Hopkins’s “rhetorical stressing,” Gross writes, “violates a simple meter,” producing “a puzzling dramatic distortion.”[136] Gross does not go on to scan Hopkins’s unmarked line six, “It will come to such sights colder,” but his eye, if steady, would find four trochees there. Both Gross and Hopkins would stress the first syllable of the line’s first foot: “Ít will.” But for Hopkins this scansion would serve to reeve over the rising rhythm he sets up in line five: “Áh! ás the héart grows ólder.”[137] Hopkins starts this line with a “sprung head”: “Áh! | ás | the héart | grows óld | er.” He would count this line’s last syllable to the first foot of the next line: “[-]er / Ít | will cóme | to súch | sights cóld | [-]er / Bý | and bý,” etc. To keep the rhythm “rising”—rather than falling, as Gross would have it—Hopkins “reaves” (steals) a syllable from the end and “reeves” (lashes) it to the beginning of his lines. Rhythm and meter pun on each other.

Gross twists the sprung couplets of “Spring and Fall” into a kind of backwards ballad measure, but plainchant, which Hopkins tells Bridges he is setting to the poem, proves the nearer melodic analogy: “I think ^I remember that^ Patmore pushes the likeness of the musical and metrical time too far—or, what comes to the same thing, not far enough: if he had gone ^quite^ to the bottom of the matter his views would have been juster. He might remember that for more

than half the ~~time~~ ^years^ music has been in the world it had perhaps <u>less</u> time than verse has, as we see in plainchant now."[138] Music of "less" time requires heavier scoring if it is to "flow in one long strain."[139] Hannah Sullivan judges that Hopkins's diacritics, far from wrongfooting the reciter, rather "*overmark* the amount of stress we actually pronounce."[140] Taking a page from Poe, perhaps, Sullivan runs the first couplet of "Spring and Fall" as what she calls "one long dactylic line": "Margaret, are you grieving over Goldengrove unleaving?" That is plainly chantable, but it is hardly "dactylic." "Mārgărĕt, | āre yŏu grĭev | -īng ŏvĕr | Gōldĕngrŏve | ūnlĕavĭng?" only sets the eye at war with the ear, which, if it is attuned to Hopkins's, hears: "Márgarét, áre you gríeving óver Góldengróve unléaving."[141] This notation deforms its medium—verse—as much as any analysis, but its violence has the virtue of being self-inflicted and so unambiguous. It inspires original speech, "fine utterance" of what has never been said before.[142]

Overreaving allows Hopkins to present an idea, stress, in and as the material of prosodic experience, namely rhythm. Michael Hurley defines stress as "the net value of at least four factors—syllable length, pitch, loudness, and timbre" and notes that this value is relative, not absolute: "one can have various degrees of stress."[143] Hopkins contributes to stress's net value the additional factor of a certain violence, what J. M. Coetzee has called "a metaphysical ache" and what Hopkins calls, in the fourth stanza of "The Wreck," "a préssure, a prínciple, Chríst's gift."[144] The value of Christ's gift of stress—Benjamin's "divine violence"—fluctuates with the degree of "instress" it receives from those to whom it is applied. Sprung rhythm sets up a series of intermediate experiments with stress in the interest of achieving insight into the idea of stress, a continuum that does not admit of representation in language but can be presented as manifold of contiguous discontinuities, or cases of stress. Such presentation, or instressing, is doomed to

failure: instress will never meet stress with an equal "pressure." Overreaving, as an attempt to instress stress, succeeds in its failure to represent a poem's "one long strain" by presenting instead a "constructed continuity" that puts stress's constitutive discontinuities on display.[145] Instress is the acknowledgment or recognition of these stresses. It prepares the way for forgiveness understood as the interval, "ever-diminishable" in the experience of overreaving, between "stress on a syllable (which is English accent proper)" and the "one long strain" of the stanza or poem.[146] Forgiveness is the transition from "mythic" to "divine" stress, the kinematics of integration by which a hyper- or ultra-continuity—Hopkins calls this "mýstery" both "mercy" and "Mástery"—emerges from a set of discontinuities articulated in tension with each other.[147] The transition as sprung rhythm drives it is not smooth. Abruption is the life of it. Where the poet's mastery runs up against the Master's comes a bump or shock. This is the instant of transfiguration of what Benjamin, discussing two poems by Friedrich Hölderlin, calls "the duality of death and poet into the unity of a dead poetic world."[148] "The Wreck of the Deutschland" superintends this transformation, a mortification of poetic subject and object alike in the hope of securing a "sphere of total neutrality" with respect to both in which forgiveness might occur.[149] Such forgiveness would be "a historical yet nonhistoricist enterprise."[150] The continuity that Hopkins establishes between martyr and master—the continuum on which "Stórm flákes" shade into "scróll-leaved flówers, lily shówers"—guarantees the fact of transition at the cost of transience.[151] Snowflakes like petals melt into air. But because each has in dissolution its moment of truth—what Benjamin calls its "now of knowability" [*das Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit*]—as a singular experience in time, each remains innocent of the "timeless validity" on which reconciliation, rather than forgiveness, would rest.[152] Forgiveness synthesizes the continuity of

stress with the "unique experience with the past" that constitutes instress.[153] In forgiveness the latter makes the former manifest.

The first three words of "The Wreck" give the reader a chance to overreave along the line, as it were: the challenge of "letting the scansion run on…without break" through—or "throughther"—this first line's five (or are there just four?) syllables in search of the two "beats" that Hopkins's author's note is sure are to be found there.[154] These syllables bear no stress-marks in either of Bridges' manuscript transcriptions of Hopkins's lost autograph.[155] Would-be reciters must renounce metrical mastery of "Thou mastering me" if they hope to reach "God!" at the head of the second line, to which the same note assigns three beats, all likewise unpointed by diacritics: "God! giver of breath and bread."[156] An earlier version of these lines elides the enjambment to which the revision half-commits the reader: "God mastering me: / Giver of breath and bread;"[157] Freely "unended," the lines could shoulder a mainly iambic mantle: "God más | tering mé: | Gíver | of bréath | and bréad;"[158] The "rising" pulse is even plainer as revised: "Thou más | ter íng | me Gód! | gíver | of bréath | and bréad;" But Hopkins wishes the reader "strongly to mark the beats of the measure" without, however, "caring…whether the line begin with a beat or not."[159] "Be pleased, reader, since the rhythm in which the following poem is written is new…": One must take care to conjure the new rhythm nonchalantly *ex nihilo,* to spring it into being as if in self-surprise from a silent void of carelessness that is both its origin and its goal.[160] Forgiveness—and not, precisely, reconciliation—is made for moments like these, or rather of them. Here the reciter reduces the gift of rhythm to its givenness as it redounds to its giver ("God!") and givee ("me") in turn, "as- / Tray or aswarm, all throughther, in throngs."[161]

"To grasp the eternity of historical events is really to appreciate the eternity of their transience," Benjamin writes in the paralipomena to his theses "On the Concept of History" (*SW*

IV 407).[162] In forgiveness remembrance and forgetting enter into a dialectical relationship, which a reader's overreaving of a sprung-rhythm stanza sets up. The first moment of a forgiving reading is destructive. To let the scansion run on from line to line "without break" the reader must momentarily break with the event of the line-break itself. Letting the scansion run on soon leads to letting it run itself down and out of conceit with its own analytic function. What Michael Hurley calls "the particular realization of meter by rhythm in particular verse instances" involves, in the instance of sprung rhythm, the application of a reading practice closer to spectrometry than to any codified tradition of scansion.[163] "'Read what was never written,' runs a line in Hofmannsthal," from a play of 1894.[164] In 1878 Hopkins writes to Bridges that to do (the sprung rhythm of) "The Loss of the Eurydice" "any justice you must not slovenly read it with the eyes but with your ears, as if the paper were declaiming it at you."[165] To read with the ears—"properly"—would make the "stress" that is the "life" of the rhythm unmistakable.[166] Returning to the issue a year later Hopkins tells Bridges of the "raw nakedness and unmitigated violence" that struck him on reading the same poem, after a long look away, "as one commonly reads ^whether^ prose or verse, with the eyes, so to say."[167] Such violence remains unmitigated but "becomes all right" if one "but take breath and read it with the ears, as I always wish to be read."[168] The realization of meter ("a matter of arranging lines") by rhythm ("one of arranging feet") brings the violent "life" called "stress" to knowability in the "now" of performance by eyes and ears "that have first realised the effect of reciting" through study.[169] To do injustice, legal or mythic violence, to sprung-rhythm verse one need only read it "as if it were prose fantastically written to rule."[170] To do it, and to "do" its, pure violence one must prepare the effect of "making up by regularity, equality, of a larger unit (the foot merely) for ^in^equality in the less, the syllable."[171] Hopkins's author's note sketches such rhythmic recompense in action:

> Only let this be observed in the reading, that, where more than one syllable goes to a beat, then if the beating syllable is of its nature strong, the stress laid on it must be stronger the greater the number of syllables belonging to it, the voice treading and dwelling: but if on the contrary it is by nature light, then the greater the number of syllables belonging to it the less is the stress to be laid on it, the voice passing flyingly over all the syllables of the foot and in some manner distributing among them all the stress of the one beat.[172]

This procedure draws into the interior of stress the matter of memory, which Benjamin calls "the true measure of life."[173] "Looking back," Benjamin writes, memory "runs through life like lightning."[174] Whether "treading or dwelling" on the syllables or "passing flyingly" over them, the voice performs the "Penelope work" of memory, which brings remembrance and forgetting into tension with each other.[175] By turns retrieved and released is the elusive canon of "equality" on which English metrical law depends. The achievement of equality, or rather "equally great violence," in stress calls from the voice a feat of modulation that would interarticulate "in some manner" each syllable in the line or stanza with every other.[176] No law prescribes the relative "strength" of syllables; it demands discovery "passing flyingly."[177] "Which syllables however are strong and which light is better told by the ear than by any instruction that could be in a short space given."[178] But Hopkins believes the ear attunable to criteria that would bring the "secret" of stress to light *en passant*.[179] Actors, singers, and instrumentalists develop sensitivity to stress on long exposure to their art's "living tradition," while "the natural performance and delivery belonging properly to lyric poetry, which is speech, has not been enough cultivated, and should be," perhaps with the help of the phonograph, Hopkins suggests.[180]

Overreaving constructs the stanza on the fly—a flight grounded in study—as a "field of differences" (of "strength" as much as duration) from which springs stress, "the highest life in all

things" that is on each occasion of utterance "born anew."[181] Recitation is a stressful voyage, perilously glancing "from the grace to the grace," whose end is to keep the interval between strength and strength tending to zero, the point of origin of stress.[182] Overreaving also incorporates its construction into the performer's "involuntary memory," where it is "dedicated to the memory of the anonymous."[183] Overreaving makes of recitation "a kind of summary justice," in which each of its moments reveals itself as "a moment of judgment concerning certain moments that preceded it."[184] Each moment—every syllable—presents a chance for forgiveness understood as the shattered image of myth, whose "basic conception" is "the world as punishment—punishment which actually engenders those to whom punishment is due."[185] In the look of forgiveness—a small "displacement of the angle of vision" on the past—what leads up to an event confronts, anew in each present moment, what follows on from it.[186] There and then ("now") the world of law, the world as punishment, assumes what Benjamin calls a "genuinely messianic face" proper to the moral universe, where forgiveness comes out to meet punishment and engender those to whom forgiveness, the gift of grace regifted, is acceptable.[187]

Hopkins seeks with the poem forgiveness for writing it. "The Wreck" is what Vladimir Jankélévitch calls forgiveness's "organ-obstacle" (*organe-obstacle*): its occasion as well as its frustration.[188] The poet puts his petition not to God directly but in the mouth of the Tall Nun, whose cry as "she réars hersélf to dívine / Ears" the reader is compelled to voice and so implicated in the general wreck of recitation that sprung rhythm guarantees will go down.[189] Of "The Loss of the Eurydice" Hopkins writes: "to perform it quite satisfactorily is not at all easy, I do not say I could do it."[190] Yet perfect performance is possible in principle even if "time does not allow" for demonstration of the "mathematics and technicalities" that would prove it.[191] "A composer need not be able to play his ~~music~~ violin music or sing his songs. Indeed the higher

wrought the art, clearly the wider severance between the parts of the author and the performer."[192] The Tall Nun is the diva of "The Wreck," its consummate critic. Her virtuosity makes up by the equality of a larger unit—equanimity in the face of fate, "the guilt context of the living"—the inequality of the poet-reader's stuttering syllables.[193] Her genius is for speed. "O Chríst, Chríst, come quíckly" means, with its twin sprung feet, the Messiah "now."[194] Her cry constructs a "time differential" that indicates the narrowing gap between Wales and the wreck, author and performer, the events of the poem's first and second parts.[195] The forgiveness she brings to bear on the fateful situation consists in her single-eyed clairvoyance. At a closing distance in spacetime from the poet the Nun "christens her wild-worst Best," naming the snowstorm her salvation.[196] Her designation is no bolder, or less precarious, than Hopkins's placement of stress-marks along a line like the penultimate of stanza 26 ("What bý your méasure is the héaven of desíre…?") or the last of stanza 31, which ends: "is the shípwrack then a hárvest, does témpest carry the gráin for thee?"[197] The "wording" of these questions, like the word, "Best," that the Nun gives to her "wild-worst," both takes and makes the "méasure" of "him that present and past, / Heaven and earth are word of, worded by."[198] The Nun's martyrdom taps no hope for the future. It manifests a violence ("heart-throe, birth of a brain, / Wórd") that in the manner of the poet's stress-marks marks off its own time, "óutright," from within and against the background of historical despair.[199]

If for Hopkins "rhythm is a thing apart from language but upon which language rides," it may be identified with the "mércy that oútrides / The all of water, an ark / For the lístener," where the first enjambment allows the apposition of water's "all" to "mércy" as much as it suggests that "mércy" rides out the flood.[200] Stress "rídes tíme like ríding a river," but it also engulfs it.[201] Stress, the essence of rhythm, the realization of meter, runs tangent to time from

eternity: "there is no relation between any duration of time and the duration of God."[202] A star- and storm-delivered violence, it has hushed guilt and flushed hearts since Christ's Great Sacrifice, the Incarnation, begun before history began.[203] "The first intention then of God outside himself, or, as they say, ad extra, ~~ou~~ outwards, the first outstress of God's power, was Xt."[204] Hopkins wonders why God "outstressed" Christ further, from His *ensarkosis* (the taking on of "flesh") in eternity, through angelic or "aeonian" duration, into earthly time, where He became man (*enanthropesis*).[205] The first movement, Incarnation proper, never entailed the last, the Redemption, but Hopkins associates the Second Person's whole "outward procession" with the divine violence of Gethsemane: "It is as if the blissful ~~struggl~~ agony or stress of selving in God ~~could~~ ^had^ forced out drops of sweat or blood, which drops were the world."[206] The point of "the world" is to "name and praise" God: "the world, man, shd. after its own manner give God being in return for the being he has given it or shd. give him back that being he has given. This is done by the great sacrifice. To contribute then to that sacrifice is the end for which ~~all~~ man was made."[207] Atonement on this scheme feeds back directly into Creation, which Hopkins names "news of God" with two meanings in mind: both "God's utterance of himself…outside himself," the birth of a brave new world, and man's bruiting the latter about, his making it new, renewing its newsworthiness for every "now."[208] Hopkins gives to the reciter of sprung rhythm, the overreaving reader, the role of renovating God's gift of the world by redounding it to its giver.

The lesson of the first part of "The Wreck" is that God's wrecking ball, "the stroke dealt," swings the world into being from eternity into time.[209] Stress is a rolling catastrophe to which this or that incident on land or at sea contributes its mite. Forgiveness occurs whenever the history of stress is "granted the fullness of its past" by becoming, on the newsworthy reading of a poem, "citable in all its moments," when stress is "made to fetch out" the relative strength of

each syllable as well as "the meaning and feeling of the words."[210] A stanza under the stress of overreaving falls within what Hopkins, speaking of the self in relation to God, calls the "belonging field": the "outsetting" or "display" of a person considered as a central "point of reference" with respect to "the world of objects," part of which "is ^also^ part of the very self in question, as in man's case his own body, which each man not only feels ~~with~~ in and acts with but also feels and acts on~~x~~."[211] The incarnation of a poem in a reading with the ears turns it into a field of action belonging as much to the reader as to those forsaken ones for the sake of whose "happy memory" the poet writes.[212]

Walter Ong, SJ, summarizes the implications of Hopkins's confrontation with Duns Scotus's account of the Great Sacrifice: "If the Incarnation was the first divine decision or decree, so that the universe and human beings were created as a field for Christ's love to work in, Christ is antecedent to history and, instead of Christ's being in history, all history is in Christ."[213] If history is Christ's "belonging field," no poem composed in history belongs to its maker any more than to those who would remake it in interpretation. Its "life" and "afterlife" alike—what Hopkins's would call its "sake" or "fame"—stand absolved of the "order of possession."[214] Hans Blumenberg goes not quite far enough fairly to qualify Hopkins's violent practice when he writes: "What can be salvaged from the shipwreck of existence proves to be not a possession withdrawn, in whatever way, into interiority but rather the self-possession achievable through the process of self-discovery and self-appropriation."[215] A "proper" reading of the "left-branching" possessives of the last two lines of "The Wreck" would yield not "a process…of self-appropriation" but the discovery of a moment of disappropriation from the logic of possession: "Príde, rose, prínce, hero of us, high-príest, / Oür héart's charity's héarth's fire, oür thóught's chivalry's thróng's Lórd."[216] Forgiveness turns history, the field of fate and guilt, over to time

conceived as an expanse of stress belonging to no one and within which anyone with access to instress may "burn, new born to the word."[217]

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[1] Geoffrey Hill, "Language, Suffering, and Silence," in Geoffrey Hill, *Collected Critical Writings*, ed. Kenneth Haynes (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 405. This volume hereafter cited as *CCW*.

[2] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Volume I: Correspondence 1852-1881*, ed. R. K. R. Thornton and Catherine Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), lvii; 324 (letter of 19-24 January 1879). Hereafter *CW* I.

[3] *CW* I, 326 (29-30 January 1879).

[4] *CW* I, 325 (19-24 January 1879).

[5] *CW* I, 328 (29-30 January 1879).

[6] *CW* I, 325 (19-24 January 1879).

[7] Hill, *CCW*, 404.

[8] Among the handful of studies of Hopkins and violence, see especially Adrian Grafe, "'What I have done violent': Hopkins and Violence," *Cahiers victoriens et edouardiens*, number 60 (October 2004): 73-93. See also Amanda Paxton, *Willful Submission: Sado-Erotics and Heavenly Marriage in Victorian Religious Poetry* (Charlottesville, VA, and London: University of Virginia Press, 2017), especially chapter 4, "Catholicism and the Metaphysics of Longing."

[9] Gerard Manley Hopkins, "[Author's Preface on Rhythm]," in *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Norman H. MacKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 115. Hereafter

PW. This preface is dated by Robert Bridges to "'83 or not much later." See editor's note at *PW*, 314.

[10] John D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 183.

[11] Hill, *CCW*, 405.

[12] Hill, *CCW*, 405.

[13] Hill, *CCW*, 405.

[14] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Volume III: Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, ed. Lesley Higgins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 423 (hereafter *CW* III); *CW* I, 317 (5-10 October 1878).

[15] *CW* I, 186 (7 August 1868).

[16] *CW* I, 187 (7 August 1868).

[17] "St. Dorothea (Lines for a picture)," version (c), l. 40, *PW*, 58; l. 40, *PW*, 58.

[18] *CW* I, 317 (5-10 October 1878).

[19] *CW* I, 346 (27 February-13 March 1879).

[20] "The Leaden Echo," ll. 1-2; *PW*, 169.

[21] *CW* III, 335.

[22] "As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame," ll. 9-10; *PW*, 141.

[23] The two companion poems, whose lineation the editor numbers continuously, meet at ll. 16-17; *PW*, 170.

[24] "To what serves Mortal Beauty?," l. 12; *PW*, 183.

[25] "The Golden Echo," l. 35; *PW*, 170.

[26] *CW* I, 327 (29-30 January 1879); Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Volume II: Correspondence 1882-1889*, ed. R. K. R. Thornton and Catherine Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 542 (letter of 18-19 October 1882). Hereafter *CW* II.

[27] *CW* II, 544 (18-19 October 1882).

[28] *CW* II, 545, 544 (18-19 October 1882).

[29] *CW* II, 545 (18-19 October 1882).

[30] "To what serves Mortal Beauty?," l. 12; *PW*, 183.

[31] *CW* II, 544 (18-19 October 1882).

[32] *CW* I, 347 (27 February-13 March 1879).

[33] Jean-Luc Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 154. Hereafter cited as *Prolegomena*.

[34] Marion, *Prolegomena*, 168-169.

[35] Marion, *Prolegomena*, 168.

[36] Marion, *Prolegomena*, 140.

[37] Marion, *Prolegomena*, 141.

[38] Hill, *CCW*, 404.

[39] Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence" (1921), trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 250. Hereafter *SW* I.

[40] *SW* I, 250.

[41] *SW* I, 250.

[42] *CW* I, 280 (21 August 1877).

[43] Robert Bridges, *Three Friends: Memoirs of Digby Mackworth Dolben, Richard Watson Dixon, Henry Bradley* (London: Humphrey Milford for the Oxford University Press, 1932), 104.

[44] *CW* I, 296 (13-21 May 1878); *CW* I, 282 (21 August 1877).

[45] *CW* I, 282 (21 August 1877).

[46] *CW* I, 324 (19-24 January 1879).

[47] *CW* I, 327 (29-30 January 1879).

[48] Jean-Luc Marion, *Negative Certainties*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 153. Hereafter *NC*.

[49] Marion, *NC*, 145.

[50] For "Chríst's gift" see "The Wreck of the Deutschland," l. 32; *PW*, 120.

[51] l. 39; *PW*, 120.

[52] l. 2; *PW*, 119.

[53] ll. 33-40; *PW*, 120.

[54] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Humphry House and Graham Storey (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 289. Hereafter *J*.

[55] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Volume IV: Oxford Essays and Notes*, ed. Lesley Higgins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 121. Hereafter *CW* IV. The editor dates this essay to Winter 1865.

[56] *J*, 289.

[57] Michael D. Hurley, "What Sprung Rhythm Really is NOT," *The Hopkins Quarterly*, volume 33, numbers 3-4 (Summer-Fall 2006), 93.

[58] Marion, *NC*, 153; Peter Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction: Walter Benjamin and the Shape of Time* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 257. Hereafter *MR*. Fenves translates from Gershom Scholem, *Tagebücher, nebst Aufsätzen und Entwürfen bis 1923*, ed. Karlfried Gründer, Herbert Kopp-Oberstebrink, and Friedrich Niewöhner, in association with Karl Grözinger (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 1995-2000), 1:401. Hereafter cited as "Scholem."

[59] *MR*, 218.

[60] *MR*, 224.

[61] *MR*, 218, 257; Scholem, 1:401.

[62] Walter Benjamin, "Theological-Political Fragment," trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935-1938*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 305. Hereafter cited as *SW* III.

[63] *MR*, 224.

[64] *SW* I, 252; *MR*, 222; Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-1991), II.1, 203. This edition hereafter cited as *GS*.

[65] *SW* I, 84; *MR*, 100, 223.

[66] *SW* I, 226.

[67] *SW* I, 250.

[68] *SW* I, 250.

[69] *SW* I, 286-287; *GS* VI, 97-98. Cf. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Text, Criticism, and Notes*, ed. Chester G. Anderson (New York: Viking Press, 1968), 115: "The wind of the last day blew through his mind; his sins, the jeweleyed harlots of his imagination, fled before the hurricane, squeaking like mice in their terror and huddled under a mane of hair."

[70] *SW* I, 249; *GS* II.1, 199.

[71] *SW* I, 249.

[72] *SW* I, 248.

[73] *SW* I, 249.

[74] *MR*, 257, cf. 207; Scholem, 1:402; *SW* I, 287; *GS* VI, 98.

[75] *GS* VI, 92; *MR*, 241.

[76] *GS* VI, 92.

[77] Scholem, 1:390.

[78] Walter Benjamin, "Fate and Character" (1919), trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *SW* I, 204; *GS* II.1, 176.

[79] *GS* VI, 91.

[80] *SW* I, 204; *GS* VI, 91; Walter Benjamin, "Karl Kraus," trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 2, Part 2*: *1931-1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 436 (hereafter cited as *SW* II.2); *GS* II.1, 339.

[81] *SW* I, 287; *GS* VI, 98.

[82] *MR*, 257; Scholem, 1:401.

[83] *MR*, 257; Scholem, 1:401.

[84] *MR*, 257; Scholem, 1:401.

[85] Nicolas de Warren, "For the Love of the World: Redemption and Forgiveness in Arendt," in *Phenomenology and Forgiveness*, ed. Marguerite La Caze (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 34.

[86] Nicolas de Warren, "For the Love of the World: Redemption and Forgiveness in Arendt," 34.

[87] Peter Fenves, "Renewed Question: Whether a Philosophy of History is Possible," *MLN*, volume 129, number 3 (April 2014), 524; *GS* II.1, 601; Scholem, 1:402.

[88] *GS* VI, 98; *PW*, 119.

[89] *PW*, 119.

[90] Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits*, trans. Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella P. Rosenfeld (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 77, 69; Jean Améry, *Werke*, volume 2, ed. Gerhard Scheit (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta: 2002), 129, 142.

[91] *Werke* 2:129; *At the Mind's Limits*, 69; ll. 185-6, *PW*, 125.

[92] Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence*, trans. Steven Rendall (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 55.

[93] Sister Mary Augustine Roth, RSM, *Coventry Patmore's "Essay on English Metrical Law": A Critical Edition with a Commentary* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1961), 26. Hereafter cited as "Patmore." See also J. C. Reid, *The Mind and Art of Coventry Patmore* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 229, cited in Patmore, 67.

[94] *PW*, 116.

[95] Patmore, 12.

[96] *CW* II, 628.

[97] *CW* II, 628.

[98] *CW* II, 629.

[99] l. 190; *PW*, 125.

[100] ll. 239-240; *PW*, 127.

[101] ll. 225-230, *PW*, 126; On the blue-chalk stress-marks, see Hopkins to Dixon in *CW* I, 317 (5-10 October 1878).

[102] *CW* IV, 315.

[103] *CW* IV, 313.

[104] *CW* I, 363.

[105] *PW*, 390.

[106] *CW* I, 414; Patmore, 28.

[107] Patmore, 26 (Patmore's emphasis).

[108] Patmore, 26; cf. *MR*, 41.

[109] Patmore, 26.

[110] Patmore, 26.

[111] Patmore, 20.

[112] Patmore, 22.

[113] Patmore, 15.

[114] Patmore, 15.

[115] Patmore, 15.

[116] *CW* I, 358 (26-31 May 1879 to Robert Bridges).

[117] Raymond Macdonald Alden, "The Mental Side of Metrical Form," *The Modern Language Review*, volume 9, number 3 (July 1914), 305.

[118] Hannah Sullivan, "Emerging Poetic Forms," in *Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Late Victorian to Modern*, ed. Laura Marcus, Michèle Mendelssohn, and Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 111.

[119] *PW*, 117.

[120] *CW* I, 358-359 (26-31 May 1879).

[121] ll. 1-2, *PW*, 158; ll. 4-5, *PW*, 158-159; *CW* I, 363 (14-21 August 1879).

[122] *CW* I, 363 (14-21 August 1879).

[123] Quoted in Derek Patmore, *The Life and Times of Coventry Patmore* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 191; see discussion at *PW*, 407.

[124] *CW* I, 363 (14-21 August 1879).

[125] ll. 13-14; *PW*, 149.

[126] *PW*, 390.

[127] *CW* I, 414.

[128] *CW* I, 414.

[129] *CW* I, 425.

[130] *CW* I, 423.

[131] *CW* I, 418, cf. 429, note 15.

[132] ll. 6-9, *PW*, 165.

[133] *PW*, 421.

[134] Harvey Gross and Robert McDowell, *Sound and Form in Modern Poetry,* second edition (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 91.

[135] Gross and McDowell, 91.

[136] Gross and McDowell, 91.

[137] *PW*, 167.

[138] *CW* I, 424 (26 January 1881-8 February 1881).

[139] *CW* I, 363 (14-21 August 1879 to Robert Bridges).

[140] Sullivan, 111.

[141] Sullivan, 111. Compare "The Rationale of Verse," in Edgar Allan Poe, *Critical Theory: The Major Documents*, ed. Stuart Levine and Susan F. Levine (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 106 (paragraph 62). See the discussion in Jerome McGann, *The Poet Edgar Allan Poe: Alien Angel* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2014), 89-90, 177.

[142] *CW* II, 749 (letter of 5-8 November 1885 from G. M. Hopkins to his brother Everard Hopkins).

[143] Michael D. Hurley, "The Pragmatics of Prosody," *Style*, volume 41, number 1 (Spring 2007): 66.

[144] J. M. Coetzee, *Diary of a Bad Year* (London: Harvill Secker, 2007), 7; l. 32, *PW* 121.

[145] *CW* I, 363; Eli Friedlander, *Walter Benjamin: A Philosophical Portrait* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2012), 35.

[146] *MR*, 43; *CW* II, 629; *CW* I, 363.

[147] l. 39, ll. 79-80; *PW*, 120-121.

[148] Walter Benjamin, "Two Poems by Friedrich Hölderlin: 'The Poet's Courage' and Timidity'" (1914-15), trans. Stanley Corngold, in *SW* I, 34.

[149] Walter Benjamin, "On the Program of the Coming Philosophy" (1918), trans. Mark Ritter, in *SW* I, 104.

[150] *MR*, 165.

[151] l. 168; *PW*, 124.

[152] Walter Benjamin, "Theory of Knowledge" (1920-1921), trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *SW* I, 277, 276; *MR*, 166.

[153] Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History" (February-May 1940), trans. Harry Zohn, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938-1940*, ed. Michael W. Jennings and Howard Eiland (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 396 (thesis XVI). Hereafter cited as *SW* IV.

[154] *PW*, 118; "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves," l. 6, *PW*, 191.

[155] Plates 230-231 in Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Later Poetic Manuscripts of Gerard Manley Hopkins in Facsimile*, ed. Norman H. MacKenzie (New York and London: Garland, 1991), 32-33. Hereafter *LPM*.

[156] ll. 1-2; *PW*, 119.

[157] Plate 230 in *LPM*, 32.

[158] See Hopkins's phrase "free-ended" in the letter dated 22 December 1880-16 January 1881 to Dixon in *CW* I, 414.

[159] *PW*, 118.

[160] *PW*, 118.

[161] "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves," ll. 5-6, *PW*, 191.

[162] "Paralipomena to 'On the Concept of History'" (1940), trans. Edmund Jephcott and Howard Eiland, in *SW* IV, 407.

[163] Michael D. Hurley, "Theologies of Inspiration: William Blake and Gerard Manley Hopkins," in *Constructing Nineteenth-Century Religion: Literary, Historical, and Religious Studies in Dialogue*, ed. Joshua King and Winter Jade Werner (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2019), 264; on "spectrometry" see *SW* IV, 402.

[164] *SW* IV, 405.

[165] *CW* II, 296 (13-21 May 1878).

[166] *CW* II, 296.

[167] *CW* II, 354-355 (22 April 1879); see the discussion in Angela Leighton, *Hearing Things: The Work of Sound in Literature* (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 1-2.

[168] *CW* II, 355.

[169] *CW* II, 747-748 (5-8 November 1885).

[170] *PW*, 118.

[171] *CW* II, 748; see Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Volume V: Sermons and Spiritual Writings*, ed. Jude V. Nixon and Noel Barber, SJ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 382 (hereafter *CW* V), on the verbal-nominative phenomenon that Hopkins calls "the doing be."

[172] *PW*, 118.

[173] Walter Benjamin, "Notes from Svendborg, Summer 1934" (July-October 1934), trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *SW* II.2, 788.

[174] *SW* II.2, 788.

[175] Walter Benjamin, "On the Image of Proust" (June-July 1929, revised 1934), trans. Harry Zohn, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 2, Part 1: 1927-1930*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 238.

[176] *SW* I, 249.

[177] *PW*, 118.

[178] *PW*, 118.

[179] *CW* II, 748 (5-8 November 1885).

[180] *CW* II, 748.

[181] Friedlander, 69; Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 459 (entry N1a,4). Hereafter *A*.

[182] l. 24, *PW*, 119; cf. *CW* V, 386-7 on John 1:16; see also Friedlander, 70.

[183] *SW* IV, 403, 406.

[184] *SW* IV, 407.

[185] *SW* IV, 403.

[186] *A*, 459 (entry N1a,3).

[187] *SW* IV, 187.

[188] Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Forgiveness*, trans. Andrew Kelley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 125-128; see the discussion in Aaron T. Looney, *Vladimir Jankélévitch: The Time of Forgiveness* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 164.

[189] ll. 150-151; *PW*, 124.

[190] *CW* II, 748 (5-8 November 1885).

[191] *CW* II, 748.

[192] *CW* II, 748.

[193] Walter Benjamin, "Fate and Character," in *SW* I, 204.

[194] l. 191; *PW*, 125.

[195] *A*, 456 (entry N1,2); see the discussion in Friedlander, 69-70.

[196] l. 192; *PW*, 125.

[197] l. 207, *PW*, 126; l. 248; *PW*, 127.

[198] ll. 229-230; *PW*, 126.

[199] ll. 239-240; *PW*, 127.

[200] Meredith Martin, "Picturing Rhythm," in *Critical Rhythm: The Poetics of a Literary Life Form*, ed. Ben Glaser and Jonathan Culler (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 199; ll. 257-259, *PW*, 127.

[201] l. 47; *PW*, 120.

[202] Hopkins's retreat note of 8 November 1881, in *CW* V, 360.

[203] On Hopkins and Scotus on the "Great Sacrifice," see the editors' discussion in *CW* V, 18 and 358.

[204] *CW* V, 18.

[205] *CW* V, 435 (entry of 25 August 1885); *CW* V, 361; cf. *CW* V, 429, and the editor's discussion in Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Christopher Devlin, SJ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 114.

[206] *CW* V, 361.

[207] *CW* V, 348 (entry of 7 August 1882).

[208] *CW* V, 348.

[209] l. 44; *PW*, 120.

[210] Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *SW* IV, 390 (thesis III); *PW*, 118.

[211] *CW* V, 354-355.

[212] *PW*, 119.

[213] Walter J. Ong, SJ, *Hopkins, the Self, and God* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 109. See 99-106 for a valuable discussion of Hopkins and the sacrament of penance that complements the concerns of this chapter.

[214] On "life" and "afterlife" see Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator" (1921), trans. Hary Zohn, in *SW* I, 254; on "sake" see *CW* I, 359 (26-31 May 1879 to Robert Bridges); on "fame" see *CW* I, 301 (4 June 1878 to Dixon); *MR*, 257; Scholem, 1:401.

[215] Blumenberg, 14.

[216] See James Milroy, *The Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: André Deutsch, 1977), 212, cited *PW*, 350; ll. 279-280, *PW*, 128.

[217] l. 265; *PW*, 128.

3. David Jones's "Balaam business": The Poetics of Forgiveness after Passchendaele

The Book of Balaam's Ass evokes a world to come in which God's forgiveness might make itself unmistakable. The setting is what Jones calls, here and elsewhere among his poetic manuscripts, "the Zone." The leading feature of the Zone is its flatness. Forgiveness, in this vision, compels the dissolution of hierarchy. In the Zone forgiveness goes by the name of "influence." For Jones forgiveness is a state of the world that manifests itself as a leveling force. Forgiveness flows through the Zone exalting every valley and making low every mountain. It is a form of violence that sheds no blood but expiates guilt by annihilating evil, whose sign is subjection in all its guises. Forgiveness as Jones presents it applies not to any particular deed but to the whole life, including the afterlife, of those who find themselves in the Zone.[1] Sacrifice or atonement may take place in the Zone, but precisely because the meaninglessness that reigns in the Zone renders all actions interchangeable, neither constitutes a mechanism of expiation there. The Zone is a plenum of guilt, and there is no "outside" the Zone to invoke. The only space for salvation is inside the Zone itself, and it is the function of Jones's poem to show the despair that suffuses the Zone to be a secret hope for forgiveness. The poem includes God in the history of guilt it presents in the hope that God might hasten down the Last Judgment, at which time the Zone is rezoned as the moral universe.[2]

The paradigm of divine influence for this poem is the speech of Balaam's she-ass in Numbers 22:28-30. The Zone is the setting of the entire Book of Numbers, which takes place on the march and in camp between Sinai and the plains of Moab (just across the river from the promised land), where the story of Balaam begins. Israel's wilderness *Wanderjahre* are a period of expiation, a spiritual adolescence in which the exodus generation learns to walk erect after

enslavement in Egypt. God's blessing, inflected by God's judgment, superintends this four-decade maturation process. One rabbinic tradition treats the Balaam cycle (chapters 22-24) as a self-standing book.[3] The pericope is definitely not of Priestly authorship and may even be from a hand other than either J or E. The episode with the ass (22:21-35) is a further fold within this independent tradition. It appears to derive from a source that takes a dimmer view of Balaam than that expressed in the surrounding verses. Balaam utters four poetic oracles (23:7-10, 23:18-24, 24:3-9, and 24:15-24) whose narrative coherence with one another suggests a common origin older than the interleaved prose. The structure of the Book of Numbers, and the relationship to the composite whole of its interpolated "Book of Balaam" in particular, provides a blueprint for *The Book of Balaam's Ass*. The silhouette of the structure cuts the figure of forgiveness against the skyline of the Zone.

God opens the mouth of Balaam's ass as Balaam, a gentile prophet, is riding her on the way to a meeting with the Moabite king Balak, who has summoned him to curse the Israelites. The night before, God had given Balaam permission to make this mercenary journey, but today He sends an angel to intercept him. This roadblock, sword drawn, proves invisible to Balaam at first, but not to the ass, who earns his lash as she swerves and balks three times before articulating her indignation at this ill-treatment. The Lord then opens Balaam's eyes and addresses him through the angel: "I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: and the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive" (Nm 22:32-33; KJV). By the following verse Balaam is acknowledging fault in a show of penitence slightly dulled by self-justification: "I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again" (22:34). The angel lets him off with only a warning,

repeated from verses 20-21, to follow God's word to the letter when delivering his prophecy concerning the Israelites, however unrefusable an offer Balak might make to buy out his blessing.

Admitting this angel-arranged traffic stop as editorial interruption of an otherwise straightforward story leaves begging the question of the intent of the divine intervention at which both Balaam and his ass wonder aloud. Why does God give Balaam, not to mention his ass, this hard time? God's apparent ambivalence over Balaam's progress has exercised many interpreters of this encounter. The explanations they advance reflect and inform debates about the nature and function of prophecy. The Anglican John Henry Newman, preaching in the shadow of Joseph Butler's pulpit, follows Philo and Ambrose, among others, in understanding the angel's leniency "as a punishment" in disguise.[4] Since Balaam, unwilling to take no for an answer, "was rash enough to ask a second time" to go with Balak's men, God gives him leave to pursue his presumptuousness to its natural conclusion, death by the sword in Numbers 31:8.[5] This ignominious end is appropriate for a prophet whose heart, on most accounts, never entered his mouth. Balaam goes down as a type of the false prophet, a vessel capacious of God's word but ultimately empty of the righteousness he professes to desire (Nm 23:10). Balaam's blessings are efficacious in spite of himself, converted from curses in midair.

It is this miracle of metamorphosis that Jones endeavors to give poetic form: "I have attempted to appreciate some things, which, at the time of suffering, the flesh was too weak to appraise."[6] For Newman the "miracle" that occurs in the account of Balaam is the speaking of the ass, which he suspects many readers of treating more "lightly…than is expedient."[7] Jones's innovation on the interpretive tradition is to focus attention on the event of subhuman speech, less out of interest in its content than in its efficacity. In this story, says 2 Peter 2:16, an animal

serves the role of a resistor in the circuit of divine influence. The current flowing from angel to ass bypasses the prophet-for-hire in a moment that threatens the hardwired assumptions of all those made in God's image. In fact Balaam never recovers from this reproach. Seizing on his aspirational mention of the Messiah in Numbers 24:17, Origen and Jerome will extend Balaam a measure of redemption in the lives made good of his descendants or disciples, the Magi foremost among them.[8] But Philo locates his only genuine contact with God on the back of his ass.[9] Something essential escaped Balaam en route to his rendezvous with Balak, and it is this loss that Jones sets out to recover. His poem is an energy-recapture operation doomed to failure by the laws of history but worth carrying through in full knowledge of this fate for the sake of the cursed words themselves. As long as these live in remembrance—the poet's memory achieved as poetic archive—the histories of the Balaams who enunciate them remain incomplete.

It is the function of forgiveness to recognize as open to the future what has been sealed by sin or death in the past. Jones's mission—what he calls his "Balaam business"—is to bring to bear this open relationship with time on those things, including corpses, long or lately left for dead.[10] *The Book of Balaam's Ass* conducts this "business" in the course of describing it. Jones's earliest mention of the poem, his second after *In Parenthesis* (1937), comes in a letter of 31 May 1938 to his friend Harman Grisewood. Jones has been struggling to get the manuscript to hang together ("A very rambling affair—sometimes it all seems balls and sometimes I like it in places."), but he has no trouble telling Grisewood what it is "about": "It is about how everything turns into something else, and how you can never tell when a bonza is cropping up or the Holy Ghost is going to turn something inside out, and how everything is a balls-up and a kind of 'Praise' at the same time."[11] The relationship of the events that inspired *In Parenthesis* to the composition of that poem was more "straightforward" than that between the content and

composition of this new writing.[12] *Balaam's Ass* is "about 'ideas'," whereas *In Parenthesis* had a story to tell: the fate of Jones and his friends on the Western Front between December 1915 and July 1916.[13]

Unharnessing her from history, Jones throws his muse on the mercy of time, granting himself an unexplored artistic freedom that it is the point of the poem to exploit on behalf of those whom history has consigned to a mythic past, where time stands still. Jones taps time's mercy—its forgiveness of history—by translating to poetry the post-impressionist doctrine that "a picture is essentially a flat surface covered with an arrangement of colour."[14] In his own terms, Jones conceives of the manuscript page as a Zone of forgiveness whose featureless expanse corresponds to the eternity enjoyed by those who have died. Time, like blank paper, exists for the poet to fill. Marking time in this manner runs the risk of leading nowhere; poetry, like forgiveness, is prodigal with time, wasting it on purpose. As Jones puts it to Grisewood: "it seems to me that if you just talk about a lot of things as one thing follows on another, in the end you *may* have made a shape out of all of it. That is to say, that shape that all the mess makes in your mind."[15]

In Parenthesis seeks meaning in Mametz Wood by allusion to "Birnam copse."[16] *Balaam's Ass* abandons the analogical method as obsolete in the age of the gasmask. After the Somme the world grew "poorer in communicable experience," as Walter Benjamin puts it in an essay published a few months before *In Parenthesis*.[17] Jones's preface to that work opens by setting a right parenthesis at July 1916: "From then onward things hardened into a more relentless, mechanical affair, took on a more sinister aspect."[18] The culprit is chemical warfare: "We feel a rubicon has been passed between striking with a hand weapon as men used to do and loosing poison from the sky as we do ourselves."[19] A weaponized atmosphere effaces

conventional differences between classes and species and between man and God. Not "the intimate, continuing, domestic life of small contingents of men" but the air itself becomes the medium of fate.[20] Jones closes his preface to *In Parenthesis* by asking his readers to take back the sky: "We who are of the same world of sense with hairy ass and furry wolf and who presume to other and more radiant affinities, are finding it difficult, as yet, to recognise these creatures of chemicals as true extensions of ourselves, that we may feel for them a native affection, which alone can make them magical for us."[21] *Balaam's Ass*, the earlier poem's sequel, answers this challenge by inhaling deeply of the poison cloud to see what in it might give inspiration. Finding no molecule untainted, it makes of the haze a medium of forgiveness.

Although Jones is careful to cut off the tale of *In Parenthesis* with his wounding in the Wood during the night of 10-11 July 1916, intimations of the way in which fate might become forgiveness appear in the poem's preface and at the end of its Part 2. In the former Jones issues a non-apology for the presence of "impious and impolite words" in his text, unavoidable insofar as "the whole shape of our discourse was conditioned by the use of such words."[22] Such obscenity as survives on the page indexes the utterly profane "condition" of the trenches. The front lies on the frontier of the sacred. But Jones includes the offending expletives not merely from an impulse to documentary realism but in hope of making them available for "enchantment," a transformation that takes place not in substance but on the order of perception.[23] For oaths of all stripes carry an aura of the efficacious: "the 'Bugger! Bugger!' of a man detailed, had often about it the 'Fiat! Fiat! Of the Saints."[24] It will be the charge of *Balaam's Ass* to test the viability of this fiat in a far more unforgiving environment, the mud of Passchendaele of the following year. Jones gives the brief of that poem in a letter of 11 April 1939 to his friends Jim and Helen Ede: "Let me see—this is not public information—but I think it is really about how if you start

saying in a kind of way how *bloody* everything is you end up in a kind of *praise—inevitably*—I mean a sort of Balaam business."[25]

In this sense the "business" of *Balaam's Ass* is to catch the force of the first projectile to pierce the peace of *In Parenthesis*'s early pages, which registers itself at the end of Part 2 in an ambient pressure-change, as "an on-rushing pervasion, saturating all existence."[26] The heavens open upon the advent of this "destroying toy," Private John Ball's baptism by fire.[27] Private Shenkin of *Balaam's Ass* will undergo a "baptism by cowardice" in a "shallow crater" in Flanders fields that could be the son or sibling of the shell-hole dug here.[28] This experience super-sensitizes Ball's sensorium, alerting him to the "exact disposition of small things" within his field of vision in the seconds before impact.[29] Ball's baptism christens him an artist, endowed with the faculty of perceiving glory in "approaching violence."[30] Jones applies this insight to the curses of his Cockney colleagues: "The very repetition of them made them seem liturgical, certainly deprived them of malice, and occasionally, when skillfully disposed, and used according to established but flexible tradition, gave a kind of significance, and even at moments a dignity, to our speech. Sometimes their juxtaposition in a sentence, and when expressed under poignant circumstances, reached real poetry."[31] In the Zone of *Balaam's Ass* God alone assumes the title of "dispositioner" of curses, since all else are dead, dying, or otherwise indisposed. It is left to this "effecter of all transubstantiations" to transmute their "cheerless blasphemy into a lover's word."[32]

Human presumption to "more radiant affinities" finds itself dashed in the Zone, so *Balaam's Ass* turns its attention to the "world of sense" that the soldiers share with other members of the animal kingdom.[33] In 1939 Jones was still uncertain whether to call his poem *The Book of Balaam* or *The Book of Balaam's Ass*.[34] By settling on the latter he leads his readers

to consider how the poem itself might act as did the jenny in the biblical "Book of Balaam." Belief in man's uniqueness as the sole sign-making beast was a premise of Jones's theopoetic, and he was quick to pounce on any suggestion to the contrary. His article of faith that "Art is the sole intransitive activity of man" entailed for him the corollary that man is the only "intransitive" animal actor.[35] No gesture of any other creature can be thought "gratuitous," unmotivated by instinct or practical necessity. Jones concedes the beauty made and ingenuity displayed by bees, "the agger-making beaver, the ant, the nuthatch whose nest, I'm told, is something of a strong-point," but their inability to choose right from wrong keeps all of them down in the end.[36] "They are irresponsible agents only, sentient creatures, willy-nilly doing the will of Providence just as does insentient creation."[37] The Book of Numbers does not present Balaam's ass as anything other than a receptacle of God's transitivity, but she does engage Balaam in a conversation, however condensed, comparable with nothing else in the Bible (outside the Apocryphal Acts) than that between Eve and the serpent in Genesis 3:1-5. If she can be said to act, it is as a reagent ordained by God to test the purity of Balaam's prophecy. Of course the joke is on Balaam, the seer who can't see the angel under his nose, whose prophetic powers are regarded by the tradition as fleeting and corruptible at best and as a dangerous facility for mere soothsaying at worst.

In his poem Jones picks up and runs with the suggestion that this would-be kingmaker is no better-spoken than his ass, an equation that elevates the ass as much as it humbles her master. An allusion in the poem's opening pages to Nebuchadnezzar's portion with the beasts of the field further diminishes the vaunted independence of human will. Although Jones will admit some decades later that the discovery of simian mourning rituals "betrays an extra-utile tendency," here he is less interested in claiming for the creaturely a portion of humanity than in pondering

the bestial condition of the other ranks.[38] "We find ourselves privates in foot regiments. We search how we may see formal goodness in a life singularly inimical, hateful to us," Jones writes in his preface to *In Parenthesis*.[39] On this account soldiers are eminently artistic, and so, for Jones, specimens of the species *par excellence*. They also have a bit of the Balaam about them, specializing as they do in the vulgar trick of blessing while cursing. It follows that Balaam is the type of the poet, whose every word is at once stalked by the risk of failure and guaranteed an audition by God. The deductible of this hardly reassuring insurance policy is the poetic act itself, which inevitably airs as a compromised prophecy.

A note of subjectivity is the sign of false prophecy as of false poetry in Jones's aesthetics of impersonality. "When the workman is dead the only thing that will matter is the work, objectively considered. Moreover, the workman must be dead to himself while engaged upon the work, otherwise we have that sort of 'self-expression' which is as undesirable in the painter or the writer as in the carpenter, the cantor, the half-back, or the cook."[40] Just after this dire announcement early in the preface to his next poem, *The Anathemata* (1952), Jones confesses to personal difficulty with the application of the principle in practice. Indeed, personality wells up through all of Jones's poems from the bottom of the page, in the form of his footnotes (endnotes in *In Parenthesis*), which tempt the reader to make a category mistake. No poem can be a treatise without leaving the realm of the "extra-utile," and so that of *poiesis*, but Jones's poems tease at the possibility that a treatise can be poetical. A treatise-as-poem, as opposed to a poem-as-treatise, would contain the "certain attractive amateurishness, and elbow-room for idiosyncrasy" that Jones cherished in pre-Somme trench-life.[41]

Jones's self-annotation, along with his customary alternation of prose and verse on the more apparently poetical parts of his pages, serves to deflate the vatic ambitions he associates

with poetic impersonality. But even as they set up a prosaic counterrhythm in his poems, dragging them down a little nearer the world of "hairy ass," or at least of the professor, Jones's notes betray a utile tendency in his work more directly, by filling in for the reader what Jones, borrowing a phrase from C. S. Lewis, calls "unshared backgrounds."[42] Jones introduces this concept in his preface to *The Anathemata*, a poem famously festooned with footnotes, and he revisits it in the drafts of his headnote to the fragment of *Balaam's Ass* that he excepted for publication in his final collection, *The Sleeping Lord* (1974). At the end of *The Anathemata*'s forty-three-page preface, characterized there as an "apology," Jones disclaims for his book "any pretentions whatever of a didactic nature."[43] His patently pseudo-scholarly apparatus—"As often as not I have no means of judging the relative accuracy of these data"—is "meant only to elucidate a background."[44] Without it the poem verges on opacity to the point of invisibility. The tautly drawn surface of the poem must be thrown into relief in order to be seen.

This rationale raises the question of what, if anything, finally distinguishes for Jones figure from ground within the limits of a poem, and the related problem of where, if anywhere, the poem itself ends and the rest of life begins. "It is very desirable in the arts to know the meaning of the word ex-orbitant, or there is pastiche or worse."[45] Worse than pastiche would be no poem to speak of at all, a status that *Balaam's Ass* barely eludes. "I've got a miserable feeling that my new thing is not so 'tight' and 'made' as *I.P.*," Jones writes to Harman Grisewood on 17 January 1939.[46] "It tends to be descriptive in a way that bores me—also rhetorical—my chief fear and danger."[47] On a handful of occasions in *The Anathemata*, the first duly footnoted, Jones recurs to an instance of background-elucidation common in Ancient Rome: the augur's consecration of a *templum* for the purposes of divination.[48] In a notable (but not footnoted) moment Jones makes an augur of Christ in the hours before his Crucifixion:

His dispositions made

he would at once begin the action.

He has begun it

here

within the camp

see

he takes the auguries.

How else the dawn deployment?[49]

The final section of *Balaam's Ass*, in which Jones demarcates the Zone, can be seen in light of this later image as an early emblem of the illumination that this poet requires his poems to shed on their own "sharp contours and unformed voids."[50]

The Zone—the wasteland wrought of the strife of "the *sword* against money"—is "tight" and "made" to a fault, and the piece of the poem that describes it manages to be highly "descriptive" and "rhetorical" without being "boring."[51] Jones found this part the easiest to write, perhaps because its subject—depersonalization in person—gives automatically the impression of impersonality he elsewhere labored to cultivate.[52] It is even grimly funny in spots:

> They never complain in the Zone.
>
> When their teeth break on the dark stone they say to themselves: We're the boys of the bulldog breed. This is the price of our freedom. We can take it, you can't have jam on everything, there is a price to our enlightenment. After all it's the twentieth century.[53]

Jones consecrates the Zone for contemplation, but not for prophecy. Balaams have no "business" in the Zone: "O Mrs Balaam if you want a long thirst to quench after a long burden of prophecy—go to the Zone, you won't be troubled by the sweet influence in the Zone."[54] No

speaker is named here, but this jibe could come out of the mouth of Balaam's ass. The poem reproaches its maker even as its voices contradict themselves: "There is no shadow no shade, no shade to caress, no walls on the heath, no recession; it's all on one plane in the Zone."[55] The Zone may be flat and barren of "influence" (Jb 38:31), but someone has found or made a vantage, attained a bird's, or an ass's, eye-view from which to call the zone a Zone.

In the preface to *The Anathemata* Jones explicitly disavows a prophetic vocation: "Rather than being a seer or endowed with the gift of prophecy [the artist] is something of a vicar whose job is legatine—a kind of Servus Servorum to deliver what has been delivered to him, who can neither add to nor take from the deposits."[56] But this chastened ideal of the artist as sluice of divine influence could stand just as squarely as the definition of true prophecy in the grand biblical manner, as executed for example by Jonah, to his own dismay. In the penultimate section of *The Book of Balaam's Ass*, which also openly mocks "Mrs Balaam," a voice reminds her: "You don't have to be necessarily aware, you may be actively hostile to the precious influence."[57] In the word "influence," its astrological overtones chiming, Jones conflates the prophetic and poetic powers he is elsewhere keen to keep apart. Like Don Quixote and his nag, Balaam and his she-ass are an inseparable pair ("Mrs Balaam" for short). Entangled together they host a wandering theophany, compose a kind of organic Ark of the Covenant. Transferred to the page they appear as a poem-with-notes. The parallels between the Akedah and Balaam's interrupted itinerary have not been lost on the commentators, and it is worth wondering in turn about the *The Book of Balaam's Ass*: What there takes the role of the ram that Abraham offers in place of his son? A step away from the altar brings the scene into focus. Jones sacrifices the artifactual integrity of the *Book* itself, the smooth surface that occupies the zone of influence spread by a "made" thing. In the preface to *In Parenthesis* Jones warns of the "considerable cost"

at which accommodation of chemicals to the aims of art will come.[58] If this is the price, it cannot be written off as a loss, since the *Book*, by virtue of its very "recession," thrusts itself into the ken of its critics, kindling its own afterlife in interpretation. What suffers is the self-image of the artwork as icon.

An essay of 1953 by Georges Bataille offers an original analysis of the animal figures preserved in Paleolithic cave paintings that bears on the fate of art in the Zone. Not only were these apparitions invested with sympathetic magic, so that a picture of a bison might lead to its capture in the hunt, but they were also, according to Bataille, the object of their painters' insincere plea for forgiveness: "in addressing the animal, the human predator asks forgiveness for treating the animal as a thing so that he will be able to accomplish without any remorse what he has already apologized for doing."[59] Bataille notes that the reduction of the animal, in image, to "the condition of the possessed thing" complements the curious effacement of the human face in prehistoric self-portraits, compared with which the beasts look perfect. False humility, Bataille cries, but also a symptom of early man's open suspicion of his own "unfinished" stage on the way out of animality.[60] It seems that David Jones was similarly convicted of humankind's underacknowledged implication in the creaturely. His response was not self-effacement, already the poetic fashion of his day, but a second-order defacement of his finished work. The plea for forgiveness implied in *The Book of Balaam's Ass* is directed by its author, and his readers over his shoulder, to the poem itself, that made thing caught between possession and dispossession. For Jones all artworks are *anathemata* in the teeth of that word's ambivalence: "the blessed things that have taken on what is cursed and the profane things that somehow are redeemed."[61]

Something of the beast in man clings to the artist at work and to the objects of his workmanship. Jones wishes to designate this animal element as "the utile," but his own poem

flies out of any pigeonhole into which he would stuff it. An awe of animality underlies his lip-service to the "hierarchy of being."[62] Jones does not "envy" his ass's happiness, but neither is he jealous of human historicity.[63] The first pages of his poem are an untimely meditation on the overlap of art and politics, a pair like man and beast or man and woman whose terms Jones insists on dirempting in theory even as they emerge in his practice under the aspect of hendiadys. In July 1938 Jones opens a review of a book by his acquaintance Herbert Read by polarizing poetry and "anarchism" (Read's titular conjunction), the better to identify them at the essay's climax: "Given explicit and safe-guarded meaning to the words used, I think perhaps 'Poetry *is* Anarchy' will stand—but when one says: 'Poetry *and* Anarchism,' one has instinctively that uneasy feeling, evoked by such phrases as 'The Church *and* Art,' or 'This culture left men free to create beauty.' One knows that in the last analysis Poetry is 'free' and Man is 'bound.' It is *bound* men who have been, and will be, poets."[64]

Between "anarchism" and "anarchy" lies original sin, the reality of which, on Jones's account of Read's argument, the former refuses to recognize: "Mr. Read shows repeatedly a passion for that perfect freedom which is the first and last demand of all of us. Were it not for the 'happy fault,' and for the original manœuvre of the first born of creation, I think one would be in agreement with much that he says."[65] Adam's curse is the blessing of art, which remains behind with the animals in Eden, abiding there as "a similitude of the Kingdom of God."[66] For Jones art and politics are discontinuous; the one cannot be made to subserve the other. Art is not a stage on the way to freedom; in it freedom rings now: "The Heavenly Jerusalem is already with us in an art-work."[67]

Art forfeits its definitive gratuity upon enlistment in the fight for freedom. And yet politics, like war, is itself an art when prosecuted as pure means, with animal abandon. The art of

war, to which Jones would dedicate a long essay of the early 1940s, can order anarchy. Waged with "no end but its own perfection," divested of ulterior motives (Jones mentions "'money'"), war amounts to play, which brings out the animal as much as the infant in man: "It must never be forgotten, at least the 'artist' in us must never forget, that we are beasts. If Uranus is our father, Gea is still our mother."[68] Animals do not believe and are untainted by sin, points of contact with "the 'artist' in us." Jones hedges about his terms with inverted commas and talk of "analogy," but his instinct is to ascribe to art an amoral, which is to say animal, essence: "It must be understood that 'art' *as such* is 'heaven,' it has outflanked 'the fall'—it is analogous not to faith but to charity."[69] Art as such—as anarchy—outflanks sin insofar as the artist in man does not forget that "one of his operational flanks rests on the strong-point of animality."[70] As Jones puts it in his review of Read: "in an art-work, the cat can eat the mouse all the day long, and we rejoice."[71] Man is an artist in spirit, but art, like the animal in man, is exempt from the prudential order to which man is bound, so what Jones calls "the intimate creatureliness of things" cries out for acknowledgment.[72] *The Book of Balaam's Ass* answers this call.

T. S. Eliot devoted himself to "giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" and counted Jones along with Joyce and Pound in the trenches of this project.[73] Jones, however, was less beholden to "method," mythical or narrative, than Eliot suggests. "My 'method'," Jones writes in a letter of 29 December 1952, "is merely to arse around with such words as are available to me until the passage in question takes on something of the shape I think it requires & evokes the image I want."[74] Hovering between book and scrap, *Balaam's Ass* brings Jones's unmethodical method into high relief as it works out Bataille's principle of inner experience: "to emerge through project from the realm of project."[75] The emergent zone in which this paradoxical project

(Bataille's word for progress) unfolds is the kingdom of talking animals to which the poem attends. It is also the space in which forgiveness arises as an answer to anarchy.

Herbert Read does not advocate a revival of Catholicism: "in the theory of anarchism the organized Church is as much an anathema as the State."[76] But he does, more surprisingly, believe that the "universal order of thought" achieved by a "realistic rationalism" is the same for which theology, if not religion, strives.[77] Anarchism, for Read, "affirm[s] the rule of reason, which is the rule of God."[78] Like Jones, Read wishes to disentangle art from politics. Read heeds Walter Benjamin's warning that any aestheticization of politics leads inexorably to war: "Peace is anarchy," Read writes.[79] Jones agrees but does not seek a remedy in the politicization of art, because art and politics are for him already interchangeable expressions of human nature, artistic at heart. Read associates art with beauty and both with "the subtle and unconscious world of the imagination," which must not mix with reality, the province of "Truth."[80] For Jones the imagination (a term he avoids) is reality, and as the world grows less real imagination enters a crisis. This is the situation that *Balaam's Ass* both embodies and laments.

The poem opens with a paean to Prudence Pelham, Jones's closest lady friend of the 1930s. The setting is Sidmouth, Devon, where Jones lived during the second half of the decade. The "*very sudden*" marriage of Prudence to Guy Branch on 25 March 1939 shattered Jones, for whom the loss mingled with a sense of foreboding about the failure of appeasement, an essay in support of which he wrote that spring but left unpublished.[81] His letters of this period indicate the extent to which the personal and political crises converged in his mind. From Campion Hall, Oxford, he wrote to Grisewood on 23 June 1939:

> Over all that political stuff, I believe I've altered a bit—I feel less interested in it somehow at the moment. I feel I can't cope with it—that whatever one thinks or says

> makes no 'impression' and one's data is anyway so meagre. I'm feeling if I can't get back to my own 'art work,' which is all I really care about, I don't know what I shall do. I also think all the time about Prudence but don't get any clearer about how to face up to it. O dear, this old romantic love, the only type I understand, does let you down.[82]

Too distracted to paint ("it is so 'totalitarian,' and you DO have to be strong to do it, once you know the snags"), Jones took refuge in writing—*Balaam's Ass*.[83] Its first pages celebrate the astringent radiance of an unnamed "she," whose graceful movement through a room seems in drafts of this passage to reduce a group of men, diplomats and lobbyists, to silence.[84]

> SHE'S BRIGHT WHERE SHE WALKS SHE
> DIGNIFIES THE SPACES OF THE AIR AND MAKES AN AMPLE SCHEME
> ACROSS THE TRIVIAL SHAPES. SHE SHAKES THE PROUD AND ROTTEN
> ACCIDENTS; SMALL CONVENIENCES LOOK SHRUNK SO THAT YOU
> HARDLY NOTICE THEM:[85]

The earliest extant draft of these lines is headed "entry."[86] Jones is trying to absorb the blow of this woman, a human howitzer, as she makes her way across a room. Like Ball's shell, she does not so much stop time as reveal its inner continuity with space, an event that Jones marks as a shrinkage. This will be his image of forgiveness in its aesthetic mode: not covering an evil or blotting it out or bearing it away, but shriveling it to a husk that might be charged with time. Forgiveness is "a creative interaction with the past" that leads with its destructive face forward.[87] The forgiver, who is also guilty, incurs a fracture between past and present that affords an opportunity for reconstruction on the strength of the insight that what was can be invaded by what is.[88] Forgiveness, a decision that "befalls" forgiver and forgiven alike, lies beyond both freedom and fate.[89] Not a matter of choice, it remains inconstruable as sacrifice. It is at once

"balls-up" and "praise." To make a work of art as, in Robert Browning's phrase, "a forgiveness" is to produce a microcosm as a microeon: as, in Walter Benjamin's phrase, "an organon of history."[90]

Jones borrows from Gerard Manley Hopkins a verb to honor forgiveness in this sense: "keep." The word gets its most memorable workout in Hopkins's song "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo," but it is the sestet of the sonnet "As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame" that Jones quotes in his review of Read's *Poetry and Anarchism*: "Feeling the temper of his [Read's] mind, I find it difficult to understand why he should seek, in this world, that freedom which is only reflected in the domain of art: We know that '…the just man justices; [/] Kéeps gràce:…,'."[91] These lines compress into a handful of syllables what Jones takes pages of prose to express: his conviction that the poet, exemplary man, has been by tradition "the custodian, rememberer, embodier and voice of the mythus."[92] The "specific task" of the artist is, "somehow or other, to lift up valid signs."[93] "Keeping," then, for Jones, is both retention and protention. The poet keeps culture in store by thrusting it continually before the eyes of the cult. Remembrance begins by dismembering the complacencies of the present, and this mortifying moment gives it its anarchic edge. As a keepsake of immemorial anarchy, a poem poses a threat to any power that seeks to impose a new order: "Poetry is to be diagnosed as 'dangerous' because it evokes and recalls, is a kind of *anamnesis* of, i.e. is an effective recalling of, something loved."[94] In the preface to *The Anathemata* Jones replaces Hopkins's "keeping" with Pope Gregory XV's "propaganda": As an embodiment of "dangerous memory," in Johann Baptist Metz's phrase, poetry "is inevitably 'propaganda,' in that any real formal expression propagands the reality which caused those forms and their content to be."[95] Forgiveness of a poem unfolds first as anamnesis, a recognition that all of the "contingent and more remote

associations" the poem evokes constitute a clear and present danger.[96] Without this realization the shrinkage that is one look of forgiveness in art cannot occur. The artist who succeeds in spatializing his epoch as an artwork restores it to reality, making it available for propagation. The more densely history is packed in the poem, the more anarchic history appears, because the more transmissible it becomes. Or as Jones puts it: "The more real a thing, the more it will confound their politics."[97] Forgiveness is pure propaganda: history reduced to "the zero point of its own content" for the sake of its transmissibility.[98] This is the end of the artist's vast knowledge, an insight that Jones captures in a line from a draft of *The Book of Balaam's Ass*: "the beneficent artisans know well the keeping."[99]

In sacrificing the content of tradition for the sake of its transmissibility, forgiveness yields a keeping without a keeper. Jones's poetics may be seen to seek the state caught in a line of Wilfred Bion's 1970 essay "Container and Contained Transformed": "All thinking and all thoughts are true when there is no thinker."[100] Jones gives to this condition, in which thinker is absolved of thought, the names "'pure myth'" and "permanent mythus."[101] Jones defines pure myth—his example is "the myth of the Evangel"—as "a myth devoid of the fictitious, an utterance of the Word."[102] In the *logos*, as the Catholic theologian Heinrich Fries presents it shortly after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, "myth is at once abrogated and fulfilled," revelation being "the crisis of myth and the judgment upon it."[103] In his prose Jones keeps myth immaculate by enclosing it in inverted commas, setting off its utterance from its utterer. The footnotes from which the lines of Jones's verse rise serve the same purpose: to establish the poem as permanent myth. In *The Book of Balaam's Ass*, which accrued annotation only late in its composition, the non-human mind fulfils the function of scare quotes. Animals

and objects absorb the sin of those who regard them, designated by Jones as "you." The first beast to appear in the poem is a tiger in a zoo:

> like when pale flanks turn to lace with agile stripes the separating grill—until you quite forget the necessary impertinence
>
> the shackling and iron security
>
> by which and
>
> in which and
>
> through which
>
> you indulge your fine appreciation.[104]

Pacing in her cage, the big cat effaces the frame erected by her keepers and becomes pure myth. Only a look at the identification plate "tells you she's a male born in captivity," a revelation that arrives with the impact of an "unquote," releasing the reader back into the wilds of impure or impermanent myth.[105]

The feminine "minstrelsy" of forgiveness then makes its appearance as "a living sail" that, seen on Lyme Bay from the Sidmouth seafront, "sets free the constricting esplanade and bends the rigid sea-rail to a native curvature (for space itself, they say, leans, is kindly, with ourselves, who make wide deviations to meet ourselves)."[106] Both the turning of the tiger and the "surprising advent" of this vessel Jones designates as "incomings that lend life."[107] Less momentous than Rilke's encounters with panther or torso, Jones's assignations with "influence" involve a slow seduction that causes his world to "lean" a little rather than swoon away. To the ship offshore one of Sidmouth's grand hotels has "inclined" herself, and from it she gains "a passing fulness."[108] By it, Jones writes, "she's been conditioned," as if for purgation. Near the end of the poem Jones will note with some sarcasm of the soldiers in the Zone, blissfully

ignorant of their predicament: “They’re as mercifully conditioned as a limbo child.”[109] The influx of influence induces a manifestation of the curvature native to the spacetime continuum, a property that Jones elsewhere identifies with Aristotelian “equity”: the equitable, as Jones quotes the *Nicomachean Ethics*, being “‘a better kind of justice’.”[110] Art, on Jones’s account, courts an aesthetic equity whose function is to feature an otherwise unfelt flexibility proper to tradition. The confrontation with some cattle that occupies the next page of the poem emphasizes the ungentle aspect of the equitable. Bent out of shape, tradition turns loose an energy approaching the anarchic:

> or
>
> stiff-legged calves who make the gradual fields skip like imagined hills, play erratic circles to accuse the static adults, drifting on stubble-sea, or set heavily like islands humped…[111]

After this Jones reverses the shot to show “you” from the perspective of the full-grown bulls, who “almost seem to rumble” the human trespasser on their turf: “They startle when you come on hind-legs at them; you come fore-paws waved to shoo them off. You subdue imperiously with fragile man’s-hand, bellowings and forest-might. You scorn crumpled or bright horn that gored the burning cat with your anthropoid gestures.”[112] This zoomorphizing move returns to man’s-hand the boomerang of brutalization. The allusion that follows to the Book of Daniel equates “the long idiocy of agriculture” to scorn for God’s grace: “Pray stone bulls won’t make the stone low his name, who toppled his diadem to reach his fodder / between the irrigation ducts.”[113] The final paragraph of this section tags the poem’s title and gives to the talking ass a Christian spin of the type that other parts of the Numbers story have long received: “Lords of Creation, hierarchy of use and delectation, rational souls, convenient syllogistic cornering of memory and will, and

dumb beasts perishing as poor brute-bodies must—She'ld make a Balaam of you to narrow your path, she'ld drag you down on Christmas night into an appropriate attitude till your arse reflected the nine Choirs shining."[114] The antecedent of "she" is the "bull-brain" broached above but also the "influence" that "she" embodies.[115] The shiftiness of the referent captures the elusive fluency of influence even as it confers upon the poem, "by some acid twist," the quickly evaporating coherence that is for Jones the look of grace in art.[116] "The immediate, the nowness, the pressure of sudden, modifying circumstance"—this is the way forgiveness makes itself felt, as a liberating narrowing of the path to redemption.[117] Shrinkage and constriction are the hallmarks of anarchy for Jones. "She" is, like Paul in Ephesians 6:20, "a legate in bonds" who "bellows loudly as she ought to bellow."[118] Parrhesia is the prerogative of the imprisoned—prisoners of "the fantastic hierarchy" whose preservation is the prerequisite of the stress-testing of each link in the chain of being that this poem performs.[119] The poet is bound to transform tradition into "genuine myth": "To conserve, to develop, to bring together, to make significant for the present what the past holds, without dilution or any deleting, but rather by understanding and transubstantiating the material…saying always: 'of these thou hast given me have I lost none'."[120] Anarchism and communism, "two bugbears" of *Balaam's Ass*, break the chain but keep the baggage.[121] Anarchy, the influence of forgiveness in politics, turns the past to account by showing it on the point of perspiration: "She'ld make your exploiting governance wither away all right—if she could recall him sweating out his chrism, easing his tailless flank under the burning sun-baked terracing."[122] The agony here belongs to both Nebachudnezzar in the field and Christ in Gethsemane. Forgiveness has the look of hematidrosis.

Animals, not men, pass down the wisdom in the world of *Balaam's Ass*. But while the burden of the past weighs heavily on their backs, it proves on inspection to be insubstantial.

Tradition means nothing anymore to man, yet a whisper of its onetime validity lingers. Forgiveness—an anxiety of influence—is the persistence of such validity in the absence of significance. When he has not let his inheritance slip from his grasp, man has lost the means of making it out. Animals hold the advantage, a kind of innocence, of never having known the cipher in the first place: "no tail or hairy ear clears the tormenting buzz of memory—the bovine race-myth not unravel."[123] Were these kine to talk, their drover would not fail to get their drift. Their words would reach them with what Benjamin calls "the annihilating character of true reconciliation (*Vernichtende wahrer Versöhnung*)," the life-risking reconciliation of an individual with God.[124] "Could she blink a thought-maze back, there would be a Dialectical incoming for you!"[125] This condition would clinch the "true reconciliation with God" that, according to Benjamin, echoing Jesus, "is achieved by no one who does not thereby destroy everything—or as much as he possesses—in order only then, before God's reconciled countenance, to find it resurrected."[126] From "true reconciliation" (*wahre Versöhnung*) with God, which Benjamin elsewhere calls forgiveness (*Vergebung*), follows "conciliation [*Aussöhnung*] of one's fellow men."[127] True reconciliation Benjamin restricts to the "supermundane"; as such it resists "concrete [*gegenständlich*] depiction" in an artwork.[128]

The artist who wishes to depict forgiveness is therefore doomed to deal in its mundane effects alone. Jones mines the Book of Balaam for an alternative tactic. There he finds scriptural authority for the transposition of reconciliation between God and man to forgiveness of the animal in man. This forgiveness shakes man by the root: "She'ld thrust you on your origins. She'ld break down and nozzle to your foundations and toss high for the windy advent day a thousand middle-walls of partition."[129] But it is nonetheless comic. Like Kafka, Jones finds his holy fools funny.[130] Their absurd naivete renders them irreproachable and, as the poem goes on

to show, invulnerable. *The Book of Balaam's Ass* is a concrete depiction of the angel that arises from man's reconciliation with his own animality—and of that angel's necessary evanescence in a world for which the "genuine myth" of forgiveness is too pure.

The third section of the poem presents a scene of conciliation between veterans and those stuck listening to their warmed-over war stories. The party achieves at best "the semblance of reconciliation" (*Schein der Versöhnung*) because all involved seek forgiveness from God only indirectly through each other.[131] Jones casts their impasse in terms of the fear that keeps the Wedding Guest from making his peace with the Ancient Mariner: "you couldn't choose but hear."[132] It soon grows clear that choice must cede to decision if forgiveness is to befall them. Children, like animals, are decisive to the extent that they find themselves cut off from choice. Two decades later, in the preface to his essay collection *Epoch and Artist*, Jones will call their "trouble"—their inability "to take the particular for no more than it is"—a *felix culpa*.[133] In *Balaam's Ass* their unselfconscious feeling for "the immemorial formulas" (Jones quotes a folk rhyme repeated by a character in George Borrow's *Lavengro*) ensures that "these being dead, speak."[134] One auditor voices a similar sentiment even as she complains of "the tedium of twice-told tales": "But it is inevitable and meet: / while there is breath it's only right to bear immemorial witness."[135] Jones defends here the mythical method he had deployed in *In Parenthesis* by ventriloquizing and exaggerating its anticipated detractors' scorn:

> Tilly Vally Mr Pistol that's a pretty tale. La! on my body—tell that, sir, below stairs. Gauffer it well and troupe it fine, pad it out to impressive proportions, grace it from the Ancients. Gee! I do like a bloody lie turned gallantly romantical, fantastical, glossed by the old gang from the foundations of the world. Press every allusion into your Ambrosian racket, ransack the sacred canon and have by heart the sweet Tudor magician gather your

sanctions and weave your allegories, roseate your lenses, serve up the bitter dregs in silver-gilt, bless it before and behind and swamp it with baptismal and continual dew[136]

The truth-content of combat experience has been compromised in the interest of allowing it to enter tradition. This passage imputes guilt of the crime of historical forgiveness ("Lime-wash over the tar-brush there's a dear") to Shakespeare, whose righteousness in the act Jones seizes for himself by implication.[137] The fourth part of the poem reveals on whose behalf, and in whose image, Jones performs the sacrifice of truth "for the sake of clinging to transmissibility."[138] The inevitable failure of the sacrifice does not nullify its justification.

This central section of the poem depicts the opening attack of the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele), the assault on Pilckem Ridge in the early morning of 31 July 1917. Twelve thousand soldiers died that day. A member of the 15th Battalion (London Welsh) of the 113th Brigade of the Royal Welch Fusiliers (23rd Foot) of the 38th (Welsh) Division, Jones sat out this episode in "battalion nuclear reserve."[139] The manuscript of the Passchendaele passage features a Private Jones, his name changed to Shenkin for the typescript, who affords Jones an inner standing-point from which to unfold the action (specifically "the G.O.C. in C's diversion before the Mill") that he had only heard from a distance.[140] "Pick-em-up" Shenkin is "the least sure-footed of men," maladjusted just so to survive in a shifting sea of mud.[141] Out of phase with the battle rhythm, his missteps save him: "there was in his maladroitness a scheme of self-preservation."[142] Like Chaplin's, his immediate environment leans in to accommodate his deviations from the standard. Casualties occur on the "open plain" of Passchendaele in the complete absence of "cover."[143] The barrenness of the terrain, Jones recalls in a draft headnote to the poem, made some in his unit wax nostalgic for the "woods & chalk ways of the Somme."[144] A shell-hole "snuggery" kindly swallows Shenkin.[145] A mixture of indifference, haplessness and

fear conspires to reduce him to a "rodent": "in his burrow of salvation and over his drawn-back ears and unseen to his deflected eyes the missiles wove this way and that a steel hatch for him."[146] Here Shenkin lies listening to the cries of the wounded around him each calling on his own tutelar, among them

> the Sanctifier and lord who is glorious in operation, the dispositioner, the effecter of all transubstantiations, who sets the traverse-wall according to the measure of the angel with the reed, who knows best how to gather his epiklesis from that open plain, who transmutes their cheerless blasphemy into a lover's word, who spoke by Balaam and by Balaam's ass, who spoke also by Sgt Bullock.[147]

That only Shenkin hears them is Jones's own "cheerless blasphemy." If the transmutation he mentions takes place it is by virtue of the "dolorous anaphora" that these pages send up.[148] Benjamin writes of Kafka that he "eavesdropped on tradition."[149] In his household revelation communicates itself as white noise. "There is no doctrine that one could learn and no knowledge that one could preserve."[150] In Jones's world, too, "the unknown God" is known by triangulation, as the addressee of an overheard apostrophe who stands convicted of the unknown guilt in general circulation.[151] Jones toys with the idea of Shenkin as a sin offering, but this scapegrace survives as a "scape-goat" who walks away from the altar as spry as ever, if not unscathed.[152] Shenkin emerges from his "shallow crater" as "easily" as he had slipped into it.[153] His caprice marks him out as influence incarnate: "You have to be agile to trace the fleet-foot doubling Influence," Jones writes in the next section of the poem.[154] As the reagent of forgiveness Shenkin unwittingly embraces his role to hold hope in reserve as despair:

> In his covert he had not been altogether ungraced because of the diverse cries coming up from the earth, and because of the baptism by cowardice which is more terrible than that

> of water or blood. Remembering the Rocky Mountain goat he leapt from shell-hole to shell-hole (and no one could tell whether he leapt because he feared or feared because he leapt) until he regained the security of the assembly trench. And that is why he is called one of the three who escaped from the diversion before the Mill.[155]

One small voice Shenkin distills from the rumor of war hails "the God of the philosophers who is not in the fire, who can yet illumine the nature of fire."[156] Shenkin's special "baptism" does not allow him to "escape" incorporating this "diverted" divinity into the cowardly life that remains to him. Unsinged by the firefight, he reflects its garish light sight unseen as the "transmission of the impossibility of transmission, transmission of transmissibility itself—that is, the transmission of trauma."[157] The look of forgiveness is a thousand-yard stare.

Forgiveness is to be found wherever Jones's typographical cues divert his reader's gaze. This "Passchendaele" section of the poem is notable for the footnotes Jones added to it three decades on for publication in *The Sleeping Lord* in March 1974.[158] (Provisionally entitled "Assault on the Mill," it is one of two sections of the longer manuscript of the 1930s and 1940s that Jones revised as the last poem, "from *The Book of Balaam's Ass*," in his final collection, and the only section to receive self-annotation.) These notes fill in Shenkin's shell-hole. If the latter is the look of truth turned "transmissibility itself," the former push "pure myth" to the point of unreadability. Some notes straightforwardly detail what Jones terms his "deposits," the *materia poetica* "of which the poet is himself the product."[159] "Cf. Wordsworth's 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill'" is a sober example.[160] Others of this sort serve up less public but not quite private information: "'Big Willie', the heaviest type of German trench-mortars were sometimes called by us 'Big Willies' after the name of Kaiser Wilhelm II, and those of lighter caliber, 'Little Willies' after the Crown-prince."[161] The self-conscious exotericism of certain notes, however,

transforms them into oblique apologies for the form of the "poem-with-notes" (which Neil Corcoran finely distinguishes from the "poem with notes") itself.[162] Gesturing at justification of the appearance of the name "Hycga" in one passage, Jones comments at the bottom of the page: "In the 1940s, when writing this passage I supposed my source could only be the *A.S. Chronicle*. But on enquiries I'm told that no such entry exists in the *Chronicle*. Jutes in the vicinity of High-Wycombe sounds improbable, but on the other hand, the idea was fixed in my mind and one does not invent tales of this sort, *ex nihilo*."[163] Jones almost certainly formed this *idée fixe* on reading R. G. Collingwood's *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* (1936), whose mention on page 452 of Buckinghamshire place-names associated with the Saxon (not Jute) landowner Hycga he notes in the *Balaam's Ass* manuscript.[164] His note in the published version of the poem goes out of its way to conjure up a crisis of transmissibility. Whether Jones forgot his source or deliberately ignored or suppressed it, he offers here an apology for his second-hand scholarship when its integrity was never in doubt.

This section of the poem is a litany of lamentation for the naked exposure of the soldiers on Passchendaele's "open plain."[165] On their behalf the footnotes oppose the "negative gradient" of the narrative, mercifully ratcheting up the Zone's rugosity.[166] The "backgrounds" that the notes purport to share obtrude into the foreground, throwing up speed bumps in reader's road through the Zone. Poetry in the Zone, these notes proclaim by their presence, only appears mediated by prose, which constitutes a continuation of poetry by other means: commentary. The notes echo the voice of the ass, checking like the latter the headlong rush of prophetic revelation along its course to apocalypse. While from one perspective the ass appears to waylay Balaam, from another she seems to overtake him. Jones's prose similarly surges up from under the lines of his poetry, wringing from the white field of the page on which they are printed room for the

tradition from which they emerge to make itself heard. Tradition by turns forestalls revelation, enjoining revelation to tarry out tradition, and perfects it prematurely, forming as it were a forcing house for truth.

Jones's notes "on points of pronunciation" sound the depths of this dialectic with particular sensitivity.[167] Extracting from it, at the end of his life, a piece for inclusion as the last poem of *The Sleeping Lord* sequence, Jones interpolated in the old manuscript of *Balaam's Ass* a page of new verse that approaches unpronounceability.[168] His editors have named this insertion "the Melchisedec passage," its eponymous priest-king himself hailing from an interpolation, chapter fourteen, in the Book of Genesis, where his mention at verses 18-20 may mark a yet further incursion of "an isolated source."[169] Melchizedek had made a memorable appearance in Jones's 1952 preface to *The Anathemata*. The reader should conceive the "unity" of that poem, Jones writes there, as one would "a longish conversation between two friends, where one thing leads to another; but should a third party hear fragments of it, he might not know how the talk had passed from the cultivation of cabbages to Melchizedek, king of Salem."[170] Here, two decades later, Melchizedek enters the verse on a sudden only to find himself immediately caught in a longish conversation carried out in prose at the bottom of the page. He appears on the list of "those Bright ones" to whom Shenkin hears, in surround sound, stricken soldiers direct devotions with their last breaths.[171] In *The Sleeping Lord* Melchizedek replaces the original manuscript's "Lord of Noe who contracted with all flesh indifferently," an exchange perhaps inspired by the apocryphal identification of Melchizedek with Noah's nephew.[172] Dai Meyrick makes his "dolorous anaphora" on "Magons and Maponus," Celtic deities equivalent with the Roman Mars and Apollo.[173] The elaborate idiom of the Melchisedec passage—Jones's editor calls it "recognisably in David's later 'Anathemata' style"—marks it as the author's own anaphora, and

as if reluctant to release it to the heavens Jones shackles its thirty-one lines to six footnotes, running to forty-one lines of prose.[174] The name-check of Melchizedek himself ("MELCHISÉDEC Wledig") rates the most perverse of these annotations, which explains, or perhaps gives the pretext for, the acute accent Jones places on its penult: "The stress accent on 'e' in Melchisedec is merely in accord with the stress on the penultimate syllable in the majority of Welsh words because it seemed to go with the Welsh title Gwledig (a ruler of great eminence). Cf. Cunedda Wledig, Macsen Wledig. Taliesin refers to God as *Gwledig Nef a phob tud*, 'Ruler of Heaven and all countries'."[175] In the preface to *The Anathemata* Jones tells his readers that he intends his poem to be "said" and advises them to read it aloud slowly: "'with deliberation' is the best rubric for each page, each sentence, each word."[176] "It was written to be read in that way."[177] This word was written to be read "wrong" at first: that is, in the manner familiar from the missal: "summus sacérdos tuus Melchísedech."[178] Jones's eccentric accent and the footnote explaining its placement wrongfoot the reader in a way that sounds more right to the writer, because it causes the reader to stumble upon a network of association otherwise invisible or inaudible.

Rowan Williams expounds the effects of this move in archaeological terms. For Jones, Williams writes, the object of the artist's excavatory activity is connection as such:

> The artist uncovers 'root systems' in human imagination and communication and displays the virtual infinity of ways in which one thing is what it is because of countless others and one word is anchored in entire systems of myth and perception. Everything and every word is thus *for* a whole ecology of meaning, in whose completeness (a completeness that of course resists possession or definitive expression) the unequivocal gift of God is mediated, the gift of both being and bliss.[179]

Jones goes out of his way to accent the makeshift character of his spadework, exposing it as a kind of "Penelope work" instead.[180] The same annotation that points up the painstaking reticulation of the verse often suggests that the net in question has simply dropped from the sky, that the "root system" belongs to an air plant.

The epithets "noswyl duw Gwener" and "pridie the Ides of Mars" (for Holy Thursday and Good Friday respectively) prompt a long, tortured note on the second page of the Melchisedec passage in which Jones plumbs the shallows of his soil. These designations, he writes, "are in no sense meant to have any historicity. The year of the Paschal period in which the Passion occurred is unknown." To ensure that the lunar calendar keep pace with the solar year its reckoners must intercalate a thirteenth month every two or three years, an operation whose own history is subject to the spotty survival of the relevant documentary evidence.[181] Dating the Crucifixion ("in the first month / of the Romulean year Ab Urbe Condita / seven hundred and eighty-four," as Jones gives it) thus resists frictionless translation from one calendar to another, a difficulty of which Jones signals his awareness: "I have simply followed the tradition of the Church and supposed the Supper at which the Oblation placed the Offerand in the state of a Victim to be immolated on the morrow, i.e. Dies Veneris, which *if* it was in the Roman month of March would be the day before the Ides and by Jewish reckoning on the eve of the Passover."[182]

Jones could have made no bones about the "extreme complexities involved," which he says struck him only after the *fait accompli* of composition, but the bones are the chief attraction of the Melchisedec passage. The several extant drafts of the note on dating appear to be of the same vintage as the verse they supplement; it is hard to be sure which came first in the order of conception. The whole two-page prose-verse complex, however, unambiguously postdates the manuscript into which Jones has inserted it by about three decades. In the published version of

1972 the Melchisedec passage arises in "from *The Book of Balaam's Ass*" like the Jesus of the Letter to the Hebrews: according to the order of Melchisedec, which is to say without genealogy and as if plucked from out of time. It is an intercalary—and, as it turns out, culminating—moment in the tale of Pick-em-up Shenkin, who seems to take advantage of the interruption it constitutes (itself further dilated by its footnotes) to muster up the courage (or is it just redoubled cowardice?) to break the cover of his shell-hole and make it to the safety of the assembly trench.

At the end of a letter of 20 July 1935 to Harman Grisewood touching on his latest "mental miseries" Jones says he feels "rather like a Lifeguardsman in a breastplate and spurs without a horse in a mine-crater in a gas attack," a predicament that prefigures Shenkin's in his shell-hole.[183] Jones wonders what this overarmored warrior should do: "It would be a good question in a military examination paper, for the staff."[184] It is a draft of the question that Jones, echoing Jeremiah, issues at the end of the early *Balaam's Ass* manuscript: "Ah, what shall I write."[185] In the Zone of postwar life-in-death, where "Pilkem [sic] heath seems fragrant to the memory," happiness arises only from a form of remembrance that seeks to render incomplete what feels complete: suffering.[186] The Lifeguardsman would do well to act on Shenkin's impulse: "He found that his wire mesh slipped away from him easily."[187] The decision to quit his covert befalls Shenkin spontaneously, and it arrives with the shock of a drive-by baptism—"by cowardice" rather than "of repentance."[188] Shenkin, the unlikely survivor, finds himself persisting in a state of what Bataille calls, in a letter of 6 December 1937 to Alexandre Kojève, "'unemployed negativity'" or, more literally, "negativity without use" [*négativité sans emploi*].[189] History has ended for Shenkin, and he has nothing left to do but inhabit the end of time as if it were the time of the end that it has been, he suddenly recognizes, all along.[190] It is this realization—an animal insight, or an insight into his own animality—that recalls to him "the

Rocky Mountain goat," a force of creatureliness whose embrace ejects him from his shell-hole.[191] Shenkin leaps out of his human skin, projected into an orbit indifferent to "project."

This kingdom, animal or messianic, is the site of "happiness" as Jones defines it in some notes on painting he made for his doctor, William A. H. Stevenson, on 8 October 1947: "Painting odd in that one is led partly by what evolves as the painting evolves, this form suggesting that form—happiness comes when the forms assume significance with regard to this juxtaposition to each other—even though the original 'idea' was somewhat different."[192] The temporality of this process is the time of forgiveness, in which the artist soldiers on hapless with happiness, impatient of "project." Forgiveness here comes unhinged from both subject and object. Neither God nor sin plays a role. The "happiest" paintings "seem to make themselves," Jones writes.[193] And since "the felicity of forms" is what Jones is "really after," the "themes" of an artwork acquire the cast of *anathemata*, preserved as containers emptied of content: "Subject is *everything* in one sense and nothing in *another*."[194] The happiness forgiveness entails grows indistinguishable from despair. The end-time marks a new start, but "the time of the remainder" will also run out.[195] Shenkin has leapt from the shell-hole into the assembly trench; he has not left the front and may never.

In the penultimate section of the poem Jones puts grace and disgrace (golden and leaden echoes, respectively) in the scales and finds the equation hard to throw off balance: "Who shall say the measure, and the price?"[196] Gauging the net effect of "the fleet-foot doubling Influence" proves impossible—"The tare is wheat within your pruning fingers"—and so the soundest counsel is to trust its strength, which means for Jones to do it homage.[197] "You'll be out of grace not to praise…," warn the *disciplinae* of both art and war.[198] The artist must "bend" to influence, and the cost of contortion could not be higher: "That drought and all dead for peculiar splendour

of this one withered tree to eke-out a half-line for this poet in his poverty."[199] At the end of *In Parenthesis* Jones dismisses "Life the leveller" for her "impudent equality," ushering her on to "less discriminating zones" where she might meet hierarchy with anarchy more openly.[200] Instead of life, the casualties of the Somme, an "elect society," receive a "fragile prize" according to hidden merits that establish among them an order of "precedence."[201] A year later and seventy miles north at Ypres, artillery have so undermined the grounds for discrimination that life finds it favorable to flood in, her impudence intact as forgiveness. The zoning laws could not be more lax here, where all zones partake of the Zone.

The last section of the poem introduces the Zone as the place where the hard fate that "our frailty should use us" becomes apparent.[202] Jones exposes the Zone as the antitype of both Salisbury Plain, where the Fusiliers practiced for Passchendaele, and the "Forward Zone" north of the Ypres Salient itself.[203] The Zone extends forward, as in a Nash landscape, to England in 1919-1922, but not, significantly, back to Mametz Wood, the "King Pellam's Launde" of which "it would be difficult to think meanly" and the fragrant memory of which persists as an antidote to the antitype.[204] The Somme stands awkwardly in parenthesis between the "blasted heath" that stretches from Farnborough to Flanders and back.[205] After July 1916, Jones writes in the preface to *In Parenthesis,* the war became more of a "mechanical affair."[206] "'Mechanization' in the widest sense" links the training camp at Winnall Down of August through November 1915 to the "glassy towers" of London immediately after the armistice, and with the advent of mechanization connection to "a less exacting past" began to wither away.[207] *The Book of Balaam's Ass* sets out to set off the Somme as an improbable but irresistible irruption of "influence" in the Zone of "unshared background" that lends to modern life its groundless character.

In Parenthesis ends as the "Queen of the Woods" bends her "influential eyes" on the dying at Mametz, but the more "discriminating zones" that Jones addresses in *Balaam's Ass* seem impervious to her project.[208] In a draft headnote to the poem, dated 1972, Jones acknowledges her absence in order to offer her role to an unnamed understudy: "There was no 'Queen of the Woods' to garland the dead at Passchendaele but no doubt her equivalent found a way for Villon reminds us that the Queen of Heaven & Mundi domina is also Imperatrix of the infernal marsh."[209] Her "equivalent," no doubt, is Balaam's ass, who survives in the last section of the poem as a piece of shagreen for sale in the Zone: "You can be sure of spun buck, sir, you can't improve on our spun buck, my love."[210] On the heath, where "Art and Industry have kissed," the angel and the ass, "freed from love's constraint," combine to form a fine leather accessory.[211] The prophetic voice that howls the poem's final lines sees the skin as of a piece with all commercial products "conceived outside love's covenant" and as natural to a world in which "the habitations of Peace and War" alike share freedom from "love's constraint."[212] Like his footnotes, which Jones wished to keep here "to the barest minimum" required by "courtesy" to put the reader "on the scent" of the right reference, the ass's hide cures tradition, preserving it by desiccation.[213] Opening his heart to "sterility" and travailing for influence's "adamant surfaces," Jones's Jeremiah finds forgiveness under the aspect of wizened wisdom, the look it adopts in the Zone.[214]

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[1] See Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 254-

255: “The idea of life and afterlife in works of art should be regarded with an entirely unmetaphorical objectivity….The concept of life is given its due only if everything that has a history of its own, and is not merely the setting for history, is credited with life.” This volume hereafter cited as *SW* I.

[2] On “the Judge judged in our place,” see Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, volume IV, part 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), 211, 236-238.

[3] See the headnote to Numbers by Nili S. Fox in *The Jewish Study Bible*, second edition, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 267.

[4] John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, volume IV (London: Longmans, Green, 1909), 32.

[5] Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, IV, 32.

[6] David Jones, *In Parenthesis* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014), x.

[7] Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, IV, 19.

[8] Judith R. Baskin, *Pharaoh’s Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 108-109.

[9] Baskin, *Pharaoh’s Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition*, 95.

[10] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat: A Self-portrait of David Jones in his Letters*, ed. René Hague (London: Faber & Faber, 1980), 91; William Blissett, *The Long Conversation: A Memoir of David Jones* (London: Oxford University Press, 1981), 67.

[11] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 86.

[12] Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 86. Comparing *The Anathemata* unfavorably to the earlier *In Parenthesis* and the later *The Sleeping Lord*, Donald Davie echoes Jones's own dissatisfaction with his attempt to write poetry to a program at second hand to the poet's lived experience, whether visionary or carnal. Of "The Tutelar of the Place" Davie remarks: "Here Jones once again speaks with unflurried authority—with the authority of the seer, where he spoke *In Parenthesis* with the authority of the survivor, the 'one who was there'," making the poem, like *In Parenthesis* and unlike *The Anathemata*, "rewarding to read aloud." See Donald Davie, "A Grandeur of Insularity," *Times Literary Supplement*, issue 4039 (22 August 1980): 935. *The Book of Balaam's Ass* undertakes a prophecy of survival, a vision of an injury that survives invisible because it occurred out of the sightline of one who was not quite here or there yet near enough to the action in space and time both to overhear what happened and hear about it shortly afterward from the ones who came all too close. The reader aloud of the poem is rewarded with a share in the schadenfreude.

[13] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 86.

[14] This is a remark by the French painter and theorist Maurice Denis (1870-1943) as quoted and translated by Jonathan Miles in *Eric Gill and David Jones at Capel-y-ffin* (Bridgend: Seren, 1992), 30. Miles notes that Dom Theodore Bailey, a Benedictine monk and artist who had studied with Denis, visited Gill and Jones at Capel from Caldey Island in the mid-1920s.

[15] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 86.

[16] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 178.

[17] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov" (1936), trans. Harry Zohn, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935-1938*, ed. Howard

Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 144. This volume hereafter cited as *SW* III.

[18] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, ix.

[19] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, xiv.

[20] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, ix.

[21] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, xiv.

[22] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, xii; William Blissett, *The Long Conversation*, 133-134.

[23] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, x.

[24] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, xii.

[25] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 91.

[26] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 24.

[27] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 24; cf. Mark 1:10.

[28] David Jones, *The Book of Balaam's Ass*, in Jones, *The Roman Quarry and Other Sequences*, ed. Harman Grisewood and René Hague (New York: Sheep Meadow Press, 1981), 201, 199.

[29] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 24.

[30] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 24.

[31] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, xii.

[32] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 200.

[33] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, xiv.

[34] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 91.

[35] David Jones, "Art and Sacrament," in Jones, *Epoch and Artist*, ed. Harman Grisewood (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), 149; cf. Jones, "Art and Democracy," *Epoch and Artist*, 94.

[36] David Jones, "Art and Sacrament," *Epoch and Artist*, 149; cf. David Jones, "Art and Democracy," *Epoch and Artist*, 87-88.

[37] David Jones, "Art and Sacrament," *Epoch and Artist*, 150.

[38] David Jones, "Use and Sign," in Jones, *The Dying Gaul and Other Writings*, ed. with an introduction by Harman Grisewood (London: Faber & Faber, 1978), 183.

[39] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, xiii.

[40] David Jones, *The Anathemata: Fragments of an Attempted Writing* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010), 12.

[41] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, ix.

[42] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 14; cf. the David Jones Papers at the John J. Burns Library, Boston College, MS 1986-1, box 3, folder 1, p. 4 of 9; see also C. S. Lewis's commentary on Charles Williams's Arthurian poetry in Charles Williams, *Arthurian Torso: Containing the Posthumous Fragment of* The Figure of Arthur (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 189: "An example of difficulties arising from Unshared Background would be *The Waste Land*."

[43] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 42.

[44] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 42.

[45] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 34.

[46] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 89.

[47] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 89.

[48] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 87; Jonathan Miles, *Backgrounds to David Jones: A Study in Sources and Drafts* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1990), 132-133.

[49] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 226.

[50] David Jones, *In Parenthesis,* x.

[51] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat,* 90.

[52] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat,* 89.

[53] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry,* 209.

[54] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry,* 209.

[55] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry,* 209.

[56] David Jones, *The Anathemata,* 35.

[57] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry,* 203.

[58] David Jones, *In Parenthesis,* xiv.

[59] Georges Bataille, "The Passage from Animal to Man and the Birth of Art," in Bataille, *The Cradle of Humanity: Prehistoric Art and Culture,* ed. Stuart Kendall and trans. Michelle Kendall and Stuart Kendall (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 78.

[60] Bataille, *The Cradle of Humanity,* 78.

[61] David Jones, *The Anathemata,* 28-29.

[62] David Jones, "Art and Democracy, *Epoch and Artist,* 96.

[63] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," in *Untimely Meditations,* ed. Daniel Breazeale and trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 60.

[64] David Jones, "Poetry and Anarchy," *The Tablet,* 16 July 1938: 77.

[65] David Jones, "Poetry and Anarchy," 77.

[66] David Jones, "Poetry and Anarchy," 77.

[67] David Jones, "Poetry and Anarchy," 77.

[68] David Jones, "Art in Relation to War," in *The Dying Gaul*, 164; cf. 165: "It is remarkable, to say the least, that man should have served his optimism and his dream of a pacific order in spite of the long historic necessities which have made him essentially the 'warrior' and more and more caught in the double encirclement of the power of 'money' (call it what you like) and the power of the 'sword'—these two traditional foes which seem to have becomes his Scylla and Charybdis, his destroyers."

[69] David Jones, "Art in Relation to War," *The Dying Gaul*, 164.

[70] David Jones, "Art in Relation to War," *The Dying Gaul*, 164.

[71] David Jones, "Poetry and Anarchy," 77.

[72] H. S. (Jim) Ede quoting Jones in his "David Jones," *Horizon* (August 1943): 132.

[73] T. S. Eliot, "*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth," (1923) in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919-1926*, ed. Anthony Cuda and Ronad Schuchard (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press and Faber & Faber, 2014), 478; cf. Eliot's 1961 introduction to *In Parenthesis*, viii: "David Jones is a representative of the same literary generation as Joyce and Pound and myself, if four men born between 1882 [Joyce] and 1895 [Jones] can be regarded as of the same literary generation."

[74] David Jones, *Inner Necessities: The Letters of David Jones to Desmond Chute*, ed. Thomas Dilworth (Toronto: Anson-Cartwright Editions, 1984), 24.

[75] Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. Leslie Anne Boldt (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 46; See Bataille, *Œuvres Complètes*, tome V (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 60: "Principe de l'expérience intérieure : sortir par un projet du domaine du projet."

[76] Herbert Read, *Poetry and Anarchism* (1938), in *Anarchy and Order: Essays in Politics* (London: Faber & Faber, 1954), 107.

[77] Herbert Read, *Anarchy and Order*, 107.

[78] Herbert Read, *Anarchy and Order*, 108.

[79] Herbert Read, *Anarchy and Order*, 121.

[80] Herbert Read, *Anarchy and Order*, 108.

[81] See the letter of 11 April 1939 from Jones to Jim and Helen Ede in Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 91; see also Oliver Bevington's edition of Jones's letter of 18 December 1938 to Neville Chamberlain, in Jones, *David Jones on Religion, Politics, and Culture: Unpublished Prose*, ed. Thomas Berenato, Kathleen Henderson Staudt, and Anne Price-Owen (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 11-43.

[82] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 93.

[83] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 92.

[84] David Jones Papers, National Library of Wales, LR 7-1 (1), pp. 125-6; Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 187. René Hague, whose work Harman Grisewood completed after Hague's death in 1981, presents an edition of the manuscript catalogued as LR 7-1 as Jones, *The Book of Balaam's Ass*, in *The Roman Quarry*, 187-211. Manuscript page numbers are the archivists'.

[85] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 187; LR 7-1 (4), p. 8; Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 187.

[86] LR 7-1 (1), p. 123.

[87] Walter Benjamin, "Literary History and the Study of Literature" (April 1931), trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 2, Part 2: 1931-1934*, ed. Michael

W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 463. Hereafter cited as *SW* II.2.

[88] See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Three volumes in one* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), volume 2, 174: "In all human relations he who forgives is himself guilty, not only generally, but in the concrete situation in which he forgives."

[89] Walter Benjamin, "Goethe's Elective Affinities" (written 1919-1922, published 1924-1925; Goethe's novel's title not italicized in Benjamin's essay's title), trans. Stanley Corngold, in *SW* I, 332. See William Blake's song of innocence "Infant Joy" for an uneasy rhyme between the actions of "calling" and "befalling" that catches the ambivalence of the decision to "be fallen" that forgiveness entails. To call down the joy of innocence is to "befall" forgiveness.

[90] See Richard Gibson, "Browning's 'A Forgiveness': A Grammatical Reading," *Literature Compass* 11, volume 2 (February 2014): 74-83; Walter Benjamin, "Literary History and the Study of Literature," in *SW* II.2, 464.

[91] David Jones, "Poetry and Anarchy," 77. The grave accent on "gràce" here is Jones's or his editor's intervention. Jones's copy of Hopkins's *Poems,* a gift at Christmas 1930 from his father, was Charles Williams's second edition, published November 1930 by Oxford University Press, which reads "Kéeps gráce:" (53). For a history of Jones's reception of Hopkins up to 1968 see Thomas Berenato, "A 're-cognition' in 'the exact sense of that word': David Jones's Unfinished Essay on Gerard Manley Hopkins," in Jones, *David Jones on Religion, Politics, and Culture: Unpublished Prose,* 101-118. Jones mentions Hopkins's "The Leaden Echo" in *The Book of Balaam's Ass*. See Jones, *The Roman Quarry,* 205.

[92] David Jones, *The Anathemata,* 21.

[93] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 23.

[94] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 21.

[95] Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. and ed. J. Michael Ashley (New York: Crossroad, 2007), 88; David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 21.

[96] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 21.

[97] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 22.

[98] Gershom Scholem, discussing Kafka, in a letter of 20 September 1934 to Walter Benjamin, in *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem 1932-1940*, ed. Gershom Scholem and trans. Gary Smith and André Lefevere (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 142: "You ask what I understand by the 'nothingness of revelation'? I understand by it a state in which revelation appears to be without meaning, in which it still asserts itself, in which it has *validity* but *no significance*. A state in which the wealth of meaning is lost and what is in the process of appearing (for revelation is such a process) still does not disappear, even though it is reduced to the zero point of its own content, so to speak. This is obviously a borderline case in the religious sense, and whether it can really come to pass is a dubious point." This volume hereafter cited as *C*.

[99] LR 7-1 (1), p. 126 (verso).

[100] Wilfred Bion, "Container and Contained Transformed," in *Attention and Interpretation* (London: Karnac, 1984), 117. Compare Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *SW* I, 252: "In appreciation of a work of art or an art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful. Not only is any reference to a particular public or its representatives misleading, but

even the concept of an 'ideal' receiver is detrimental in the theoretical consideration of art, since all it posits is the existence and nature of man as such. Art, in the same way, posits man's physical and spiritual existence, but in none of its works is it concerned with his attentiveness. No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the audience."

[101] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 40, 82.

[102] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 40.

[103] Heinrich Fries, "Myth," in *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise* Sacramentum Mundi, ed. Karl Rahner, trans. John Griffiths, Francis McDonagh, and David Smith (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 1016.

[104] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 187.

[105] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 187.

[106] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 188.

[107] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 188.

[108] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 188.

[109] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 208.

[110] David Jones, "A Note on Mr. Berenson's Views," in *Epoch and Artist*, 277. For a fuller discussion of this essay see Thomas Berenato, "David Jones and the Influence of Analogy," in *David Jones: A Christian Modernist?*, ed. Jamie Callison, Paul S. Fiddes, Anna Johnson, and Erik Tonning (Boston: Brill, 2018), 209-223.

[111] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 188.

[112] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 188.

[113] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 189.

[114] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 189.

[115] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 188.

[116] David Jones, "Art in Relation to War", *The Dying Gaul*, 140.

[117] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 28.

[118] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 189.

[119] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 204.

[120] David Jones, "The Myth of Arthur," in *Epoch and Artist*, 243. Jones quotes John 18:9 (KJV).

[121] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 189.

[122] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 189.

[123] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 189.

[124] Walter Benjamin, "Goethe's Elective Affinities," in *SW* I, 343; "Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften," in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-1991), I.1, 184. This edition hereafter cited as *GS*.

[125] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 189.

[126] Walter Benjamin, "Goethe's Elective Affinities," in *SW* I, 342; *GS* I.1, 184.

[127] Walter Benjamin, "Goethe's Elective Affinities," in *SW* I, 287, 343; *GS* I.1, 184. On "Vergebung" see "Die Bedeutung der Zeit in der moralischen Welt," in Walter Benjamin, *GS* VI, 98.

[128] Walter Benjamin, "Goethe's Elective Affinities," in *SW* I, 343; *GS* I.1, 184.

[129] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 189.

[130] See William Blissett, *The Long Conversation*, 93.

[131] Walter Benjamin, "Goethe's Elective Affinities," in *SW* I, 342; *GS* I.1, 184.

[132] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 191. On Jones and the doctrine of Original Sin, see Thomas Berenato, "David Jones and the Ancient Mariner," *Religion & Literature* 49.1 (2018): 131-140.

[133] David Jones, "Preface by the Author," in *Epoch and Artist*, 14.

[134] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 190.

[135] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 192.

[136] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 193. On the sarcasm of this passage, see Neil Corcoran, "Spilled Bitterness: *In Parenthesis* in History," in *David Jones: Man and Poet*, ed. John Matthias (Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, University of Maine, 1989), 209-225.

[137] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 193. On Jones's reception of the *Henriad*, see Adrian Poole, "The Disciplines of War, Memory, and Writing: Shakespeare's *Henry V* and David Jones's *In Parenthesis*, *Critical Survey* 22, number 2 (2010): 91-104.

[138] Walter Benjamin, discussing Kafka, in a letter of 12 June 1938 to Gershom Scholem, in *C*, 225. See also Benjamin's letter to Scholem of 11 August 1934, *C*, 135.

[139] Thomas Dilworth, *David Jones in the Great War* (London: Enitharmon, 2012), 161; see also *A History of the 38th (Welsh) Division, by the G.S.O.'s I of the Division*, ed. Joseph Ernest Munby (London: Hugh Rees, 1920), 25. Jones heavily annotated his copy of this book, which he autographed in July 1929. See item 295 of Jones's personal library in the National Library of Wales.

[140] LR 7-1 (7), pp. 25, 27; David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 199.

[141] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 198.

[142] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 199.

[143] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 193.

[144] David Jones Papers, John J. Burns Library, Boston College, MS 1986-1, box 3, folder 1, p. 8 of 9.

[145] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 199.

[146] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 199.

[147] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 200.

[148] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 201.

[149] Walter Benjamin, letter of 12 June 1938 to Gershom Scholem, in *C*, 224.

[150] Walter Benjamin, letter of 12 June 1938 to Gershom Scholem, in *C*, 224.

[151] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 201.

[152] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 192.

[153] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 199, 201.

[154] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 203.

[155] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 201.

[156] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 200.

[157] Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 80.

[158] See Thomas Dilworth's biography, *David Jones: Engraver, Soldier, Painter, Poet* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2017), 350.

[159] Jones, *The Anathemata*, 14, 20.

[160] David Jones, *The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments* (London: Faber & Faber, 2017), 103.

[161] Jones, *The Sleeping Lord*, 104.

[162] Neil Corcoran, "The Man Who Wrote the Book: Some Recent Work on David Jones," *PN Review* 37, number 4 (March-April 1981): 64.

[163] Jones, *The Sleeping Lord*, 102.

[164] LR 7-1 (6), p. 9 of 15.

[165] David Jones, *The Sleeping Lord*, 104.

[166] W. G. Sebald, *The Emergence of Memory: Conversations with W. G. Sebald*, ed. Lynn Sharon Schwartz (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2010), 41. Sebald is speaking of the function of the photographs in his books: "possibly that of arresting time" (41).

[167] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 43.

[168] LR 7-1 (16), p. 13 of 17; p. 17 of 17 bears the date July 26, 1971. This is a manuscript inscription on a typescript dating to the 1940s.

[169] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 200, editors' footnote 3; *Genesis*, second edition, ed. and trans. E. A. Speiser (Garden City, NY: The Anchor Bible, 1964), 105.

[170] Jones, *The Anathemata*, 33.

[171] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 200.

[172] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 200; see the commentary on the Letter to the Hebrews in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, second edition, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 471, 473.

[173] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 201; Jones, *The Sleeping Lord*, 110; Jones, *David Jones's* The Grail Mass *and Other Works*, ed. Thomas Goldpaugh and Jamie Callison (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 150, Jones's footnote 1.

[174] David Jones Papers, National Library of Wales, LS 9-2, p. 1 of 32.

[175] David Jones, *The Sleeping Lord*, 108.

[176] Jones, *The Anathemata*, 35.

[177] Jones, *The Anathemata*, 35-36.

[178] *Latin-English Booklet Missal for Praying the Traditional Mass*, fourth edition, twelfth printing (Chicago: Coalition in Support of *Ecclesia Dei*, February, 2015), 36.

[179] Rowan Williams, foreword to Jones, *David Jones on Religion, Politics, and Culture: Unpublished Prose*, ed. Thomas Berenato, Kathleen Henderson Staudt, and Anne Price-Owen, xvii.

[180] See Walter Benjamin, "On the Image of Proust" (June-July 1929, revised 1934), trans. Harry Zohn, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 2, Part 1: 1927-1930*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 238: "For the important thing to the remembering author is not what he experienced, but the weaving of his memory, the Penelope work of recollection [*Eingedenken*]. Or should one call it, rather, a Penelope work of forgetting?"

[181] See Sacha Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar, 2nd Century BCE to 10th Century CE* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. chapter 2, "The Intercalation," 47-97.

[182] David Jones, *The Sleeping Lord*, 109.

[183] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 76.

[184] Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 76.

[185] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 209.

[186] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 209. See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), entry N8,1, p. 471, which begins, "On the question of the incompleteness of history…" and ends: "…history is not simply a science but also and not least a form of remembrance <*Eingedenken*>. What science has 'determined,' remembrance can modify. Such mindfulness can make the incomplete (happiness) into something complete, and the complete (suffering) into something incomplete. That is theology; but in remembrance we have an experience that forbids us to conceive of history as fundamentally atheological, little as it may be granted to us to try to write it with immediately theological concepts." On happiness, see also Walter Benjamin, "Theological-Political Fragment," trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *SW* III, 305-306, and Peter Fenves's commentary, "Completion Instead of Revelation: Toward the 'Theological-Political Fragment'," in *Walter Benjamin and Theology*, ed. Colby Dickinson and Stéphane Symons (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 56-74.

[187] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 201.

[188] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 201; see Luke 3:3.

[189] Georges Bataille, *Guilty*, ed. and trans. Stuart Kendall (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011), 111; Bataille, *Œuvres Complètes*, tome V, 369; Alex Dubilet, *The Self-Emptying Subject: Kenosis and Immanence, Medieval to Modern* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 230, note 41.

[190] On this distinction see Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 62, and Dubilet, *The Self-Emptying Subject*, 234, note 78.

[191] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 201.

[192] David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 137.

[193] Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 137.

[194] Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 138.

[195] Dubilet, *The Self-Emptying Subject*, 171.

[196] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 206.

[197] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 205.

[198] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 207; *Anathemata* 34, note 1.

[199] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 211, 204-205.

[200] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 185.

[201] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 185.

[202] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 206.

[203] David Jones Papers, John J. Burns Library, Boston College, MS 1986-1, box 3, folder 1, p. 6 of 9.

[204] See Jeremy Hooker, "Mametz Wood: The photographs of Aled Rhys Hughes," in Aled Rhys Hughes, *Mametz* (Bridgend: Seren, 2016), 88-89; David Jones Papers, John J. Burns Library, Boston College, MS 1986-1, box 3, folder 1, pp. 2 and 6 of 9; Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 209.

[205] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 207.

[206] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, ix.

[207] David Jones Papers, John J. Burns Library, Boston College, MS 1986-1, box 3, folder 1, p. 7 of 9; Dilworth, *David Jones in the Great War*, 52; David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 211; David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, ix.

[208] Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 185.

[209] David Jones Papers, John J. Burns Library, Boston College, MS 1986-1, box 3, folder 1, p. 7 of 9. See Kathleen Henderson Staudt's brief commentary in her *At the Turn of a Civilization: David Jones and Modern Poetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 100-101.

[210] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 210.

[211] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 209.

[212] Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 202, 209.

[213] David Jones Papers, John J. Burns Library, Boston College, MS 1986-1, box 3, folder 1, pp. 4-5.

[214] David Jones, *The Roman Quarry*, 210, 211. One of the travailed-for "surfaces" is that of the page on which the poem is to be printed. A draft of a 1966 letter to Eric Walter White, one of the first editors of "A, a, a, DOMINE DEUS," the short standalone lyric that Jones fashioned from the end of his *Balaam's Ass* manuscript and would later publish as the first poem in *The Sleeping Lord* sequence, shows the author taking extraordinary pains to ensure that his intended blocking of its prose and verse elements is clear to the typesetter. See David Jones Papers, National Library of Wales, LS 2-1.

Conclusion

A note on method, and method rather than theory:[1] This study does not presume to offer a new theory of forgiveness. A theory would presume the security of a theorizing subject, an onlooker capable of contemplating coolly the course of forgiveness through the poems and their poetics under discussion. The "look" of forgiveness in poetry is rather reciprocal; it redounds upon a reader whom the poetic action leaves bereft of a fixed concept of forgiveness. "What you look hard at seems to look hard at you," Hopkins observes in a journal entry of March 1871.[2] To the extent that the method supposes a "theorizing object," as it were—catching the theorizing subject in the act of abdication from all theory—method and theory converge upon a theology. The theology of criticism in play here generates the look of forgiveness uniquely in each case—for each poet, for each poem by each poet, for each line of each poem, etc.—by suspending the distinction between construction and reception of the differentials on which the analysis works. The halfway term between active construction and passive reception of the object of criticism is in fact forgiveness, and the object under critique by forgiveness would look no different than any other did the critic and the criticized in the context of forgiveness not reveal in each other a sudden similarity. This image of affinity, emergent and evanescent, is the look of forgiveness. The theory of forgiveness is the recognition that critique is a way, unmethodical beyond the particular instance, of seeing and being seen.

A final note, on failure:[3] This is a study of failure as well as of forgiveness, and it is an exercise in both. Here forgiveness finds expression as failure. The failure of forgiveness consists in its recognition of failure in the "radical sense" that R. P. Blackmur gives to the notion in an essay of 1936 on Henry Adams. Blackmur's definition of failure: "that we cannot consciously react to more than a minor fraction of the life we yet deeply know and endure and die."[4]

According to Blackmur the greatness of Adams's mind lies in its "acceptance, with all piety, of ignorance as the humbled form of knowledge."[5] These commentaries on Blake, Hopkins, and Jones catch the look (Blackmur speaks later of a "plummet echo") of this acceptance in their work.[6] Failure is integral, not incidental, to their attempts to educate themselves, in the view of a public small to the point of vanishment, into "positive ignorance" of God.[7] Each of the poets is aware of his failure to find God. Their forgiveness is to count that failure as worthy and capable, or rather necessary and irresistible, of expression.

Blake's failure is to discountenance what he calls, in his annotations to Bishop Richard Watson's *An Apology for the Bible* (1797), prophecy "in the modern sense": "Jonah was no prophet in the modern sense for his prophecy of Nineveh failed."[8] Modern prophecy, predicting the future, depends on the strength of a chain of events linked to each other by the logic of cause and effect. By design or by default—the effect is the same—of a powerful failure of imagination, Blake lays this law aside.[9] The order, amounting to disorder, of the plates in some of his illuminated books bears witness to his failure. No two copies of *Songs of Innocence*, for instance, share an arrangement of their plates. Similarly, the plates of no two of the seven copies of *The [First] Book of Urizen* appear in the same order. Jerome McGann argues that the latter's "unstable text is of a determinate type," inspired or corroborated, alongside the other books of Blake's Bible of Hell, by the "fragment hypothesis" of the Scottish scholar Dr. Alexander Geddes, which revealed the Bible of Heaven as a "promiscuous heap" of discontinuous provenance, a text more jumbled than layered.[10] McGann proposes that *Urizen*, with its missing third and redundant fourth chapters, among other incoherences, represents Blake's deliberate parody of Genesis in a Geddesian spirit. This assertion of intent, so unmistakable in the case of the earlier *Marriage*, undersells the pathos of Blake's procedure in *Urizen*. The success of satire

depends on the establishment of an even tone, the sustenance of a straight face with respect to the historical data under parodic pressure. To mirror a mess with the mimetic assiduity McGann's Blake brings to the task makes for, first of all, a second-order mess the full glare of whose disorderliness must achieve, at the risk of overloading the scruples of, critical registration. To Blake, especially after the turn of the century, religion is neither a struggle nor a joy but a terrible battle to be won or lost.[11] The battlefield is the illuminated book, on and across its printed plates. If *Urizen* is a parody of Genesis, as it certainly is, to explain away its anomalies as such is to produce a parody, an ahistorical hypostasis, of the Higher Criticism. This has the virtue of all textual contextualization—the never unwelcome framing and filling in of the historical picture—but it threatens to encourage the vice of historicism, an apparent avoidance of idiocy, to thrive unchecked. What is deliberate in Blake's work is not ultimately parody but the deliberation of a state of affairs, abetted by orthodox radicals like Geddes, to which parody seems the most earnest response available short of silence. Blake suffers the horror of parody—unflinchingly absorbs his own heresy—by acknowledging that it gives or takes no particular direction, that it has the force of the idiotic laughter of general idiocy. Blake puts his own epistemic overconfidence on notice by defining bounding lines in the boldest of strokes, as in the Proverbs of Hell, where wisdom falters at the limit of abstraction and pretense to the absolute solicits absolution. "To Generalize is to be an Idiot," Blake scrawls on Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses on Art*.[12] The paradox of this pronouncement lands first as farce, then as tragedy. If it is parody it is one that knows itself to be punching above its weight and so turns the other cheek to accept its own blows on the rebound. In this way critique doubles (back) as a plea for forgiveness, whose principle is self-interruption.

This same dynamic is on display in Hopkins's terrible sonnet "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves," which dismembers its vocables the better to disremember (that is, fail to remember) them. Like Blake's song of innocence "Infant Joy," Hopkins's song of (evening) experience seeks the reader's supplication. Whatever these poems are about—both broach the feel of "befalling"—matters less than that they succeed as an "expense of greatness," which is Blackmur's definition of failure. Hopkins accepts defeat at the start and compels all who join his enterprise into complicity with this concession. The penultimate foot of the first line is simply an ellipsis, tempting the would-be reciter into an abyss of expression.[13] Enunciation realizes renunciation of meaning. Sucked into only to be sprung from the poem's center, the voice finds itself ejected—itself expressed, spit out, spelt—to the poem's periphery, whence it proceeds, at a loss for any other occupation, to exert what pressure it can on the entropic contents of the following lines. Some remarks of Henry Adams at the end of his *Education*'s thirty-second chapter supply an apt summary of this poem's plot: "The stupendous failure of Christianity tortured history. The effort for Unity could not be a partial success; even alternating Unity resolved itself into meaningless motion at last."[14] For His failure to secure Unity God must be forgiven, as must the poet and his reader. This sonnet offers itself as a site for that self-consuming operation, safe on the far side of expression. Forgiveness comes in the application of force from the outside, a job once held down by God's finger that now falls to the modulations of each tentative human tongue. "The effort must begin at once, for time pressed. The old formulas had failed, and a new one had to be made, but, after all, the object was not extravagant or eccentric. One sought no absolute truth. One sought only a spool on which to wind the thread of history without breaking it."[15] The last four lines of Hopkins's poem transpose Adams's urgent task onto "twó spools" that "tell, éach off the óther."[16]

Failure and its secret sharer forgiveness unfold in Jones's poetry in the region he stakes out there between prose and verse. Donald Davie observes that Jones was all but unsusceptible to "the niceties of turning from one verse-line to the next" and had no ear for the melodic effects of syntax.[17] "Did any one ever want to read aloud any page of it?" he asks of *The Anathemata*, quoting a passage from the poem's first section, "Rite and Fore-time."[18]:

> At these Nocturns the hebdomadary is apt to be vested for five hundred thousand weeks. Intunes the Dog:
>
> *Benedicite ignis*…
>
> Cantor Notus and Favonius with all their south-aisled numina:
>
> *con flora cálida*
>
> *mit warmer Fauna*
>
> The Respond is with the Bear:
>
> *Benedicite frigus*…
>
> Super-pellissed, stalled in crystallos, from the gospel-side, choir all the boreal schola
>
> *mit kalter Flora*
>
> *con fauna fría*[19]

In the version of his essay that Davie published in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1980 as well as in its posthumously published revision Jones's lineation does not survive intact, and his footnotes to this passage disappear altogether.[20] Davie or his editors break the first line after "hebdomadary," where Jones lets it run to the end of the page, as prose, at the bottom of which he gives this gloss: "Cf. the term Hebdomadarius, which is used of that member of a chapter or religious community whose office it is to lead in choir. His or her duties last a week."[21] A defender of this poet need not deny Davie's charge that "Jones's having no more than a coterie following meant that he had no safeguards against unwitting self-parody, which he fell into quite often."[22] Parody well names the relationship between prose and verse in this poetry. "It may be that the kind of thing I have been trying to make is no longer makeable in the kind of way in

which I have tried to make it," Jones admits in his preface to *The Anathemata*.[23] This predicament does not stop him from publishing these "fragments of an attempted writing," as his subtitle advertises the book's contents. The object of parody Jones's work implies is the reader who would refuse to take at face value the confession this statement and this subtitle contain. Jones's prose is rife with scare quotes and their kin—among them self-conscious hyphenation of "re-presentation" and a worrying of the distinction between "Sacrament" and "sacrament" in his essays in theological aesthetics—that serve to save his project from canonicity.[24] This abdication of authoritativeness—"I quote from memory only…" begins the first reference of Jones's 1955 manifesto "Art and Sacrament"—functions like Blake's claim that he took down the verse of *Jerusalem* as dictation and Hopkins's insistence that his own performance of "The Loss of the Eurydice" would hardly "realise" his intent for it: "Indeed the higher wrought the art, clearly the wider severance between the parts of the author and the performer."[25] All three co-opt as a form of forgiveness in art the structural failure of execution to live up to conception. In the mismatch lies both damnation and deliverance. Henry Adams expresses it in the editor's preface to the *Education* he wrote over the byline of Henry Cabot Lodge, in his third-person talk of "Adams" throughout the autobiography, and in the figure of the "manakin" he introduces in the book's second preface (where he refers to the author as "the tailor"). This dummy "has the same value as any other geometric figure of three or more dimensions, which is used for the study of relation. For that purpose it cannot be spared; it is the only measure of motion, of proportion, of human condition; it must have the air of reality; must be taken for real; must be treated as though it had life."[26] For Blake, the life of poetry floods the gap between a guinea and an innumerable company of the heavenly host. For Hopkins, its life arises from the play of stress against instress. For Jones the strife of verse and prose on the page proves the perennial failure of myth and

science to coincide. As he explains in his general note to "Rite and Fore-time," poetry lives—finds its forgiveness—in this interstice:

> The findings of the physical sciences are necessarily mutable and change with fresh evidence or with fresh interpretation of the same evidence. This is an important point to remember with regard to the whole of this section of my text where I employ ideas based on more or less current interpretations of archaeological and anthropological data. Such interpretations, of whatever degree of probability, remain hypothetical. The layman can but employ for his own purposes the pattern available during his lifetime. The poet in c. 1200 could make good use of a current supposition that a hill in Palestine was the centre of the world. The poet of the seventeenth-century could make use of the notion of gravitational pull. The abiding truth behind those two notions would now, in both cases (I am told), be differently expressed. But the poet, of whatever century, is concerned only with how he can use a current notion to express a permanent mythus.[27]

"Who knows? Possibly it had!" Adams exclaims of his manakin's hypothetical possession of life. Forgiveness consists in this attitude to the unrealized possibilities possessed by the past that survive into the present as specimens of failed life. It treats them as Jones treats the Gospel: as a "'pure myth'" possessed of permanent life because "devoid of the fictitious."[28]

[1] This note takes inspiration from Max Pensky's account of Walter Benjamin's thought-figure the "dialectical image" in *The Arcades Project* and its adjuncts. See Max Pensky, "Method and time: Benjamin's dialectical images," in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David S. Ferris (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 177-198.

[2] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Volume III: Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, ed. Lesley Higgins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 504.

[3] This note takes inspiration from *The Education of Henry Adams*, first circulated privately, in an edition of one hundred copies, in 1907 and then published posthumously in 1918, the year of Hopkins's *Poems*. Adams suggests in one of its two prefaces a subtitle to his autobiography: "a Study of Twentieth-Century Multiplicity." His study's method, he says there, is to reverse that Augustine deployed in his *Confessions*—moving from multiplicity to unity—by taking unity as its starting point. Adams found this scheme ultimately "unmanageable." Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*, ed. Ira B. Nadel (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5. Forgiveness is one name for managing the unmanageable, and another name for forgiveness is education, in and up to and finally through a failure to reconcile unity (or innocence) and multiplicity (experience).

[4] R. P. Blackmur, *Henry Adams*, ed. Veronica A. Makowsky (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 4. Blackmur's essay "The Expense of Greatness: Three Emphases on Henry Adams," collected in this posthumous volume, first appeared in the Summer 1936 issue of the *Virginia Quarterly Review*.

[5] Blackmur, *Henry Adams*, 19.

[6] Blackmur, *Henry Adams*, 30.

[7] Blackmur, *Henry Adams*, 19. See also p. 18: "Failure, far from incidental, is integral to that attempt ["to justify experience and so to pass beyond it"], and becomes apparent just so soon as reason falters and becomes abstract, or faith fails and pretends to be absolute."

[8] *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, commentary by Harold Bloom, revised ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 617. Erdman's edition hereafter cited as "E."

[9] According to W. J. T. Mitchell, the "atemporal, antisequential quality" that *The [First] Book of Urizen*'s "movable" wordless plates, over a third of the whole, impart to the reading experience suggests that a "deliberate formal device" is at work through the illuminated book. See W. J. T. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art: A Study of the Illuminated Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 137.

[10] Jerome J. McGann, "The Idea of an Indeterminate Text: Blake's Bible of Hell and Dr. Alexander Geddes," *Studies in Romanticism*, volume 25, number 3 (Fall 1986): 309, 319, 320. McGann counts "the works of David Jones" in the "textual tradition"—of poetic structures built in conscious response to eighteenth-century German biblical scholarship—at the head of which *Urizen* stands (303). Jones's preface to *The Anathemata* (1952) opens: "I have made a heap of all that I could find." See David Jones, *The Anathemata: Fragments of an Attempted Writing* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010), 9.

[11] See the remark of the artist Wharton in the fifth chapter of Henry Adams's 1884 novel *Esther*: "It all comes to this: is religion a struggle or a joy? To me it is a terrible battle, to be won or lost." See Henry Adams, *Henry Adams: Novels, Mont Saint Michel, The Education*, ed. Jayne Samuels and Ernest Samuels (New York: Library of America, 1983), 246.

[12] E 641.

[13] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Norman H. MacKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 190: "Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, | vaulty, voluminous, … stupendous" (l. 1). This edition hereafter cited as *PW*. The following analysis could be extended to Hopkins's sonnet of 1888 "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection" (*PW* 197-198), with its three codas and diverser complement of diacritical marks. But the earlier, less comforting sonnet (begun 1884) offers the direr test of the triumph of the forgiveness-failure paradox.

[14] Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams,* 393.

[15] Henry Adams, *The Education*, 393.

[16] Hopkins, *PW*, 191; l. 11, l. 13.

[17] Donald Davie, *Under Briggflatts: A History of Poetry in Great Britain, 1960-1988* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1989), 162.

[18] Donald Davie, *With the Grain: Essays on Thomas Hardy and Modern British Poetry*, ed. Clive Wilmer (Manchester: Carcanet, 1998), 231.

[19] David Jones, *The Anathemata,* 63-64. This book, Jones's second after his war poem *In Parenthesis* (Faber, 1937), first appeared in 1952. Scholars of Jones's manuscripts such as Thomas Goldpaugh have since shown the extent to which *The Anathemata* is itself a fragment of what Davie (*Under Briggflatts*, 162) calls "one poem in the strictest sense interminable," comparable in this quality to *The Cantos*. See David Jones, *David Jones's* The Grail Mass *and Other Works,* ed. Thomas Goldpaugh and Jamie Callison (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), Goldpaugh's recent edition of Jones's unpublished poetry.

[20] See Donald Davie, "A Grandeur of Insularity," *Times Literary Supplement*, issue 4039 (22 August 1980): 935.

[21] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 63.

[22] Donald Davie, *Under Briggflatts*, 162. Davie (*With the Grain*, 231) discusses a letter of 4 July 1945 from Jones to Harman Grisewood reporting a dinner conversation with W. F. Jackson Knight about prosody: "These chaps are awfully interested in the metre thing, aren't they?" See David Jones, *Dai Greatcoat: A Self-portrait of David Jones in his Letters*, ed. René Hague (London: Faber & Faber, 1980), 129.

[23] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 15.

[24] On this theme see Elizabeth F. Judge, "Notes on the Outside: David Jones, 'Unshared Backgrounds,' and (the Absence of) Canonicity," *ELH*, volume 68, number 1, Spring 2001: 179-213. Judge argues that Jones self-annotates his work "out of the canon" by rendering critical commentary "redundant" (195). Her conclusion: "Notwithstanding that his poetry shares many parallels with the modernists and that he was championed by influential principals of the modernism movement, Jones, inspired to annotate by a solicitude for the common reader and his distrust of certain academic exegeses, prevented his own assimilation into academic discourse and thus precluded his canonization" (202).

[25] David Jones, *Epoch and Artist*, ed. Harman Grisewood (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), 146; Blake, *Jerusalem*, pl. 3, E 145 (see also *Europe*, pl. iii; E 60); Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Volume II: Correspondence 1882-1889*, ed. R. K. R. Thornton and Catherine Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 748 (letter of 5-8 November 1885 from G. M. Hopkins to his brother Everard Hopkins; see the discussion in chapter 2, pp. 80-81 above).

[26] Henry Adams, *The Education*, 8.

[27] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 82.

[28] David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 40.

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