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Sarah Braden Stein Date

A Hebraic Modernity:
Poetry, Prayer and Translation in the Long Eighteenth Century

By

Sarah Braden Stein
Doctor of Philosophy

Comparative Literature

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Deborah Elise White
Advisor

---

Geoffrey Bennington
Committee Member

---

Walter L. Reed
Committee Member

---

Jill Robbins
Committee Member

Accepted:

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Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

---

Date

# A Hebraic Modernity:
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By

Sarah Braden Stein
B.A., University of Minnesota, 2004

Advisor: Deborah Elise White, Ph.D.

An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

A Hebraic Modernity:
Poetry, Prayer, and Translation in the Long Eighteenth Century
By Sarah Braden Stein

*A Hebraic Modernity: Poetry, Prayer, and Translation in the Long Eighteenth Century* explores the central role played by translations of the Hebrew Psalms in British literature of the eighteenth century. What may seem to be exercises in Christian piety or orientalizing erudition turn out to be pivotal sites of encounter with the problem of origin (national, religious, linguistic) and the relation of an origin, or of an original text, to a newly constituted literary modernity. As each author translates the psalms, a myth of the Hebraic origins of England is created and embraced. Thus, through translation, the heightened language of the psalms becomes the occasion of a broader meditation on the movement between and within languages as an articulation of modernity's contradictory relationship with its origin. Through close readings of eighteenth-century poetry, fiction, and criticism *A Hebraic Modernity* investigates the attempt by multiple authors simultaneously to return to and to transcend the original text of the psalms. The appearance of psalm translations in the work of John Dennis, Samuel Richardson, Christopher Smart, and William Blake reveals an implicit theory of translation in the work of each author. The study is divided into four chapters which establish the important role played by psalmody in the eighteenth century, clarify the theory of translation inherent in the work of Dennis, Richardson, Smart, and Blake, and explore the myth of 'sublime Hebrew' in order to illustrate the complex relationship between Hebrew and English in the eighteenth century.

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# Introduction

Translations of the Hebrew Psalms played a central role in British literature of the long eighteenth century. What may seem to be exercises in Christian piety or orientalizing erudition turn out to be pivotal sites of encounter with the problem of *origin* (national, religious, linguistic) and the relation of an origin—or of an original text—to a newly constituted literary modernity. Through translation, the heightened language of the Psalms becomes the occasion of a broader meditation on the movement between and within languages as an articulation of modernity's contradictory relationship with an *absent* origin it can never name. Psalm translation, as a genre, encompassed many different forms in the long eighteenth century. The many metrical translations of the Psalms, popular in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, proliferated into eighteenth-century texts.[1] In each case, the translation of the psalms into English reflects a concern with the incorporation of the biblical tradition in what was experienced as a newly modern condition. At the same time, the eighteenth-century fascination with origins of all kinds reveals itself in the desire to translate literary work and language at its assumed origin, in the Hebrew Bible.[2] While earlier translations may have wrestled with the complicated relationship to origins in the psalms, the privileged status of origins in the eighteenth century makes these translations a site of singular concern with the relation of English to its supposed Hebrew roots. Rewriting the psalms in English allowed the translator to address the relation of English speech and language to Hebrew language, and of English Christianity to its sources in the Judaic text of the Old Testament.

I. Interruption, Address, and Apostrophe in the Psalms

The definition of psalmody has long been contested.[3] Psalms have generally, however, been claimed in the West as belonging to the poetic tradition, and the status of the psalms as poetic texts plays an important role in the understanding of eighteenth-century psalm translation. In the western Christian tradition, the psalms are read as poetry in contrast to the prose narratives that comprise most of the biblical text, and by the eighteenth century, the psalms were understood as a product of the "poetic imagination" (Sheehan 155). Numerous scholars, both before and during the eighteenth century, tried to find a hidden meter in the psalms and wrote about what they considered the lost meter of the Hebrews (Alter 111. (Samuel Johnson's dictionary defines poetry simply as "metrical composition" (*Dictionary* 175). Johnson later expanded his understanding of poetry, as seen in his discussion of the poet Waller: "The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights" (*Poets*, 110).) It was Bishop Robert Lowth, who revolutionized the study of the psalms as poetry in 1753 with the publication of his *De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum (Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews).* Lowth argued that Hebrew poetry was organized under the principle of parallelism, in which each line consists of two parts which are related to each other through syntactic or semantic repetition. The second half of the eighteenth century turned to a concept of Hebrew poetry as marked not by meter or rhyme but by parallelism, remains the dominant reading of the psalms today.

Contemporary academic work on the psalms puts a modern spin on the work of Bishop Lowth. Both James Kugel and Robert Alter write about what defines Hebrew poetry and how ancient Hebrew poetry should be read by modern readers. In his book *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, James Kugel provides a reading of parallelism in biblical text. While he agrees with the

earlier assessment of Lowth that biblical style is 'heightened' by parallelism, he specifically rejects the notion of biblical poetry as a separate genre of biblical writing. He argues that the characteristics, mainly parallelism, which mark poetry also show up in the 'so-called prose' of the Bible (63). Kugel questions the link that scholars have made between the biblical text of the psalms and poetry. He writes: "There is no word for 'poetry' in biblical Hebrew" (69). Here, Kugel argues that the term 'poetry' is a Greek category adopted in the west that has been imposed on the Hebrew text from the outside. Kugel goes on to argue that there are not simply two modes of Hebrew writing (poetry and prose). Instead, he finds multiple levels of elevation in style which he places on a "continuum of organization" (85). Robert Alter, in opposition to Kugel, argues for a definite and separate mode of Hebrew poetry. In his book *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, Alter agrees with Kugel about the centrality of parallelism, but also presents a reading of the psalms as formal poems. He writes that these poems can be distinguished as poems based on the building of tension in the texts and the fact that they "convey densely patterned meanings." Alter sees the psalms as the genre that makes it possible to express what he calls "the emotional weight of the faith of monotheism" (113).[4] In his discussion of the poetics of the Hebrew Bible in *Dialogues of the Word: The Bible as Literature According to Bahktin* Walter L. Reed defines the genre of psalmody based on Hebrew's own vocabulary, including the psalms in the genre of wisdom literature but noting their connection to prophecy (62). Reed writes that the psalms include many "diverse types" and convey a "broad palette of emotions," but he refrains from defining them as poetry proper (63).

Are the psalms poems? Even if we can concede that the psalms are 'poetic', does this mean that we should read them as poems? This dissertation will follow Kugel's and Reed's lead in reading the psalms as their own genre, poetic but not poetry. What does it mean, then, to be

like poetry but not poetry? I would like to argue that it is exactly this in-between status of psalmody, as poetry that is not poetry, that makes it uniquely important for an understanding of eighteenth-century translation. A psalm, in translation, becomes an attempt to incorporate the uncanniness of poetry that is not poetry into the tradition of English poetry proper.[5] The psalms appear to be poetry but they interrupt the interpretation of poetry by calling into question the very definition of "English poetry."[6] The psalms are foreigners that appear to be locals, but when they open their mouths the words that come out are not quite those of the local dialect. In short, the psalms are an interrupting genre in the context of British literature. The psalm is brought into the fold of English literature as poetry where it hides out, but it is never quite assimilable as poetry. The psalms are both inside and outside of literature, as the Hebrew and Jewish traditions are both inside and outside of the Christian tradition.

In the Jewish tradition, the psalms are תהלים (tehillim), "praises." They are defined not by their poetic form or lack thereof, but by their function. The function of the psalm is praise.[7] In praise, the psalmist, calls out to God. We see this in Psalm 18:3: "Praised, I cry, is the LORD, and I am saved from mine enemies." But the act of praise is revealed to be a form of interruption in Psalm 18:7: "In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God; out of His temple He heard my voice, and my cry came before Him unto His ears." 18:3 serves as a summary for the action of the entire psalm: the psalmist praises God and is then saved. In 18:7, in good parallelistic fashion, the psalm gives more detail of the specific act of praise. The psalmist calls out to God, and his words come before God, interrupting God and throwing him into action to save the psalmist. Praise intervenes with God who then intervenes in the world. The tehillim, the praises, are also the performance of interruptions.[8]

In addition, the very form of the psalms is a form of interruption. In parallelism, Line A is followed by Line B, but the two lines are inter-related. The second line, in a sense, intervenes, to provide commentary on the first line. As Kugel has noted, the relationship between the two lines can take on many forms, from an apparent lack of any logical connection between the two lines, (or line-halves), to the word for word repetition of almost every word in both lines (3). The second formulation expands upon or complicates the understanding of the first. In other words, the second interrupts the first. To read the psalms is to take part in a constant series of interruptions and digressions. The flow of the narrative continually doubles back on itself, repeating and refiguring the message. In addition to parallelism, the multiple voices that speak in the psalms provide another mode of interruption in the text. Often, within a psalm the voice of the speaker will change, or the addressee will shift between an unknown reader and the Lord. One example can be found in Psalm 42 when the psalmist writes: "5 Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. 6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore I will remember You." Here, the speaker shifts from speaking about God to speaking to him, and it is not even clear that the speaker is the same in both lines. In her discussion of Bahktinian dialogism in the psalms of lament, Carleen Mandolfo argues that the psalms contain the voices of multiple speakers at once, creating a dialogue within a single psalm (169). The genre of multiple voices speaking at once embodies a spirit of interruption in which each line interrupts the last to be heard above it. The voice that praises is a voice interrupting itself, interrupting others, and interrupting God.

Finally, the genre of psalmody performs an interruption in the Bible itself. For example, in Exodus 15, the Israelites sing the song of Moses and Miriam as they escape from the Egyptians:

> Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. (Ex 15:1-2)

The song that follows has many of the markers of psalmody. It uses the imagery of God found in the psalms, even using some of the exact same language. The exact words of "The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation" appear in Psalm 118:14. In addition the word tehillah, praise, which appears only three times in the entire Torah, being much more common in the prophets and in the psalms themselves, appears in the song in Exodus 15:11: "Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the mighty? Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Although technically not a psalm because it does not appear in the Book of Psalms, the song of Exodus 15 clearly belongs to the genre of the psalm. The psalm has been added into the narrative text. While it seems entirely appropriate to the moment of escape through the Red Sea, the passage describes Miriam calling to the people to sing a song only *after* first giving the text of the song. In other words, the song is somewhat out of place in the narrative, arriving, as it does, before the actual call for a song. The song interrupts the narrative, creating a dramatic pause at the moment of escape. It is not necessary to the narrative. It interrupts and supplements. But while it may not move the narrative forward, it does serve a function in the text. First of all, it marks the momentous moment of the parting of the red sea as truly miraculous. Even in the biblical text, full of miracles, this miracle must be marked above all. Secondly, it enacts the praise it calls for and thereby writes the desired response to the

narrative into the narrative. The moment of God's great miracle should be marked by awe and followed by praise. By interrupting the narrative, the psalm acts as commentary upon that text.[9]

One may even say, the psalms are written in the form of interruptions, both through the use of the parallelistic line and the changing voice of the speaker. At key moments they interrupt the biblical text. As "praises" they call out as interruptions of God. But what does it mean to say that they are a genre of interruption? The psalms call to God, a God who is often depicted as absent. In the place of a narrative about people speaking to God, the psalms actually perform that speech. The interruption at the heart of the psalms, then, is an interruption at the foundation of the relationship between the speaker and God. The interruption in the psalm reveals the difficulty of speech and the uncertainty of prayer. While the narrative depicts the relationship with God as something that has already occurred and is therefore given, the psalm depicts the difficulty of that relationship in action. The psalms themselves address the disconnect from God felt by the psalmist. Psalm13 opens: "How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? For ever? How long wilt though hide thy face from me" (13:1)? The disconnection from God is palpable, and although the psalm closes with a call to praise God, the change of tone is only one more interruption.[10]

In fact, the Book of Psalms stands out as unique among the books of the Hebrew Bible in its address to God. Many of the psalms speak directly to 'the Lord' in praise, plea or lament. Careful inquiry reveals the complication inherent in addressing God directly. While a psalm that begins "How long, O Lord?" or "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness!" may appear to be in conversation with God, the speech only travels one way (Ps 13:1, 4:1). Without a response from God, the psalm cannot be considered 'in dialogue.'[11] In fact, it is God's absence which makes it necessary to call to him. The psalms are predicated on the figure of the

apostrophe. Their very form, the address to an absent God, shows the impossibility of a dialogue with God. God's presence in the text reveals his absence.[12]

The address to God in the psalms not only calls God's presence into question, but also the very nature of what or who one calls when calling to 'God.' God is not simply a person among other persons. By calling the address of the psalms an apostrophe, there is an assumption being made that God, while absent, is a known object to which the speaker of the psalm can direct his or her speech. But what is named when saying "God" or "my Lord"? In order for the speech to attempt to address itself to God it must name him as 'God' or 'Lord,' but in the Jewish tradition from which the Hebrew text of psalms springs, the actual name of God is unpronounceable and unspeakable. 'God' or 'Lord' simply stands in for the unspeakable name. The title 'God' is a translation of the Hebrew 'elohim' and the title 'Lord' is given in place of the Hebrew 'adonai.' The word 'adonai' simply means 'lord' in Hebrew. It can refer to God, but it can also refer to a landowner or a person with servants. When the divine name is written in Hebrew it consists of four characters (yod, hay, vav, hay), and this name is considered unpronounceable. Whenever a reader sees this word, the tetragrammaton, he or she is to simply say the word 'adonai.' Thus, every time a psalm speaks to 'the Lord' this title is given as a substitute for the actual, unknown, and unspeakable name of God. The absent God also has an absent name.

The refusal to speak the proper name of God points to the investment of great power in the proper name. God's proper name exists at the limit of what language can say. If the proper name is proper to that which it names, to name God would be to call forth God in his essence. Kenneth Burke, in his *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology*, specifically discusses language about God as a model for language about language. For Burke, the name of God becomes the model for all names, and thus the model signifier. Burke points to an absence at the

heart of all signification. Not only is God the proper name which serves as the model for all proper names and all signs, the divine, as a concept, is also the term that guarantees the totality of the world. The God-term promises that the world and that language have meaning, that we are not simply spiraling into an abyss of signification and performance of that signification without any guarantee of every finding the bottom. Drawing on Burke, it is then possible to read the psalms not simply as an address to God, but as an address to language. The language of the psalms recognizes its own failure and calls to the name of God to repair this failure, in essence, asking language to repair itself, to close the gap with itself and to provide a guarantee. In the psalms of lament we have a call not only from a supplicant to God, but from language to language.

In the psalms, then, we have an apostrophe addressed to a necessarily absent God, using a name that is not the name of God in order to mark the absent proper name which has been excluded from speech. The psalms reveal a great sense of loss, an interruption between humanity and the deity. And if the address to God is also an address to language, then the absence being marked in the psalms is an absence in language. Yet, in the face of loss they still attempt to speak, thereby marking a desire for the absent God and the failed proper name. It is as if in the face of an absent God, speech multiplies and proliferates. In the place of the unspeakable name we find a multiplicity of speakers, speaking to everyone and to no one. The desired but missed encounter with God marked by the apostrophe repeats, becomes the missed encounter with any other, and plays out in multiple configurations.

II. Translating the Psalms

The multiplication of speech found in the psalms further asserts itself as the psalms are multiplied in translation. Nowhere was psalm translation more popular than in England in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries (Kugel, 23).[13] Multiple versions of the psalms were created based on already translated English versions. John Milton, Isaac Watts, the Wesleys, and many others added their renditions to the tradition of psalmody. Each psalm translation reveals an implicit theory of translation behind its composition. In general, eighteenth-century translators followed the neo-classical reading of Horace's *Ars Poetica* which claimed that translation need not follow the original word for word. Both John Denham's and John Dryden's theories of translation, based on a reading of Horace, provided the model for eighteenth-century translation. In 1656, John Denham's *The Destruction of Troy: An Essay Upon the Second Book of Virgils Æneis* argues for a free approach to translation. Similarly, Dryden's preface to *Ovid's Epistles* argued for a move away from literal translation. In translating the psalms, free translation gave the translator the option of changing almost every aspect of the text. Psalm translation undertaken in the free style translated the psalms as poetry through the use of meter and rhyme—often dividing the psalms into quatrains—drawing on the conventions of classical and English poetry. In *'Kubla Khan' and the Fall of Jerusalem: The Mythological School in Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature,* E.S. Shaffer discusses the eighteenth-century practice of 'translating' the psalms into classical poetic forms, noting that, "the Sacred Writings, the literal Word of God, curiously became the most malleable of materials" (67). In the translation of psalms from the Hebrew Bible into an English Christian format we find the psalms, then, presented as poetry.

Many psalm translations were not translated from Hebrew, but were simply the rewriting of a psalm already translated into English. These English to English versions of the psalms were loosely termed 'translations.' It is in the preface to *Ovid's Epistles* that Dryden puts forward his often cited division of translation into metaphrase—translating word for word, paraphrase—translating meaning, and imitation—translating freely based on the text (I. 114-15). Psalm translations of the eighteenth-century primarily fall into the category of imitation, a style not recognized as translation today but which fell within the realm of eighteenth-century translation practice. Through investment in imitation, translation of the psalms becomes the means for making the psalms entirely English.

The investment in free translation as a means of incorporating foreign texts continued throughout the century with Alexander Tytler's 1791 *Essay on the Principles of Translation* calling for translations which naturalize the foreign language making it both linguistically and culturally legible in the tongue of translation. In *The Translator's Invisiblity: The History of Translation* Lawrence Venuti argues that eighteenth-century translations and translation theory took part in a practice of domesticating translation. That is, translation served to erase the signification of the foreign in translated texts, changing them in order to claim them as domestic works. Venuti is sensitive to the violent force of a domesticating practice of translation that erases the remnant of anything considered foreign. The call for transparent and fluent translation in the eighteenth-century served to cover over the violence of "domesticating translating practice" and its valorization of English cultural and social norms (35). Certainly, in the realm of psalm translation, the domestication of Hebrew literature as it was made into English poetry served to erase the singularity of Hebrew texts.

In *Translation, Subjectivity & Culture in France and England, 1600-1800* Julie Candler Hayes calls Venuti's version of eighteenth-century translation history into question. Hayes argues that the simple division between a domesticating or foreignizing practice of translation, as laid out in Venuti, is reductive and ignores the complicated and nuanced approaches to translation that were part of the period (16). She argues that translation always involves an opening to the other even at its most domesticating. Writing specifically of Hebrew translation in the eighteenth century Hayes argues: "Few forms of translation evoke as sharply the combination of connection and estrangement from another tongue as translation from the Hebrew Bible" (173). In Hebrew translation, Hayes sees the eighteenth century claiming a connection to the past while also asserting its division from that past.

This dissertation will attempt to traverse an understanding of translation that falls somewhere between Venuti and Hayes. The translations presented in the following chapters certainly take part in the practice of domesticating translation that Venuti points to. By making the psalms speak as Christian, English poetry, John Dennis, Samuel Richardson, Christopher Smart, and William Blake stripped the psalms of foreign, Hebrew elements, making them speak for their modern England. The violence done to the Hebrew tradition is undeniable. And yet, the psalms, while being systematically domesticated, cannot help but interrupt the English literature that they enter into. The incorporation of the psalms into English literary tradition, incorporates the interrupted and interrupting address to God and brings in the voice of an ancient other even if against the will of the domesticating translation. Thus the interruptive quality of the translated psalms takes part in the deconstruction of the very translation practice into which it is incorporated. In addition, each translation reveals its own theory of translation behind the words of the psalm. As Candler Hayes notes, eighteenth-century translation practice was not monolithic

and individual approaches to translation varied. In the translations read in the dissertation, each author/translator provides his own unique approach to translation, both domesticating the foreign psalms and allowing them to interrupt the process of translation.

Translating the interruptive texts of the psalms, the translations, themselves, perform an interruption. *A Hebraic Modernity* is organized around an understanding of this interruptive power of translation. Translation marks a disruption between languages and the impossibility of ever really speaking one language with the words of another. It is itself an interruption even as it claims to provide continuity. It comes to us claiming to speak for the original and at the origin, but it is always an interpretation, an answer, an interruption of the original and of the origin. In turn, the original continuously interrupts the translation. All we can ever translate (which is to say, all we can every interrupt) are interruptions.

In his essay on translation theory,"Des Tours de Babel," Jacques Derrida reads the inaugural, biblical confusion of language that takes place at Babel. God sees the people working to build a tower that will reach the heavens, something they are able to do because they all speak the same language. He comes down to interrupt their building by confusing their tongues. Speaking different languages they are no longer able to work together to reach the heavens. Derrida describes God's action of confusing speech at Babel as an act that makes translation both "necessary and impossible" (196). Translation becomes the "necessary" means of communication but its imperfection makes the speech needed to complete the tower "impossible." Moreover, translation and the impossibility of ever translating perfectly are the force of God's logos; translation is brought about by God's speech. Thus, Babel portrays an original confusion, necessitating translation while making it impossible, at the source of all language. Even speaking in only one language, signification can never achieve the perfection of

the pre-Babelian moment. Translation, then, is a practical act but also a metaphor for the process of signification in general.

Babel provides a myth of the origin of translation as founded by an interruption. It is God's interruption which leads to translation. In "Edmond Jabés and the Question of the Book" Derrida writes of interruptions: "without interruptions—between letters, words, sentences, books—no signification could be awakened" (71). Interruption, then, is the principle of signification. Translation is founded by God coming down to interrupt his people.[14] God's interruption is the mirror image of the interruption of the psalmist who calls out to God. In the biblical tradition, translation is founded in interruption and spreads out into language as the repetition of the founding interruption of God's actions at Babel. The origin of translation is an interruption.

In Walter Benjamin's *The Task of the Translator,* he presents translation as a means of "expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages" (72).[15] Rather than expressing the original in a new form, the translation expresses the space between the languages, revealing their relationship. Reading translations, then, we can hope to catch a glimpse of the relationship between languages as they interrupt one another. Writing specifically of "sacred writings" Benjamin closes his essay by referring to the space of translation as between the lines of text: "For to some degree all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines" (82). Translation exists in the interruptive spaces between: between languages and between lines. By reading translations as interruptions, we can peer into the space between texts and words to bring forth a constellation of relationships. In psalm translations we can read the interruptive relationship between Hebrew and English, between God and humanity, and between the eighteenth century and its origin stories.

The interruption of translation points to the fact that an origin is nothing but an interruption: the big bang, "Let there be light," the new word on the blank page. All beginnings are interruptions that recede farther and farther into the past. To struggle with origin stories is to struggle with the founding of interruption and to acknowledge that one's own speech is always an interruption of something that has come before. Claiming a Hebrew origin for their own modernity, translators of the psalms in the eighteenth century struggled with their origins, bringing them into their own narratives of the past in order to claim that past for their projects and claiming a continuity that is only ever an interruption. Which is not to say that there is or ever was a pure Hebraic spirit or Hebraic origin to interrupt. The Hebrew tradition is itself nothing but a series of its own interruptions back to its own story of origins.

What does it mean, then, to translate an interruption? In the Hebrew Bible God is the origin of language and of all creation. The psalms, speaking to God, enact a struggle with origins. The connection to the origin was always already interrupted. The moment of purity before translation, before mediation, or before interruption is never available to the speaker of the psalms. In their form and in their lament the psalms stutter over the loss of origin and the desire for connection. To translate the psalms is to interrupt their own interruption, and therefore through translation we are able to see the struggle to translate that they were engaged with all along. The breakdown at the heart of language as it attempts to signify something/anything is the very breakdown between the psalmist and a God who has turned his face away. The question in Psalm 137: "How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?" figures both the problem of being cut off from the divine and the problem of translation simultaneously. The psalmist longs for a connection back to the divine, but makes it a problem of languages and lands. To translate is always to be in a strange land, attempting to sing the Lord's song.

III. Hebrew in Translation

Bringing together the study of psalmody with the study of translation theory we are then faced with the question of the specificity of Hebrew translation in the long eighteenth century. What does it mean to translate Hebrew in eighteenth-century England? Eighteenth-century attitudes toward Hebrew varied widely. The period of the Enlightenment was a period of upheaval for the understanding of the Hebrew language and the reading of the Hebrew Bible. Although once a mandatory element in the education of gentlemen scholars, the Hebrew language was on the wane in England in the eighteenth century. As Frank Edward Manuel notes in his history of Christian Hebraism, *The Broken Staff*: "by the middle of the eighteenth-century…Christian Hebraism had passed its prime" (66). But the lack of actual knowledge of Hebrew did not mean the end of speculation about Hebrew language or literature.

While many continued to accept the notion of Hebrew as the original Edenic language, others began to think of Hebrew as simply one of many primitive languages and of the Bible as one of many examples of ancient literature.[16] For most poets Hebrew remained the original tongue of Adam. Aaron Hill's 1720 *Preface to Creation* and William Cowper's *Table Talk* both depict Adam speaking Hebrew. Murray Roston's *Prophet and Poet: The Bible and the Growth of Romanticism* refers to the eighteenth-century view "that Hebrew was the language spoken in Eden" (85-86). To rewrite the Hebrew Bible is not only to translate a language, then, it is to translate the text of the origin according to Christianity. Hebrew is the language of the book that recounts the creation of the world—the language in which the origin of the world was originally inscribed. Although there was some contention among scholars, Hebrew was popularly regarded as the probable original language of humanity.[17] In England, a tradition emerged of thinking of England as the new Jerusalem, and thus as the direct inheritor of the original Hebrew tradition. In

*Britannia's Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian,* Howard D. Weinbrot argues that "Britannia's definition of herself includes a Hebraic genealogy" (418). Thus, to rewrite Hebrew, and specifically to rewrite the Hebrew Bible in England, is to rewrite the origin of England itself. Through reading translations of the Hebrew Bible into an English and Christian idiom we can gain insight into the eighteenth-century conception of 'the origin.'

To translate Hebrew was also to comment on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Christopher Smart gave the title *A translation of the psalms of David attempted in the spirit of Christianity* to his translation of the psalms, and Isaac Watts called his translations *The Psalms of David: imitated in the language of the New Testament*. Both of these titles reveal a desire not only to translate from the Hebrew Bible text into an English text, but to translate from the Hebrew language and the language of the Hebrews to the language of the New Testament and Christianity. Writing about Christian figural interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, Jill Robbins writes: "Figural interpretation depends, for its governing oppositions and for its claim to make a transfer from old to new, on understanding Judaism as hidden and as old. It has to suppress the Hebrew Bible, to render it an 'Old Testament.' For the Hebrew Bible, a scripture read without reference to the New Testament, would not understand itself in opposition to the New Testament" (8). In the case of figural interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, Hebrew is recast as a figure for the Christian and the Greek. While psalm translations do not fall directly under the category of figural interpretation, the movement described here, from Hebrew to Christian and from old to new, also characterizes the work they do. Figural interpretation understands the Hebrew Bible as an Old Testament which prefigures the New Testament, and with psalm translations the Hebrew Bible psalms are rewritten in order to bring out their Christian spirit.

Thus translation of the psalms becomes a vehicle for re-reading and rewriting the Hebrew text in order to turn it into a New Testament Christian text.

While the Hebrew Bible was considered the language of the origin and the source of Christianity, it was also considered to be an example of the primitive and the oriental. In the eighteenth century, Hebrew was aligned with the Orient, and thus in comparisons of European and non-European literatures, Hebrew literature was situated outside of Europe (Shaffer,14). While it was the language of the origin, defining the internal, it was also considered a language of the outside. Manuel notes that in the eighteenth century Judaism became a "model for all primitive cultures and paganisms" (168). Roston notes a desire in the latter half of the century to embrace the "primitivism and orientalism" of the Hebrew biblical text (41). E.S. Shaffer, in her account of poetic orientalism, notes psalm translation and specifically the work of John Milton as the first example of the poetic orientalism that she sees blossoming in the late eighteenth century:

> In England, the Old Testament David the Harpist was quickly established as the poetic equal of the great classical odists….The Protestant hymnody of the Reformation adopted first the Old Testament psalms; the new Greek scholarship encouraged the many metrical translations of the Psalms of David…On this parallelism of Greek and Hebrew culture Milton built, accomplishing the first phase of poetic Orientalism. (67)

Psalm translation in England, then, played a key role in grounding 'modern' English literariness in poetic Orientalism.

Reading psalms in translation, we can see the translators claiming authority for their texts by drawing on the original status of the Hebrew Bible while simultaneously claiming to have surpassed the primitive text through translations in the spirit of western poetry and the Christian religion. The relationship of eighteenth-century translation to Hebrew texts is, then, ambivalent,

both referring back to it and attempting to do away with it. The origin becomes both that which the psalmist departs from and moves toward. Modernity, as it wrestles with 'archaic Hebrew', attempts both to deny and embody the Hebraic voice.

There has been a tendency in accounts of eighteenth-century Hebraism to mark a turn in attitudes toward Hebrew at the work of Bishop Lowth. The claim is that neoclassical translation of the first half of the century denied the sublimity of Hebrew poetry and attempted to make it English, while the poetry that followed Lowth's discovery of parallelism embraced the beauty of Hebrew poetics.[18] I would like to argue, however, that the complicated and ambivalent nature of Christian attitudes toward Hebrew persisted throughout the century. While Lowth's work allowed for the claim of Hebrew style as sublime, those who made the claim often did not know much, if any, Hebrew. The turn from neoclassical disavowals of Hebrew style to late century claims of its sublimity each served to mark Hebrew as other. Whether denigrating Hebrew or putting it on a pedestal, a myth of the Hebraic as the foil of the west persisted throughout the century. Each translation presented in the dissertation reveals the complicated and ambivalent attitudes toward Hebrew present throughout the eighteenth century.

## IV. Translation of Psalms 18 and 137

This dissertation brings together the threads of psalmody, translation, and English reception of the Hebraic in the eighteenth century through the close reading of four psalm translators and the theories of biblical translation and attitudes toward Hebrew found in their work. John Dennis, Samuel Richardson, Christopher Smart, and William Blake all translated the psalms in different forms, incorporating them into the genres of the essay, novel, poem, and painting. Each psalm reveals a unique theory of translation at work for each author. In particular

this disseration focuses on their translations of two important psalms: Psalm 18, a depiction of connection back to divine origins, and Psalm 137, a depiction of being cut off from divine origins.

Psalm 18 is a psalm of thanksgiving to God for helping David defeat his enemies.[19] In addition to appearing in the book of psalms, it also appears in the story of David in 2 Samuel: 22. (It is another example, along with Exodus 15, of a psalm that interrupts the narrative.) In the opening lines of Psalm 18 the psalmist, drowning, calls out to God for help. Psalm 18 is unique, in that it depicts God's descent to earth in order to rescue the psalmist. The theophany, the actual appearance of God in the text, is depicted with thunder, rain, hail, lightning, and the splitting open of the earth. In the eighteenth century Psalm 18 and its theophanic imagery were heralded as an example of the sublime (Morris 19). Bishop Lowth notes the "grandeur and sublimity" of the images in the psalm (77).

In addition to including sublime imagery, Psalm 18 also depicts the direct connection between the psalmist and God. In response to his cries, "In my distress I called up on the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears," God comes down to earth from the heavens and saves the psalmist. There is no better example of the connection between psalmist and God that the psalm makes possible. In Psalm 18, the psalm is speech to a God who hears and responds. The psalm enacts the desire of the psalmist to be connected to the divine origin and the possibility that the psalmists' speech will succeed in forging that connection. In translation the psalm becomes the translation of that origin and connection into an English idiom. It allows the psalmist/translator to claim a connection to God for modern England.

Psalm 137, on the other hand, depicts the total loss of connection to God and to the origin. The psalmists, in exile, are forced to sing their songs in a strange land.[20] They fear that they will forget Jerusalem and call for revenge upon their oppressors, but in the moment of their speech, they are entirely cut off from Jerusalem and from God. In the eighteenth century, Psalm 137 and its depiction of exile were popular subjects for adaptation. In *Psalm Culture and Early English Modern Litearture* Hannibal Hamlin notes the psalm was a figure of exile both for political exiles in foreign countries during the English Civil War and for Christians who followed St Augustine's example in reading the psalm as a the figure of the Christian soul exiled from heaven (15, 219).[21] Hamlin also notes that the psalm was particularly important for poets because it "figures the problem of exile primarily in terms of the interruption of song" (219). In all cases, the psalm spoke to the fear of being cut off from one's national, spiritual, linguistic, and literary origins. Psalm 137, then, presents itself as a foil for Psalm 18. The psalmist's enemies surround him in both psalms, but in Psalm 18 God saves the psalmist whereas in Psalm 137 the psalmist remains exiled. The loss of Jerusalem figures the loss of the connection to God.

The question of how to sing the Lord's song in a strange land also figures the entire problem of translation. The language of the origin is tied to the place of origin, and to speak that language in a different place changes it. The "interruption of song" is the interruption of the psalmist's language. To translate Psalm 137 into English is, effectively, to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. The translation answers the question it asks. The way to sing the Lord's song is to translate it. The psalm, in a sense, calls out for translation, and eighteenth-century psalmists were only too happy to oblige.

The psalm translations presented in this study have been chosen for several reasons. John Dennis's translation of Psalm 18 in *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry*, Samuel Richardsons's

translation of Psalm 137 in *Pamela*, Christopher Smart's translation of all one-hundred fifty psalms including Psalms 18 and 137, and William Blake's paintings of Psalm 18 and 137 reveal each author struggling with the origins of language and poetry and developing his own theory of biblical translation. The subject matter of Psalm 18, which depicts the psalmist in connection with the divine origin, and Psalm 137, which depicts the psalmist separated from the divine origin, allow each translator to place his own work in relation to God and origins. The anxiety over the loss of connection to an origin and the desire for English origins to reach back to God and creation can be found through each translation. The texts chosen are also representative of different genres (essay, novel, poem, and painting), showing the great proliferation of psalm translation in the period. Each reading reveals a psalm translation interrupting the work of the author and the English genre that it appears in and engaging with questions of how English poetry defined its own origins throughout the eighteenth century. While Watts and the Wesleys, much better known as psalm translators, created translations in the style of earlier verse translations, the authors featured here were chosen for the very idiosyncrasy of their psalmody. From John Dennis's 1704 translation of Psalm 18 to William Blake's 1806 paintings of the psalms, these attempts at new psalmody were part of a new vision for English and British poetry.

To make English the new Hebrew will always serve to cut off the voice of the Hebrew language, bringing it into an English where it can only ever speak as an interruption. Hebrew, interrupting English speech, English traditions, and English forms, must then be dealt with. The Hebrew can be accepted but tempered as in Dennis's Psalm 18, forgotten and replaced with a new narrative in Richardson's Psalm 137, embraced as in Smart's *Jubilate Agno* or completely naturalized as in Smart's *Translation*, or mobilized for the creation of entirely new forms as in Blake, but the fact of its translation means that its speech has been interrupted.

In fact, to speak at all is always to find oneself, like the psalmist in Psalm 137, attempting to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. Speech always comes to us from the realm of mythical origins. My speech is my own, but also recedes into the past. That past can be figured, as we will see in the following chapters, in terms of genealogy, in terms of memory, or in terms of divine connection, but it cannot be done away with. While the translator works to interrupt the original language, the language always performs its own interruption in turn. Refigured through translation, the translated language also refigures the translation. Dennis, Richardson, Smart, and Blake all bring their own theories of translation to the psalms and in doing so they define eighteenth-century England as the exemplar of a Hebraic modernity.

In my distress I call'd upon the Lord,
And to my God I cry'd; he from his Height,
Above all Heights, strait heard my mournful Voice,
And to my loud Complaint inclin'd his Ear.

-John Dennis, translation of Psalm 18

## Translating the Bible to Raise the Fallen: The Psalmody of John Dennis

In his 1704 essay *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry*, John Dennis presents an image of poetry in crisis: "That Poetry is miserably fall'n, is, I suppose, granted" (328). Dennis hopes that by discovering the correct rules for creating sublime poetry he can return poetry to its former "greatness" and "innocence." More than merely a metaphor, Dennis uses the term "fall'n" to describe a poetry that is, like Adam and Eve in their expulsion from Eden, no longer in contact with the deity: "By divesting itself of Religion, it is fall'n from its Dignity, and its original Nature and Excellence" (365). By restoring a religious fervor to English poetry, Dennis hopes to redeem both the fall of poetry and the fall of man. The following chapter will show how Dennis sees religion returning to poetry by way of the translation of what he calls the "poetical" parts of the Bible. Specifically, the chapter will read Dennis's translation of Psalm 18, as it attempts a renewal of both the greatness and innocence of English poetry.

Dennis's writing reveals a radical and passionate voice calling for the reform of literature and society through a process of biblical translation. Modern criticism has paid little attention to the central role that translation plays in Dennis's work. Critics have read Dennis primarily as either an important early theorist of the sublime or a stock proponent of neoclassicism in

poetics.[22] This chapter will argue that Dennis's understanding of both the sublime and the neoclassical can best be understood through his attempt to harmonize these two (opposing) forces through the process of translation. In Dennis, biblical poetry, properly translated, harmonizes opposing forces and creates religious and artistic purity. The poetry that Dennis reveals as truly sublime is based on biblical text but translated into English according to classical poetic rules in order to combine biblical passion with classical reason and order. Dennis's poetry seeks to reconcile the biblical and classical along with passion and reason. By means of translation, he attempts to unite contrary forces in order to return poetry to its original, harmonious state.

At the same time, Dennis also uses translation as the means to overcome contradictions in his own theory. Many previous critics have noted a tension in Dennis's work and a way in which his thought seems to be at odds with itself. In her article "Mapping the Aesthetic Mind: John Dennis and Nicolas Boileau" Ann T. Delehanty writes, "The analogy between religion and poetry causes Dennis the most difficulties for his poetics" (238). She proposes that the difficulty stems from a tension between poetry as divine revelation on one hand and as a craft with specific knowable rules on the other hand. John Morillo points to the same problem: "Dennis reveals how fully politicized the far-from-disinterested world of aesthetic values had become by 1701, and how difficult it could be to try to maintain simultaneous and sincere allegiance to Locke, Longinus, and Luke in one unified-field theory of poetry" (22). Morillo puts the tension in political terms; he links any apparent contradictions in Dennis's theory to a need to speak about enthusiasm and divine revelation without seeming to support political radicalism. In his book *The Religious Sublime*, David B. Morris locates the tension in Dennis in the meeting of the neoclassical rule of imitation, in which imitation of something knowable is the best form of art,

with the need to imitate the unknowable in the form of the Christian God. In short, all of these critics locate Dennis's problem at the intersection of the neoclassical and the religious. What we find in Dennis, however, is not simply a tension between religious revelation in general and poetic rules in general, but a conflict between *Pagan* poetic rules and *Christian* revelation and narrative. The conflict in Dennis's work comes down to the desire to prove sublimity based on ancient Greek texts and the simultaneous need to undermine these very texts based on their pagan origins in order to elevate Christianity, and Christian texts such as Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the Psalms. By means of translation into English, Dennis overcomes the contradiction between the pagan and the Christian within his own critical writing without having to choose between traditions.

The radical nature of the theory of translation as harmonization that Dennis promotes becomes apparent in the vision of purity and redemption that he sees as possible through biblical translation. While Dennis may have made his name in the early eighteenth century as "the Critick" by promoting "the rules," his understanding of the role of poetry goes far beyond the neoclassicism that he is remembered for.[23] For Dennis, poetry and religion are not simply complementary. They are one and the same project, and redeeming one will redeem the other. Poetry is not only a metaphor for salvation, but the actual means of salvation. Alexander Pope famously maligned Dennis for his enthusiastic embrace of sublime passion, calling him "Sir Tremendous Longinus."[24] Although in the ruin of Dennis's reputation that followed, Pope's assessment could be called cruel, his understanding that Dennis was a radical was very astute. Dennis truly believed that his vision of the harmonizing forces of translated biblical poetry provided a connection back to God.

I. Poetics as Religious Redemption: Dennis's Translation in Context

Dennis bases his argument for the inseparability of religion and poetry on a retelling of the story of the fall. In *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701) Dennis argues that man is unhappy when his reason and passion are divided and at odds with one another, a state that he argues came about with the fall. In paradise man was completely happy, but by eating from the tree of knowledge, he gave in to his animal passions, thus separating reason from passion and causing all of modern man's present unhappiness: "Man's fatal Original Sin, whether the business of the Tree of Knowledge is Literal or Allegorical, consisted in his horribly diverting his affections from his god to the Creatures. And thus the Harmony of his Intellectual and Animal powers was very miserably broke" (*Advancement* 150). [25] In essence, Dennis here rewrites the story of the fall as a severing of faculties, moving away from a 'literal' reading of the story and toward an 'allegorical' explanation that makes the division of passion and reason the actual event and epicenter of the fall.

The restoration of the harmony of the faculties is, for Dennis, found in both Christian religion and poetry. In the second half of the *The Advancement*, entitled "That the Design of the True Religion and Poetry are the Same," Dennis asserts that by using the Christian religion modern poets can be as good as and even exceed the ancient poets who he contends were superior due to the incorporation of religion in their poetry. He begins with the proposition of the French neo-classical theorist (and translator of Longinus) Nicolas Boileau: "that Christianity and poetry were things that were inconsistent" (*Advancement* 134). Dennis disagrees with Boileau, who had encouraged modern poets to write 'pagan poetry,' and says that, on the contrary, "the true Religion" is favorable to poetry (*Advancement* 135). According to Dennis,

philosophers have tried to answer the problem of disharmony either by taking the side of reason or passion. But for Dennis they have failed to return man to a state of happiness because passion will always come to haunt reason and reason passion as long as they are placed at odds with one another. It is the poets that Dennis contends have had the most success reconciling reason and passion (*Advancement* 143). Just as Christianity "restores the Harmony of the Human Faculties," poetry works to please "the Reason and Passions and Sences…at the same time superlatively" (*Advancement* 159). In the end he ties poetry and Christianity together through an image of the fall and the return to paradise promised, he argues, by both Christianity and poetry: "Poetry, by restoring the Harmony of the Human Faculties, provides for the Happiness of Mankind, better than any other Human Invention whatever" (*Advancement* 171). Poetry has the power, according to Dennis, to return people to paradise "for a time" (*Advancement* 172). Through the figure of the fall, he thus makes poetry and Christianity the same project:

> Since the design of Poetry, and the very method of prosecuting that design, as far as it can be humanly prosecuted, is the same with that of the True Religion, since the very thing that they both propose is to exalt the Reason by exalting the Passions, and so make Happy the whole Man by making Internal Discord cease, I appeal to any one whether Poetry must not agree better with that Religion, whose Designs are the very same with it, than with Paganism or Philosophy or Deism, whose Designs have been shewn repugnant to it. (*Advancement* 173-174)

The radical nature of Dennis's claim cannot be overstated. Poetry and "the True Religion" do not only happen to both partake of the passions or happen to complement one another, they are the same and their "very method" is the same.

In *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* Dennis reiterates the argument about poetry and Christianity made in *The Advancement*: "The Design of the Christian Religion is the very same with that of Poetry, which can be said of no other Religion; that the Business of both is to delight and reform Mankind, by exciting the Passions in such a manner, as to reconcile them to Reason, and restore the harmony of the human Faculties" (*Grounds* 365). Here, Dennis links poetry and religion through the term "Design." Both religion and poetry are of God's design. Furthermore, according to Dennis, God created both Christianity and poetry for the same redemptive purpose. Poetry is not a reaction to, but built into the very design of creation. Thus, poetry can fall, just as man can fall, and poetry can be redeemed. But poetry, and specifically the poetic portions of the Bible, have a special property in Dennis. Not only can poetry be redeemed, it is *itself* redemptive, working toward the goal of restoring "the harmony of the human Faculties."

Dennis proposes that by harnessing the force of religion with poetry, the modern, English poet can redeem fallen poetry and help it to regain its original, pre-fallen, redemptive status. Dennis argues that his writing is,

> No less than an Attempt to restore and re-establish the noblest Art in every Branch of it: an Art, that by the Barbarity of the Times, is fallen and sunk in them all, and has been driven and banish'd from every Country excepting England alone; and is even here so miserably fall'n for the most part by the Extravagance of its Professors, and by the Unskilfulness of its Admirers, that we have reason to apprehend it to be departing from hence too. (*Grounds* 334)

Dennis is especially concerned here with the state of English poetry. His claim to redeem poetry is thus a political claim for the redemption of England as the inheritor of a poetic tradition. The "times" have banished poetry from all countries except England, and even in England Dennis

sees poetry as in danger. His essay will provide guidance for how to overcome the crisis of modern poetry through religion. Much like the fallen man who can only be saved by turning to Christianity, poetry, too must turn back to Christianity, to the Bible, in order to bring itself back from the brink.

II. Psalm 18: Reconciling Passion and Reason

It is in the context of the claim that poetry can redeem fallen man that Dennis undertakes the translation of Psalm 18. Dennis' choice of a text from the psalms comes out of his understanding of the central importance of biblical poetry. In *The Grounds* Dennis argues for an understanding of poetry based in biblical psalmody:

> The Religion Reveal'd in the Old and New Testament is proper, nay Necessary to give the last force and Elevation to Poetry; we shall now Endeavour to Convince the Reader that Poetry is proper if not Necessary, to give force to that Religion. For indeed there are Duties in this Religion, which cannot be worthily perform'd without the assistance of Poetry. *As the offering up Praise and Thanksgiving and several sorts of Pray'r to God; and the Celebrating the Wonders of his Might*. (*Grounds* 370, my italics)

Poetry gives force to religion, but it is especially necessary for specific "duties" within the Christian religion, and the religion revealed by the biblical text is that religion which will give "force and Elevation to Poetry." His definition of those "duties" which require poetry, "the offering up Praise and Thanksgiving and several sorts of Pray'r to God; and the Celebrating the Wonder of his Might" reads like a definition of the psalms of praise and touches upon those psalms which call upon God for aid.

Dennis also explicitly links the Old Testament to poetry: "The most important Part of the Old Testament was deliver'd not only in a Poetical Style, but in Poetical Numbers" and "Poetry has been thought not only by Heathens, but by the Writers of the Old Testament, and consequently God himself who inspir'd them, to be the fittest Method for the enforcing Religion upon the Minds of Men" (*Grounds* 370, 373). He puts the emphasis not simply on God as creator of poetry but on the relationship between God's creation and the text that describes and praises that creation. He creates an indissoluble union between the creation of God, which comes from his thought and word, and the religious poetry of the Old Testament which belongs to that thought and word. The psalms are not only the prayer and praise of God and of the natural world *as* his creation; they are part of that creation themselves. Thus, Dennis's version of religious poetry, which may have seemed to be a supplement to God's creation, coming after that creation in order to praise it, turns out to be intimately tied up with creation as, itself, a product of God's thought. Instead of an origin which results in creation and a text which comes afterwards in order to comment on that creation, the text seems also to be a product of that very same origin. The psalms and biblical text, then, become a unique form of religious poetry. They are not only poetry that describes and praises God and 'his works;' as text inspired by God's own thought, they are a part of those very works. At its radical limit, Dennis's contention that the biblical text is part of God's own thought, leads to the evaporation of the separation between creation and the praise of that creation. The poetic praise is constitutive of creation, just as creation is constitutive of the poetic praise. To harness the poetry of psalmody is then to bring the event of creation into one's own poetry.

The Old Testament also provides the context for Dennis's discussion of the incorporation of Verse into his translation:

> Thus we have made it very plain, that not only the Predictions, but the Praise and Thanksgiving in the inspir'd Writers, were written in Verse; as were likewise several of the Prayers, and the Instructions, and in short the noblest and most important part of the Old Testament. Now if they were written in Poetry, it could be for no other reason, but because they who wrote them, believ'd that the figurative passionate Style, and the Poetical Numbers, did by Right of Nature belong to them, and consequently were requisite to inforce them upon the Minds of Men. (*Grounds* 371)

Dennis begins the passage by reiterating his belief that large portions of the 'Old Testament' "were written in verse."[26] He then claims a "Right of Nature" linking poetry to biblical text, making poetry the "requisite" religious form. Thus, the specifically poetic "Praise and Thanksgiving" of the psalms is essential, both naturally and supernaturally, to Dennis's redeemed religion. In addition, by giving the "right" of poetical numbers to biblical poetry, Dennis also claims the same right for his own poetry, which justifies his choice of a versified biblical translation.

Dennis gives Psalm 18 as his example of a sublime passionate poetry which could solve the crisis of English poetics, reharmonize the faculties, and provide redemption. Dennis 'translates' what he calls the 'prosaick' King James translation into a versified psalm, greatly expanding the psalm as he does so. Through the use of modern English versification, Dennis turns the psalm from biblical text to a text that is simultaneously biblical and neoclassical. And differences between Dennis's psalm and the King James Version of the psalm do not end at length and use of versification. Dennis makes key changes in the language of the psalm that reflect the simultaneous incorporation of religious passion and neoclassical grammar. By

bringing these elements together, Dennis provides a reinterpretation of Psalm 18 that attempts to reconcile passion and reason.

*Biblical Religious Passion*

Passion, for Dennis, is the key to sublime poetry. Dennis's theory of passion divides the passions into 'vulgar' and 'enthustiastick' passions.[27] Enthusiastic passions are those which create sublime reactions and are the domain of religious ideas: "The strongest enthusiastic Passions, that are just and reasonably rais'd, must be rais'd by religious Idea's, that is, by Idea's which either shew attributes of the Divinity or relate to his Worship" (*Grounds* 339). That is, through praise of God a poet can return needed passion to poetry. For Dennis, religious poetry is a poetry of passionate worship. Even the directionality of worship comes out in his repeated description of religious poetry as 'raising' the passions. The passions, like worship, are raised and directed upward, reaching closer and closer to the realm above as they reach the realm of the sublime.

The sublime worship Dennis envisions is specifically a worship of the Christian God:[28] "Nothing but God, and what relates to God, is worthy to move the Soul of a great and wise Man" (345). Although in his discussion of ancient poets in *The Grounds* and in *The Advancement* he does argue that the ancient Greek and Roman poets raised enthusiasm by using their own religious ideas and gods, he goes on to argue that since their religion was false, only the use of the Christian religion and God in poetry can reach the height of enthusiastic passion, and he provides a hierarchy of subjects for 'Enthusiastic Poetry.' At the top of the hierarchy he places God: "A Poet, who intends to give that Elevation and that Gravity to his Poem, which compose Majesty, can fetch his Ideas from no Object so proper as from God" (*Grounds* 345). Here,

Dennis uses another spatial metaphor for passionate enthusiasm. While before the image was of passions 'raised' here we have poetry which makes use both of 'Elevation' and 'Gravity.' Gravity here refers to the serious nature of the topic of divinity but also brings to mind the forces of the physical world and the movement of the planets. Dennis goes on, therefore, to place "the Works of the Creator" second to God as a source of sublime poetry (*Grounds* 345). He writes that the works of God create 'Admiration' in the reader because they "never fail to declare his Eternal Power and Godhead" (*Grounds* 345). He then divides the works of God into three categories: the angels, which are "the most glorious and admirable Beings of Creation;" devils and the otherworldly, which create terror; and finally, "the great Phaenomena of the Material World; because they too lead the Soul to its Maker, and shew as the Apostle says, his eternal Power and Godhead: As the Heavens and Heavenly Bodies, the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, and the Immensity of the Universe, and the Motions of the Heaven and Earth" (*Grounds* 345-348). In the figure of "the Motions" of the heavenly bodies gravity returns not only as the outcome of sublime poetry but also as its proper object. Poetry about the material world and its workings becomes a form of poetry about God. God's creation, as a manifestation of God, is sublime.

In support of his argument that God's creation raises enthusiastic passions, Dennis gives numerous literary examples, including a hymn from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which Dennis identifies as the 148th Psalm, and an excerpt of his own 'translation' of the Hymn of Praise *Te Deum*. The full version of Dennis's *Te Deum* appears in his *The Advancement* where Dennis acknowledges that his translation is so far from the original that it may be "unrecognizable" to the reader. This passage of the *Te Deum*, in Dennis's translation, reads:

> Where'er at utmost Stretch we cast our Eyes,
>
> Thro the vast and frightful Spaces of the Skies,

Ev'n there we find thy Glory, there we gaze
On thy bright Majesty's unbounded Blaze:
Ten thousand Suns, prodigious Globes of Light,
At once in broad Dimensions strike our Sight;
Millions behind, in the remoter Skies,
Appear but Spangles to our weary'd Eyes. (*Grounds* 349)

In Dennis's *Te Deum*, the gravity of God as a subject and the physical gravity at work in the planets come together to raise the passions. The "prodigious Globes of Light" become God's "unbounded Blaze." The infinite and unknowable God is found in the infinite and unknowable realm of the cosmos, not simply as a metaphor but as his manifestation. When Dennis writes that "Religion in Poetry was absolutely necessary to raise it to the greatest exaltation" his definition of "Religion" includes the celebration of all of creation, in other words, a celebration not only of the otherworldly but also the material world as a manifestation of God's power.

Dennis's aim is not only to argue that religious objects, such as God and creation, create the most passionate poetry, but that poetry is essential to the most passionate religion. Just as he worked to show a link between religion and passion, he develops an argument about the relationship between poetry and passion. He writes of poetic language: "Figurative Language is but a Consequence of the Enthusiasm, that being the natural Langue of the Passions" (*Grounds* 359), and of the poetry of the Ancient Greek authors: "The Wonders of Religion naturally threw them upon great Passions, and great passions naturally threw them upon Harmony and figurative Language" (*Grounds* 364). For Dennis, poetic language comes 'naturally' from an encounter with sublime passions. In addition, "Harmony," the force that Dennis identifies as having the

power to overcome the fall, comes along with passions and figurative language. Religion leads naturally to passion, which leads naturally to poetry, which makes harmony possible.

In the context of Dennis's search for religious passion in poetry, it is no surprise that he turned to Psalm 18. The psalm begins with an expression of love for God and then describes the fate of the psalmist who is trapped in a flood and snared by enemies. From this place of total despair, the psalmist calls out to God who responds by coming down from on high and shaking the foundations of the earth as described in the several verses translated by Dennis. God saves the psalmist, who goes on to praise God for rewarding his righteousness and punishing his enemies, and ends by calling for praise of God and thanksgiving. In *The Advancement* Dennis does not translate Psalm 18 but cites verses 6-15 from the *King James Bible*, as follows:

> 6. In my Distress I called upon the Lord, and cryed unto my God: He heard my Voice out of his Temple, and my Cry came before him, even into his Ears.
>
> 7. Then the Earth shook and trembled, the Foundations of the Hills also moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.
>
> 8. There went up a Smoak out of his Nostrils, and Fire out of his Mouth devoured; Coals were kindled by it.
>
> 9. He bowed the Heavens also, and came down, and Darkness was under his Feet.
>
> 10. And he rode upon a Cherub, and did fly: He came flying upon the Wings of the Winds.
>
> 11. He made Darkness his secret Place; His Pavilion round about him were dark Waters, and thick Clouds of the Skies.
>
> 12. At the Brightness that was before him, his Clouds remov'd Hail-stones and Coals of Fire.

13. The Lord also thundered in the Heavens, and the Highest gave his Voice Hailstones and Coals of Fire.

14. Yea, he sent forth his Arrows, and scattered them, and he shot out Lightnings, and discomfited him.

15. Then the Channels of the Waters were seen, and the Foundations of the World were discovered, at thy Rebuke, O Lord, at the Blast of the Breath of thy Nostrils.

(Advancement, 268)

Dennis chooses to quote and later translate only these lines, which reveal the sublime imagery of God descending to shake the earth, show both God's might and his works, and serve to raise the passions of the reader. These lines are theophanic, that is, they depict an actual appearance of God and not simply his speech or works.[29] The expansive natural imagery that defies simple understanding can easily be read as an example of the sublime. In fact, the view of the theophany of Psalm 18 as sublime became commonplace in the following decades.[30]

Donald K. Berry writes specifically of the theophany in *The Psalms and their Readers: Interpretive Strategies for Psalm 18*, noting that the Hebrew word for anger, אפך (apach), is the central theme (90). In the theophany God's אפך, or anger, manifests itself in the natural world. Several authors have noted the spatial nature of this expression of anger and of God's relationship with the psalmist as he descends from above and approaches the world below. Berry notes the "spatial imagery, especially associated with height and depth, provides a primary semantic range for all the psalm's images" (98). Mary Radzinowicz writes of a "spatial sweep" created as God descends (141). And in his translation of and commentary on the Psalms, Robert Alter notes the theophany "launching a downward vertical movement" (53).[31] The vertical nature of the world of the psalm recalls Dennis's understanding of poetry, in general, in terms of

vertical spatial organization, with God above and the psalmist or poet speaking of him from below in order to raise up a world that is fallen.

Thus, Dennis's choice of Psalm 18 can be seen to follow directly from his theory of poetic passion. In *The Advancement* where Dennis cites the King James version of the psalm as an example of poetic sublimity but does not translate it, Dennis writes of the theophany of Psalm 18: "That which satisfies the Reason the more here, raises the Passion more strongly, and entertains the Senses the better, because there are more and more amazing Effects of the Divine Pleasure. For how great, how lofty, how terrible, is that; *He bowed the Heavens and came down, and Darkness was under his Feet*" (269). Dennis argues that Psalm 18 meets his basic criteria for a sublime religious poem: it raises the passions with thoughts of the divine. Again, we can see the use of a metaphor that is at once rhetorical and spatial in the term "lofty." The passions are raised to a height and they move upward toward the realm of the divine, just as the image he gives here of God is one of God descending, coming "down" with "Darkness under his Feet" to redeem the psalmist. Thus, not only does the psalm meet Dennis's requirements for passion and divine subject matter, it also portrays Dennis's narrative of falleness and redemption in poetry.

In *The Grounds* Dennis shows the central importance of his interest in Psalm 18 as an example of passionate, religious poetry when he provides his own translation of the psalm (I have included my own interpretation of the verse numbers that correspond to Dennis' s translation in brackets):

[6] In my Distress I call'd upon the Lord,
And to my God I cry'd; he from his Height,
Above all Heights, strait heard my mournful Voice,
And to my loud Complaint inclin'd his Ear.

[7] Strait the Earth trembled, and her Entrails shook,

As conscious of her great Creator's Wrath:

The Mountains from their fix'd Foundations ran,

And frighted from their inmost Caverns roar'd.

[8] From out his Nostrils a tempestuous Cloud

Of pitchy Smoke in spiry Volumes flew,

And from his Mouth there ran a raging Flood

Of torrent Fire, devouring as it ran:

[9] And then he bow'd the very Heaven of Heavens,

And arm'd with fearful Majesty cam down.

Under his feet he plac'd substantial Night,

Which aw'd the Nations with its dreadful Gloom:

[10] Upon the flaming Cherubim he rode,

And on the Wings of all the Winds he flew;

[11] Still Darkness usher'd his mysterious Way,

And a black Night of congregated Clouds

Became the dark Pavilion of his Throne.

[12] The Clouds his Brightness could no longer bear,

But vanishing rever'd the sacred Source of Light;

And as the congregated Clouds dispers'd,

A Storm of monstrous Hail came pouring down,

Down the red Lightning wing'd its slanting way;

[13] But when his wrathful Voice was heard on high,

Strait both the Poles rebellow'd to the Sound,
In thicker Sheets the rattling Hail came down,
[14] Down came the Lightning with repeated Flames,
And Thunder bellowing through the boundless Space,
Astonish'd Nature with redoubled Roars:
[15] Earth could no longer bear the mortal Fright,
But shook it self from its perpetual Hinge
At thy Rebuke, O Lord, and at the Blast,
The dreadful Blast of thy revenging Breath;
Then upwards from the gaping Center cleav'd,
With a prodigious Wound.
The fix'd Foundations of the World display'd,
Display'd the ghastful Caverns of the Deep,
A Sight that blasted ev'n the World's great Eye,
And made the starting Sun recoil
From his eternal Way. (*Grounds*, 367)

In Dennis's translation of Psalm 18 he highlights the passion of the theophany through the personification of the natural world. In verse seven, he gives consciousness to the mountains. Whereas, originally the mountains "moved and were shaken, because he was wroth" here the earth shakes "as conscious of her great Creator's Wrath" and the mountains are "frighted from their inmost Caverns." Similarly in verse twelve of the King James Version, the clouds move due to "the Brightness that was before Him" but in Dennis's version they "rever'd the sacred Source of Light." In both examples, Dennis takes a verse that was descriptive of action, and

provides a characterization that has natural phenomena (mountains or clouds) afraid of or revering God. In verse fourteen, Dennis shows nature as actually "astonished." Dennis also greatly expands verse fifteen to illustrate an earth that splits because it "could no longer bear the mortal Fright." When it finally does split, Dennis describes it as "a prodigious Wound." The earth, as personified can both be frightened and receive wounds, as though it had both consciousness and flesh. Nature reacts in a direct and personal fashion to the creator's descent. Dennis's incorporation of fear, astonishment, and reverence into the natural world allows him to write a passionate reaction directly into the psalm. In Dennis's view, the best religious poetry, of which the psalms are the prime example, should raise the passions. The description of God's actual appearance to the psalmist is just the sort of awe inspiring moment that Dennis has called for. Yet, he cannot leave it up to the reader to be moved and have his passions raised, he must act out the raising of the passions that he seeks by writing it directly into the story. The reader's reaction to hearing of God moving the mountains should, according to Dennis, be fear, and to heighten the reaction he will write the fear reaction into those very mountains. Fear of God causes the mountains to shake, just as the reader reading of those fearful shaking mountains should in turn experience the fear of God.

The awe filled reaction Dennis cultivates also comes out in his verse nine and the much expanded verse fifteen. In verse nine of the King James psalm God actually begins his descent toward the earth. The verse describes the descent with darkness "under his feet." In his verse nine, God's descent "aw'd the Nations with its dreadful Gloom." Here, Dennis has added the reaction of people to the theophany, writing his reader into the psalm. Thus, he provides the reader with characters in the psalm, witnesses of God's descent, who can be identified with in their awe. In verse fifteen, the witness Dennis provides is the sun, "the World's great Eye,"

whose "Sight" of the unfolding events makes him "recoil." In the King James version of verse fifteen there is the figure of sight as "the Channels of the Waters were seen, and the Foundations of the world were discovered," but the text does not provide an agent who does this seeing and witnessing. Dennis on the other hand has again added a figure not present in the original psalm as a witness of the event, and therefore a witness of and within the psalm. Whether mountains, clouds, nations, or sun Dennis continues throughout his psalm to incorporate figures of the good reader, a reader who sees the psalm as a witness to God and his creation and has his passions raised through the sublimity of the text.

*Neoclassical Poetic Rules*

For Dennis, however, passion alone is not enough to create sublime poetry. For true redemption poetry must also follow "the rules". If the correct poetic rules can be discovered and implemented in the composition of poetry, poetry can become more perfect. But Dennis does not find the basis for poetic rules in the same text where he finds the basis for religious passion. While religion is inherited from the Hebraic tradition, Dennis's poetic rules are inherited from the classical tradition. Ideal poetry, in Dennis, emerges out of the combination of two forces: neoclassical rules and religious passions. Religion provides the ideas, but classical poetics provide the form. At its most simple, Dennis's plan for poetry is one in which the correct poetic rules must be combined with the most sublime religious ideas. By combining rule and idea correctly, Dennis sees a sublime, modern, and specifically English poetry rising from the ashes.[32]

In the second chapter of *The Grounds*, entitled "That Poetry is to be established by laying down the Rules" Dennis lays out an argument about 'the rules' that contains a series of strikingly neoclassical equivalences:

> The Work of every reasonable Creature must derive its Beauty from Regularity; for Reason is Rule and Order, and nothing can be irregular either in our Conceptions or our Actions, any further than it swerves from Rule, that is, from Reason. As Man is the more perfect, the more he resembles his Creator; the Works of Man must needs be more perfect, the more they resemble his Maker's. Now the Works of God, tho infinitely various, are extremely regular.

In his argument he first aligns reason with both beauty and regularity, and then these are immediately turned into rule and order. Rule is Reason which equals regularity. Man is like the Creator, and therefore man's work, when it is perfect, will be regular like God's work. In other words God's work corresponds to rules which, in man's actions become reason, beauty and regularity. Dennis also makes the argument for the regularity and rules of "the Universe" as a model of perfect, Godly order. For Dennis the problem of order returns one to creation and the fall. Man is fallen by "transgressing order" and breaking God's perfect rules. According to this logic, a return to the rules could, in a sense, undo the fall. Poetry is fallen because it does not follow the rules just as man is fallen because he did not follow the rules. Poetry, by turning to God given rules, can, then redeem its fallenness and in turn redeem man's fallen state by serving as orderly instruction to man in his disorder.

Dennis describes the rule and order of poetry as coming from God's universal order, but as a neoclassical thinker he derives his rules for great writing not from the Bible but from ancient Greek writers. In *The Grounds*, he compares modern poetry unfavorably to sublime Greek poetry, writing that he will show "what is to be done to restore Modern Tragedy first to Innocence, and secondly to the Greatness of the *Grecian* Stage" (332). In his reference to the fall, Dennis presents the Grecian stage as a metaphorical Eden. Dennis takes his authority from

the ancient Greeks throughout his argument: "And this we shall show by the Authority of the greatest Criticks among the Antients, *Aristotle, Hermogenes*, and *Longinus*" (340). These ancient writers are presented as the greatest authorities on great writing in every time and place. It is with the authority of the ancient Greek texts that an Englishman of the eighteenth century can judge universally.

The ancient standards, as defined by eighteenth-century neoclassical interpretations of them, are, therefore, those by which he judges the work of English writers, and specifically Milton. For example, Dennis compares Spenser and Milton in light of their relation to ancient rules:

> Spenser, by not following these Rules, fell so very far short of the Ancients….Milton, by daring to break a little loose from them in some particulars, kept up in several others to the Nature of the Greater Poetry in general, and of the Epick Poetry in particular, better than the best of the Ancients. (*Grounds* 331)

According to Dennis, Spenser failed because he did not take the Greek rules into consideration. Even while Dennis admits that Milton did not exactly follow the rules, he still reads Milton in light of these rules and ends by saying that he has excelled the Greeks in their own sphere. Therefore, even in a context in which Dennis appears to question the Greek norms, he finishes by reinstating their authority. The greatest compliment he can give Milton is that he is better than the best of the Ancients precisely because of the authority given to these ancient texts. Dennis adds: "That great Man had a desire to give the World something like an Epick Poem; but he resolv'd at the same time to break thro' the Rules of Aristotle. Not that he was ignorant of them or contemn'd them" (*Grounds* 333). Milton may have broken these rules, but his poem is still categorized as "Epick" based on the ancient categories and is still read in light of Aristotle's

rules. Dennis is also careful to point out that Milton did not condemn the rules. In the need for a defense of Milton we can see the sacred status of the ancient rules. In fact, Dennis will use the rules of Aristotle to support his point that religious ideas have the most sublime potential. He writes: "Religious Ideas are the most admirable; and what is most admirable, according to the Doctrine of *Aristotle*, is most delightful" (360). For Dennis the greatest writing both delights and instructs, a contention based on the precepts of Horace, and here he argues that Religious writing is delightful based on the writing of Aristotle.

In the preface to *The Grounds*, Dennis makes clear that one of the goals of his essay will be to bring a new order, based on the rules, to the psalms. He writes in reference to the versified psalms of Hopkins and Sternhold commonly used in the liturgy of the Church of England: "the vile Meetre of Hopkins…suffers the most Lofty and the most Pathetick Divine Poetry to be Burlesqu'd and Ridicul'd in our Churches" (326). As Dennis lays out his argument, he reveals an interest in the form of the psalms by specifically noting the "vile Meetre" of the common translation. Sternhold and Hopkins have not followed the rules and for this reason the passionate poetry of the psalms has suffered. In order to bring out the "lofty" and "pathetic" nature of the poetry, Dennis proposes that a new form must be found.[33] He does this by imposing a sense of neoclassical order upon the text.

Returning to his translation of Psalm 18, one sees that Dennis attempts to bring classical rule and order to the King James text. This can be seen primarily in the grammar he imposes on the psalm. While verse six in the King James gives, "He heard my Voice out of his Temple, and my Cry came before him, even into his ears," Dennis gives "he from his Height, Above all heights, strait heard my mournful Voice, And to my loud Complaint inclin'd his Ear." The King James version gives two clauses which essentially repeat the same information in different

forms; “He heard my voice out of his Temple” and “my Cry came before him, even into his ears” describe the same events. This is a classic case of biblical parallelism, in which the two clauses give the same event or image with only slight differences, a form commonly found in the psalms.[34] Dennis’s version, in contrast, creates a seamless narrative out of the events in which God hears a voice and leans in to register the complaint being made by the speaker. In addition, the King James Version, in emulation of the Hebrew grammar, provides for great ambiguity. In the phrase “out of his Temple,” it is unclear exactly what the preposition “out” refers to. Is the voice “out” of the Temple? Is God “out” of the Temple when he hears the voice? Is this a Temple that God inhabits or the Temple that the speaker cries from? Dennis makes it clear that the Temple is the place that God inhabits, “his Height, Above all Heights,” and that God hears the voice while in the temple. From the beginning of his translation, Dennis brings “rule” and order to the psalm.

Dennis also adds many small clarifying conjunctions to his Psalm 18, adding a sense of continuity and causality to the verses. In verse nine “He bowed the Heavens also” becomes “And then he bowed the heavens.” The “and then” more clearly links the verse to the preceding verse and provides a sense of ordered causality to the events of the psalm. Verse ten features another instance of parallelism in the King James: “And he rode upon a Cherub, and did fly: He came flying upon the Wings of the Winds.” In the King James the “Wings of the Winds” are a figure for the “Cherub.” But Dennis adds the word “and” between the two phrases, turning the parallelism into the description of two separate events: “Upon the flaming Cherubim he rode, *And* on the Wings of all the Winds he flew.” Similarly, in verse eleven Dennis uses the conjunction “and” to divide the separate phrases of the verse. In the King James, “He made Darkness his secret Place; His Pavilion round about him were dark Waters, and thick clouds of

the skies," the two verses are again an example of parallelism, repeating the same image while expanding upon it and adding nuances to the description. Dennis, on the other hand, divides the phrases, making the Hebrew phrasing orderly and anglicized: "Still Darkness usher'd his mysterious Way, *And* a black Night of congregated Clouds Became the dark Pavilion of his Throne." In a sense, Dennis's grammar removes the nuances of Hebrew poetic structure and turns the psalm distinctly English.

In the psalms, lines that form a parallel pair are often echoes of the same event, temporally simultaneous. Dennis takes the simultaneous layers of theophany and turns them into an ordered set of events, with one line following the next chronologically in a narrative of God's descent. Dennis makes no direct reference to parallelism, and the understanding of parallelism as the defining principle of Hebrew poetry did not come into the English tradition until Bishop Lowth published his lectures on Hebrew poetry in 1754.[35] Yet, the effect of Dennis's grammar is to undermine the complexity of the parallelism found in Psalm 18. In parallelism, the paired phrases are similar in form or content, but the precise relationship between them, whether the lines are complimentary or contradictory, is not specifically given in the text. Dennis's addition of "and" and "but" predetermines the interpretation of the parallel lines and in many instances does away with the parallelism all together. Dennis exchanges a hebraicized form and grammar, as reflected in the King James translation, for proper neoclassical order.

In verse twelve and thirteen Dennis makes order out of the somewhat confusing repetition of the phrase "Hailstones and Coals of Fire." The phrase appears at the end of both verses. In verse twelve "Hailstones and Coals of Fire" adds detail to the image of God moving the clouds with his brightness and in verse thirteen it illustrates the attributes of the thundering voice of the Lord.[36] Dennis's translation does not include a repetition of any phrase. Although he

does mention “hail” in both verses, he specifically marks the difference between the two invocations of the hail. In Dennis’s verse twelve, “A Storm of monstrous Hail came pouring down” and in his verse thirteen “In thicker Sheets the rattling Hail came down.” Dennis’s repetition creates a logical link between the two invocations of hail. In the first instance hail comes down, and in the second instance the hail comes down even “thicker.” The translation makes the static repetition become progressive, once again imposing a narrative structure on the psalm.

Finally, as already noted in my discussion of passion in Dennis’s Psalm 18, Dennis removes the ambiguity of the passive voice from verse fifteen. Whereas in the King James “the Channels of the Waters were seen and the Foundations of the World were discovered,” in Dennis the earth and the sun become the spectators of the splitting open of the world. Dennis’s awed audience serves not only to illustrate the raising of passions, but also serves to bring order to the psalm. The passive construction of the verse leaves the subject of sight ambiguous. By adding a concrete subject, Dennis removes the ambiguity from the verse. By way of imposing order, Dennis also imposes an interpretation on the psalm. In verse fifteen, Dennis adds clarity and order to the psalm while simultaneously attempting to raise the passions of the reader. Thus, in the final verse of his translation, Dennis may have accomplished his goal of harmonizing passion and reason.

*Biblical Passion and Classical Rules in Harmony and in Conflict*

In *The Grounds* Dennis lays out very specific rules to be followed when writing sublime religious poetry. He argues for a combination of neoclassical rules, based on Greek and Roman texts with Christian religious Ideas as derived from the biblical text. It is in their combination

that he sees the greatest potential for sublimity. In Psalm 18, Dennis attempts to carry out the combination of Rule and Idea that he calls for. For Dennis, whose poetry is about passion, praise, and awe, the sublimity of the psalm lies in its power to raise these reactions in the reader. The incorporation of praise and the clarity of order allow, according to Dennis's rules, for ideal poetry through the combination of reason and passion. The idea of God's sublimity and the passionate reaction to that sublimity are inseparable. Dennis attempts to make the reader's sight of the events of Psalm 18 perfect. He does this by adding in passionate witnesses who can stand in as the ideal readers in the psalm, and by giving narrative and grammatical clarity to the psalm. The clarified psalm provides for an unambiguous image in the readers mind, giving better access to the sight of God's actions. The result of combined passion and reason should be harmony and transcendent sublimity.

Yet, the relatively simple argument for rule and idea in poetry is complicated by Dennis's complex relationship to the Attic and Hebrew traditions, respectively. The argument for the sublimity of Greek and Roman rules presents several conflicts for Dennis's overall argument. First of all, he sets up a dichotomy between Greek rule and Divine idea. The sublime Rules come from Ancient Greek texts, but the sublime Ideas come from the Divine. And yet, the Divine Ideas, even if they are inspired by God, need the ancient pagan rules if they wish to be truly sublime. Secondly, he sets up a division between Ancient and Modern, relating them through the figure of the fall. The ancient, Grecian poetry has fallen and now we have modern poetry that is inferior. But when the Bible or biblical poetry enters into this dichotomy, the Bible disrupts the simple chronological narrative of ancient as opposed to modern. (The temporal confusion echoes the way in which the biblical text disrupted the straightforward chronological relationship between a creation followed by praise of that creation.) For Dennis, the Bible as the source of

Divine ideas is both ancient *and* modern. It is ancient in the sense of being the original document, a poetic creation with divine origins. But it does not follow the rules of those other ancients, the Greeks. It is modern, according to Dennis, as a Christian text. The Bible is, in effect, both perfect and imperfect, the original source of poetry but lacking the sublime poetic rules that Dennis holds out as the example of true sublimity.

Dennis's inherently ambivalent attitude toward the biblical text comes out clearly in his omission of Longinus's own citation of the Bible as sublime. Longinus writes that, "The lawgiver of the Jews, no ordinary man, since he recognized and expressed divine power according to its worth, expressed that power clearly when he wrote at the beginning of his Laws: 'And God said' What? 'Let there be light, and there was light; let there be land, and there was land'" (14). Here, Longinus cites the fiat lux as an example of sublime writing, but Dennis, while he takes time to show that Longinus's argument about the sublime is really an argument for the religious sublime, never once makes reference to this specific moment in Longinus. Dennis argues that Longinus, while never defining the sublime as religious, described a sublime that can only be found in religious texts (*Grounds*, 360). It would seem that Longinus's own citation of the Hebrew Bible would greatly support Dennis's reading of Longinus as well as his own argument for the sublimity of the biblical text and make it all the easier for Dennis to meld the Pagan rules and the Christian tradition that he so wants to reconcile. The omission of the citation from Longinus reveals that Dennis is not arguing simply that the Bible is sublime in its own right. Rather, for Dennis, the biblical text is sublime in idea, but needs a supplement to also be sublime in form. If the Hebrew Bible is already sublime, without the supplement of modern English translation or New Testament Christian interpretation, his project to reclaim poetry for modern England loses its raison d'être.

The logical impasse presented by Dennis's attitude toward biblical text was already apparent in his complicated use of the figure of the fall. On the one hand he argues that poetry originates with creation as part of God's thought and therefore that it has the properties needed to restore fallen man. On the other, he presents the idea of poetry itself as fallen and needing its own redemption. He has used 'the fall' in two very different ways here in relation to poetry. Poetry is both fallen and redemptive. Similarly, biblical text in general is both the sublime creation of God and a poetry that implicitly lacks sublime form. In order to avoid a direct discussion of the ancient sublimity or lack thereof in biblical Hebrew poetry, Dennis does something very interesting; he claims biblical poetry for modern authors. In comparing Homer to an excerpt from the prophet Habakkuk, Dennis writes "The Advantage is clearly ours" (*Grounds* 366). With this declaration, he implicitly claims the biblical text of *Habakkuk*, as a Christian text, for modern England. "Ours" claims Habakkuk for the Christian tradition, in contrast to the pagan tradition of Homer, but also at once takes part in a larger argument that aligns Christianity with the modern. Therefore, as a 'Christian' text Habakkuk actually becomes modern. Through the use of chronological ambiguity, Dennis avoids a discussion of his conflicting images of the Bible and of fallen poetry. He maintains his simple dichotomy between Ancient and Modern by putting Biblical text on the side of the modern. In *The Advancement* Dennis gives several biblical examples of sublimity, including Psalm 18, but then moves on to examples from Milton, claiming that if he gives more biblical examples people could say that these were divinely inspired writings and therefore not really examples in favor of his argument about modern Christianity's poetic potential (*Advancement*, 191). The tone of his argument implies that while others might question him, Dennis believes that biblical texts *are* examples of modern Christian sublimity.

In support of his argument for Christian poetry Dennis brings up the example of Psalm 18. He compares the psalm to a theophanic passage in Virgil's *Georgics:* "But now let us see how the Psalmist has treated the same Subject in the Eighteenth *Psalm*, and we shall find, that the Greatness of *Virgil* is Littleness compared to his" (*Advancement* 268). The Psalmist, then, becomes the poet who can redeem modern Christianity. Essentially, he has made David, as psalmist, a modern Englishman by giving the Psalms as the prime example of sublime Christian poetry. The Bible and its authors, for Dennis, belong to England. And yet, Dennis only displaces the original contradiction. If the biblical text is "ours" then it is also aligned with fallen modern text.

As I have already noted, numerous critics of Dennis have come to the conclusion that his theory is at odds with itself, full of irreconcilable contradictions between poetry and religion, reason and passion, Greek and Hebrew, and modern and ancient. Certainly, his anxiety about the sublimity of the biblical text points to an underlying instability in his categories. What has not been noted before is that Dennis, himself, attempts to provide a solution to the contradictions in his theory: translation. Superficially, translation into English immediately reconciles the contradiction between Greek and Hebrew language, but it does much more than this. In his translation of Psalm 18 Dennis attempts to unite poetry and religion, make the ancient modern, harmonize reason and passion, and combine what he sees as the strengths of both the biblical and classical traditions. Dennis's translation is not simply, as biographer H. G. Paul has noted, "a practical exemplification of his theory" (38). It also provides a solution to the contradictions that his theory struggles with. In the psalm, as Dennis envisions it, all contradictions break down and are recombined to make a new form that is simultaneously English, Hebrew, and Greek; reasonable and passionate; modern and ancient; poetic and religious.

## III. The Force of Original Spirit: Dennis's Theory of English Biblical Translation

Through translation, Dennis proposes a solution to the "miserably fall'n" poetry that so concerns him. In order to reverse the fall, the faculties that have been severed must be re-harmonized. In Dennis, translation provides this harmonizing force. Dennis proposes translation as the solution that will harmonize all the implicit conflicts in his argument. He gives English translation as the mode of writing that can reconcile the Ancient Rules with Religious Idea, the Ancient Greeks with the Ancient Hebrews, and most importantly, fallen poetry with its own redemptive powers. He writes of modern poetry basing itself in biblical text that it "might gloriously arise and lift up its head, surpassing even that of the Ancients, if the Poets would but constitute their Subjects religious" (*Grounds* 365). An English translation can maintain the sublimity of all traditions, surpassing each tradition by making use only of the strengths of each. In fact, Dennis goes so far as to claim that Virgil, "is now, by Mr. Dryden's Translation, to be reckon'd among our own Poets; and so comes within the compass of my Design" (*Grounds* 331). By translation poetry can come into the English language, but also, in Dennis's estimation into the English tradition. Virgil, by way of Dryden, has become an actual English poet. Thus English poetry becomes the inheritor of all traditions and the site of their most sublime fulfillment. The contradictions between ancient and modern, rule and idea, and Pagan and Christian are subsumed under the new banner of English religious poetry.

Yet, the biblical core of Dennis's sublime poetry remains. Biblical translation, in Dennis, gains its transcendent, harmonizing force through a direct link to an original Hebrew spirit. When Dennis writes specifically about the Hebrew text, the importance of a notion of Hebrew

spirit to his theory of translation becomes apparent. In *The Advancement*, Dennis discusses the relationship between Virgil's theophany in *The Georgics*, the King James Version of the psalmic theophany, and the original spirit of the Hebrew Psalm 18:

> And here I desire the Reader to consider, that there is more Terror here, both ordinary and Enthusiastick, and consequently more spirit in a faint Copy, nay, a Prosaick Copy, translated in the Imperfection of our Tongue, and by men who in all likelihood had no manner of notion of Poetry, than there is in *Virgil's* original. What force and what infinite Spirit must there not have been in the original *Hebrew*? Since these are thoughts that are so truly great, and so truly lofty, that they carry with them spirit and force and fire, through whatever head they pass, and whatever languages, how admirable and inimitable must they not have been, in the hands of that Divine Poet, who knew how to shew them to the utmost advantage. (269)

The spirit of the original comes through even in what Dennis considers a poor translation, showing the biblical text to have more force than even the most sublime classical text. Dennis's understanding of the spirit of the text must be read in the context of 2 Corinthians 3:6: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." Saint Augustine reads the distinction between spirit and letter as the key distinction between the Old and New Testaments. Jews adhere to the letter of the law, but Christians revive the law by revealing its spirit: "Grace hid itself under a veil in the Old Testament, but it has been revealed in the New Testament" (95). The lifting of the veil through spiritual revelation is the work of Christianity for Saint Augustine. Similarly, when Dennis invokes the spirit of the text, he does so to refer to something beyond the literal text. But here it is not the New Testament that will reveal the spirit of the Old Testament text, it is proper translation. Good translation will reveal the spirit in the biblical text.

The Pauline concept of "spirit" informs the theory of translation in Dennis's work. For Dennis, as with many translators of the eighteenth century, it is the transmission of "spirit" that makes a translation worthy. When Dennis writes of the Ideas in Psalm 18 that they are "so truly great, and so truly lofty, that they carry with them spirit and force and fire" even in translation, he argues that translation is the transmission of the "spirit" of an original idea. The "spirit" in the biblical text is, according to Dennis, "truly lofty." Again, we are in the spatial realm of the lofty and the fallen. The lofty and the Godly are in the text and the translation has the job of transmitting that lofty spirit faithfully. It is the theophanic, original, and Godly "spirit" in the text which, even in a poor translation, transcends the best theophany of the ancient poet, Virgil. Translation becomes the tool of Christianity lifting the veil on the Old Testament text and making it truly sublime by revealing its spirit, *in English*. Translation, rather than being an unfortunate necessity in a society that has lost access to the original, becomes the only true means for revealing that original to itself.

At first glance Dennis's vision of translation seems to be one in which the translation, as a derivative, must attempt to transmit a spirit found only in the original. Yet, just as in Augustine only the revelation of the New Testament can fully unveil the spirit hidden in the letter of the Old Testament, for Dennis only the English language can bring out the full spirit of the Hebrew. In his discussion of Psalm 18, Dennis directly compares Hebrew to English. His allusion to "the imperfection of our tongue" implies a perfection in Hebrew, but he also uses a strange grammatical construction in the sentence "what infinite Spirit *must there not have been* in the original Hebrew?" (my italics). The use of this negative construction in question form undermines what, at first glance, seems like a very strong argument for the innate Hebrew spirit. The grammar sheds doubt on the sublimity of Hebrew just as the content affirms it. The tension

of grammar and content perfectly mirrors the tension in Dennis's argument, where he has contended that the Hebrew Bible is the most sublime of texts while simultaneously calling for its improvement through translation. For Dennis, translation is the expression of an original spirit, but the force of biblical spirit is brought out fully only through its translation.

In *The Grounds*, in explanation of his own translation, Dennis justifies the incorporation of neoclassical verse in his Psalm 18: "For if the Passion and Harmony were thought requisite by the Original Writers, who were divinely inspir'd, to give Force to the *Hebrew*; why should not Spirit and Passion, and Numbers in a Translation, give a proportionable Force to that" (371)? Here, Dennis puts emphasis on the "Harmony" that can be brought about in poetry through the unique force and spirit of Hebrew. Through use of the rhetorical question Dennis makes an implicit argument that the "original" and "Hebrew" had a special sublime force. If the special force of poetry was needed even in the original Hebrew, then it must certainly be needed in the derivative translation, if it intends to transcend its derivative status. What Dennis does not say here, although it is implicitly suggested by his translation of Psalm 18, is that the verse that he thinks necessary to the psalm comes not from the original Hebrew but from the imperatives of neoclassical order. He lumps "Numbers in a Translation" in with "Spirit and Passion" as naturally following from the Hebrew, but in Dennis's own translation, as shown above, he attempts to add both "passion" and "numbers" to the text. In both instances cited here, Dennis makes recourse to an idea of the original Hebrew spirit that aligns with his own revisions.

In *The Advancement* Dennis stresses that the sublimity of the Hebrew original transcends linguistic differences: "Since these are thoughts that are so truly great, and so truly lofty, that they carry with them spirit and force and fire, through whatever head they pass, and whatever languages." In other words, it is not necessarily the Hebrew language that Dennis sees as perfect

here but the religious ideas that had been expressed in that language, the ideas expressed by the "Divine Poet." Here, the poet and his ability and not the language make a poem sublime. An English version of the psalm could, then, be just as valid as the original Hebrew. Again, we see Dennis making an argument for a translation that could best its original. The move here to justify English translation as a valid form of the religious text would have been, first of all, simply necessary in an eighteenth-century England where extensive knowledge of Hebrew was quite limited even among the educated.[37] By claiming that the original spirit transcends language, Dennis gives eighteenth-century English readers the possibility of equal access to the holy text. But the point being made here goes beyond arguing for translation as a necessary means of access to the holy text. If it is the spirit of the text and skill of the poet that matters and not the language in which it is recorded, Dennis's argument makes room for the possibility of an English translation that could exceed the Hebrew original. An English translation, if done correctly, could better reveal the spirit of the text than the original. Thus, an English translation could be more original than the original by being more in contact with the sublime idea at the heart of the poem. An English translation could take the letter that 'killeth' and reveal its spirit, giving it life.

Dennis does not find an example of the sublime, English biblical translation that he seeks in any of the canonical versions of his day. Just as he has maligned the versified psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins, Dennis points to the lack of versification in the King James Bible as a fault of that translation. The translation is not only a "faint copy," it is a "Prosaick copy," a copy in the wrong form. Dennis turns, instead, to Milton's *Paradise Lost* for an example of sublime biblical translation. For Dennis, Milton is the English author who has found a way to combine Pagan rule and Christian idea to make the most sublime English religious poetry. In so doing,

Milton has, for Dennis, brought ancient Hebrew text and idea in line with ancient Greek text and rule, providing a story of the fall that can redeem the fallen through its sublimity.

In the eyes of Dennis, Milton was certainly a Biblical author, taking the religious ideas presented in the Bible and turning them into the most worthy English poetry.[38] For Dennis, Milton and specifically Milton's psalm 148 are *the* example of the sublime religious poetry that he is calling for. In reference to Milton's "hymn" Dennis writes in *The Grounds*: "What Milton has done in relation to the 148th Psalm, others may do in a less proportion to other parts of the Old Testament" (372). Precisely what Dennis thinks "Milton has done" is clarified in Dennis's discussion of the reception of Milton's hymn:

> I know several Gentlemen of very good Sense, who are extremely mov'd by *Milton's* Hymn, in the fifth Book of *Paradise Lost*, and hardly at all stir'd with the Translation of the 148th Psalm, from whence that Hymn is taken…Since those Persons, who are so much mov'd by the Hymn, are not equally stir'd by the translated Psalm, the Passion or Spirit is less in the latter, and does not come up to the Ideas; and therefore we may conclude, that *Milton*, by his Genius and Harmony, has restor'd that Spirit in composing the Hymn, which had been lost by the Weakness of the Translation, and the Want of Poetical Numbers. (*Grounds* 372)

In Dennis's estimation, Milton's translation, which is much farther from a literal translation of the original Hebrew psalm, surpasses the King James version of the psalm, by being closer to the presumed "Spirit" of the original. In other words, Milton's version, by diverging from the original, is more faithful to that original by preserving the affect of the psalm. Translation, then, for Dennis is not about faithful attention to individual words or phrases, but is much more about

capturing an original essence. Translation must preserve the impact of the original text, here an assumed Hebrew and divine spirit of the text.

Dennis cites many examples from Milton in his argument in *The Grounds.* In fact, he presents the body of his work as a reading of Milton's sublime epic. Discussing Milton's opening "invocation" in Book One of *Paradise Lost*, Dennis writes:

> And it was these Divine Ideas, that rais'd his Soul, and fill'd it with Admiration, and with a noble Greatness… the Reader who goes back to the beginning of the poem will find no room to doubt. For *Milton*, like a Master, begins with a gentle Spirit, which he continues for the twelve first Lines: In the thirteenth, where he speaks of the Boldness of his Attempt, he begins to rise; and in the nineteenth, where he talks of the Power of the Holy Ghost, he is quite upon the Wings. (*Grounds* 342)

Dennis's great admiration for Milton's work is clear here when he calls Milton a "Master" and speaks of his work as "quite upon the Wings." Dennis sees the sublimity coming from Milton's use of Divine Ideas, but it is still Milton's own masterfulness that makes the poetry truly sublime. Dennis goes on to praise Milton's "Dialogue between God and *Adam*" in Book Eight of Paradise Lost: "it derives its Greatness and its Sublimity from the becoming Thoughts which it has of the Deity" (*Grounds* 342). Again, he emphasizes Milton's use of Religious Ideas.[39] Dennis also challenges "the most zealous Admirers of Antiquity to produce anything like it, from among all the Dialogues of *Homer* and *Virgil*" (*Grounds* 342). For Dennis, Milton's use of the English biblical tradition sets him above and beyond all of the authors of antiquity. He writes in *The Advancement*: "When I say that Milton excels Virgil, I mean that he does so sometimes both in his Thoughts and in his Spirit, purely by the advantage of Religion" (*Advancement* 201).

Milton is the author who can combine sublime Pagan rules and sublime Christian ideas to make the most sublime religious poetry. [40]

Although Dennis cites many examples from Milton in *The Grounds*, the longest excerpt he provides is from Milton's "Hymn" in Book Five of *Paradise Lost.* Dennis calls it "that incomparable Hymn" and identifies it as a translation of Psalm 148, writing: "A Hymn, which tho it is intirely taken from Scripture, for it is apparently the 148th Psalm, yet will always stand alone, the Phoenix of lofty Hymns; and nothing equal to it, no nor second to it, can ever be produc'd from the *Grecian* Writers of Hymns" (351). Dennis then cites fifty-five lines of *Paradise Lost* in praise of God and His creation, beginning: "These are thy glorious Works, Parent of Good,/ Almighty, thine this Universal Frame,/ Thus wondrous fair, thy Self how wondrous then" (PL V: 153-155)! Psalm 148 is a call for unbridled and universal praise of God, His name and His works. It calls upon angels, the moon, the stars, the heavens, the trees, the beasts, all peoples, and all creation to praise the Lord. Milton's hymn also calls upon all of creation to praise God, but it does so in much more detail. It is four times as long as the psalm that it is based upon, and as Dennis notes the 'translation' is different enough that it can only be identified as "apparently the 148th Psalm."[41]

In *Milton's Epics and the Book of Psalms*, Mary Ann Radzinowicz makes reference to Milton's Hymn and discusses Milton's method for turning psalms into hymns in his epics: "Milton's practice…is to imitate the common structure of psalmic hymn and ornament or develop it with common hymnic topoi" (Radzinowicz, 153). She claims that the hymn in Book Five of *Paradise Lost*, what Dennis calls the 148th Psalm, actually makes use of three different psalms: Psalm 148, Psalm 74 and and Psalm 127, but agrees with Dennis that it relies primarily on Psalm 148. The psalmic origins of the hymn are marked in Milton's text as well, when he

writes: “On Earth join all the Creatures to extol/ Him first, Him last, Him midst, and without end” (PL V: 164-165). These lines make use of a common formula from the Church of England liturgy. In the Church every psalm read is followed by the verse, “Glory to the Father and to the Son/ and to the Holy Spirit;/ as it was in the beginning is now/ and ever shall be, world without end. Amen”. Milton has taken the “for ever and ever” from the psalm and, by providing a rhythmic statement of God’s existence in the beginning the present and the future, he has turned it into the liturgical “without end” that comes at the end of every psalm, marking his hymn as a psalm. While Radzinowicz makes note of eleven different hymns in *Paradise Lost*, it is important to note that Dennis has chosen to focus on a hymn of praise which is entirely focused on creation. This psalm both praises creation and reenacts it, listing all of God’s creation just as in the creation story, repeating God’s act of creation through speech. For Dennis, it would be the example of a poem that is both of and at the origin.

Dennis, who, unlike Milton, did not read Hebrew, assumes that Milton’s text must be closer to the spirit of the Hebrew because it appears more sublime. Here, he reveals an assumed link between greater sublimity and greater connection to an original spirit. He also assumes that the English author, Milton, has access to original and originating biblical sublimity. The fallen psalmic translations can be redeemed through a translation with access to the original spirit of the text. In Dennis creation and the praise of that creation originate together. Psalm 148 in praise of God’s creation both describes and is part of the sublime origin as sublime original text. By tapping into the original “spirit” of the psalm, Milton, then, has tapped into the original spirit of creation, recreating that creation as he praises it. In Dennis’s account of Milton’s Psalm 148, we have a theory that there is an origin, a time of creation before the fall, that is accessible to man, and that through poetry an author and his readers can gain access to creation itself. Dennis’s

view of Milton as providing a connection to creation can be seen in the citations he provides from Milton in *The Advancement.* Arguing for the sublimity of *Paradise Lost*, Dennis quotes five different passages from the seventh book, all describing the creation of the world. And, while Dennis avoided citing Longinus's citation of the fiat lux, he does provide Milton's description of the "let there be light!" moment. At the heart of Dennis's theory of the religious sublime, lies a desire for connection back to the origin of poetry and of the world. Translation, through spirit, is the act which can make the connection possible.

Dennis's desire for a connection to the origin of creation through poetry can be seen in his relentless focus on psalms of praise. Although the psalms are full of psalms of lament which call to an apparently absent deity, Dennis chooses to focus on those psalms which praise God and stress the connection of the psalmist to a God who is present. Radzinowicz makes the argument that both psalms of praise and lament are present in Milton's work, and she claims that the emphasis shifts from primarily hymns of praise to primarily lamentation as *Paradise Lost* unfolds as a tragic epic. Similarly, Stanley Fish argues in *Surprised by Sin: the Reader in Paradise Lost* that *Paradise Lost* works to recreate the fall in the mind of the reader so that while reading the reader falls with Adam. For both Radzinowicz and Fish a tragic fall into lament is at the heart of *Paradise Lost*. Dennis reads this tone of lamentation as an actual falling off in the sublimity of Milton's poem. He writes in *The Grounds*: "For whereas in the first eight Books, he had by the Mouth of God or Angels, or of Man the Companion of Angels, divinely entertain'd us with the wondrous Works of God; in the latter end of his Poem, and more particularly, in the last Book, he makes an Angel entertain us with the Works of corrupted man" (*Grounds* 351). For Dennis, the purpose of religious poetry is to praise "the wondrous Works of God." Where Radzinowicz identifies psalms of lament, Dennis identifies text that deals with "the Works of

corrupted man." Dennis praises that text as sublime which emphasizes God's creation and a given relationship between man and God. He sees the last books of *Paradise Lost,* those which describe man's state after the fall, as inferior. While the lament psalms focus on a disconnect between man and God, the impossibility of ever getting back to an uncomplicated origin, Dennis's theory of the religious sublime wants to turn that impossibility into a possibility, focusing on poetry and Christianity as the sites of connection between man and God, connection to the creative origin, a connection that can repair the fall. Dennis's condemnation of the last books of *Paradise Lost* thus falls into place as an extension of his overall argument. For Dennis, the sublimity of the psalms and the sublimity of Milton come from a focus on praise and not lament, on connection and not loss. Through Milton, he defines a mode of English translation which can overcome the flaws of the Hebrew "letter" to bring out the "spirit" of creation and make Hebrew truly sublime in English.

Finally, turning back to the opening of Dennis's Psalm 18 (and to my epigraph), we find the psalmist calling to God in his distress. In the King James version cited in *The Advancement* the psalmist cries out and God hears his voice: "my Cry came before him, even into his Ears." But Dennis's translation changes the emphasis of the verse so that the cry does not simply come into God's ears; God actually "inclin'd his Ear" to hear the psalmist's plea and "strait heard my mournful Voice." The God of Dennis's psalm takes a much more active role in his relationship with the psalmist. He is not simply hearing the cry, but turning to hear it. The word "strait" implies the direct nature of the connection between the psalmist and God in Dennis's version of the psalm. Dennis's God makes himself actively available to the prayers of the psalmist. The change in emphasis highlights Dennis's understanding of religious poetry as a means of direct connection to God and to God's creation. Throughout *The Advancement* and *The Grounds*

Dennis is at pains to provide a theory of poetry that emphasizes unmediated sublimity, connection to creation and origin, and ultimately the possibility of a poetry that can return the poet to God and to an Edenic paradise. In the King James version of verse six, the words come to God in his Temple, but there is no reference to the location of that temple. In Dennis's version God's location above the speaker is given twice in the line "he from his Height, Above all Heights, strait heard my mournful Voice." The emphasis here on "height" brings us back into Dennis's spatial metaphor, in which people and poetry are fallen and must be raised up by way of passion, order, and translation. To be raised up, in the abstract, could mean many things, but in the psalm we see that, for Dennis, to be raised up and returned to a height is to return to God, to a God who makes himself available and who inclines his ear to our plight.

In the end, Dennis's theory of poetry *is* his theory of translation. While Dennis's work focuses on the idea of a sublime original, whether it is God's creation or the poetry of the psalmist, his is not simply a theory of superior original and inferior copy. For Dennis, there is redemption in poetry and in translation he finds the possibility of a return to original sublimity. The original spirit of the text, of creation, of the Edenic relationship to the deity is not lost to the translator; it is in fact uniquely available to a translator who knows how to translate properly. The best poetry for Dennis is that which, by praising God's works, makes those works manifest, a poetry that is itself participating in the creation of that which it praises. The best poetry is that which has the potential to reunite the warring faculties in order to return them to an original harmony. Similarly, the best translation is that which so fully captures that which it translates that it is a part of the manifestation of the glory of that text. The best translation will not simply copy something created, it will continue to participate in that creation, uniting disparate languages and times through a transcendent and harmonizing "spirit."

Dennis's reading of the psalms, and his understanding of biblical language and text in original and translation, reveal a Dennis not seen before, one who views praise of God as a continued manifestation of God in the world, one who sees translation not simply as a means to illustrate his argument, but as the equivalent of religious redemption, with the power to harmonize the conflicts in his theory and the conflicts inherent in the world. By reorienting a reading of Dennis around the spatial metaphors that abound in his language and in the images of Psalm 18, we gain access to a clearer reading, one which takes the confusion of logical (one could say, horizontal) impasses in his argument and exchanges them for a harmony attained in the vertical orientation of the psalmist speaking to God. For Dennis the psalm redeems the psalmist as God inclines actively to hear him, and the translation of that psalm can redeem English poetry by bringing the Hebrew tradition into the English and by giving a modern Englishman contact with the deity that, for Dennis, is thoroughly present in the text which depicts his presence. Perhaps most importantly, the psalms do not simply give us a new way to read Dennis, Dennis gives us a way to read the psalms as they flourished in the English tradition.[42] The psalms were not simply pious repetitions meant to educate the masses, they were a means of translating ancient traditions into modern culture and of bringing God into the presence of the man of prayer, not figuratively, but for Dennis literally and transformatively.

# Turning the Text and Remembering Selectively:
# A Reading of Pamela's 137th Psalm

Critics often read Samuel Richardsons's epistolary *Pamela* as an example of the rise of the novel as a new, dominant form in literature. This chapter will argue that *Pamela* not only provides a model for the new genre of the novel, but also for an eighteenth-century vision of translation. Pamela, by translating Psalm 137 to fit her own situation, creates a text that is both derivative and original. In contrast to a model of translation based on a concept of fidelity to an original, Pamela presents the reader with a model of translation based on the paradoxes of memory. Translation of a psalm becomes a means of both remembering and forgetting origins and origin stories. By reading the terms "turn," "remember," and "forget" in Pamela's psalm and throughout the novel, we find that translation is a means of turning away and of remembering to forget. Pamela, by way of the psalm, is able to forget the violence done to her by Mr. B and transfer all the blame of her captivity onto the ambiguously gendered character of Mrs. Jewkes. The forgetting made possible by the psalm allows Pamela to cover over ambiguity, both as it relates to Mr. B's character and to the demarcations of gender in the text. Writing as an amnesiac, Pamela is able to repress contradictions, contradictions that are at the heart of the original distinctions that make signification possible.

Reading Pamela as an amnesiac translator makes it possible to look at two recurring themes in *Pamela* scholarship in a new way. *Pamela* is often viewed as enacting a cultural struggle and as presenting a paradox of female sexuality. As I will show, Pamela's translation both enacts this struggle and reveals that what may appear to be only a struggle over definitions of gender is actually a struggle over the foundation of definition itself. Closely reading Pamela's

translation provides not only a new reading of *Pamela* but also a new understanding of how translation functions to both witness and erase history. In Pamela's repression, we find a repression at the heart of an English struggle to rewrite the Bible. As a biblical translation, Pamela's psalm takes part in an English writing of its own history in relation to its origins. By shifting our gaze from concerns over fidelity to the original Bible and instead viewing English translation in terms of repression and the writing of history, it becomes possible to see the English relation to the biblical text through translation in a new light, a relation mediated by repression.

The text of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* has often been read as a struggle; a struggle between two characters, a struggle to create a new genre, a struggle to define a new middle-class, and a struggle to determine the limits of new gender roles in a changing English society. In *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson* Margaret Anne Doody argues that the exploration of love as a "natural passion" lies at the center of Richardson's work: "The state of being in love fascinated him. He saw it as war, a struggle not only between the male and female principle, but also between various aspects of the character of each individual" (10). Doody situates Richardson's interest in romantic love in terms of "war" and "struggle." For Doody, the struggle depicted in *Pamela* is internal to the text and takes place between the characters in the story. Ian Watt, in his *The Rise of the Novel*, however, defines the struggle in *Pamela* as the product of a larger societal conflict, "a struggle, not only between two individuals, but between two opposed conceptions of sex and marriage held by two different social classes, and between two conceptions of the masculine and feminine roles" (154). According to Watt, a new version of marriage, love, and sexual relations, based upon the rising middle-class, was evolving in the eighteenth century. Early novels, such as *Pamela*, wrestled with the tension

between the older patriarchal model of the family and a model based on individual freedom (141). He refers to Pamela's marriage to Mr. B in *Pamela* as a "triumph of the middle-class code in sexual ethics" (166).

Similarly, Michael McKeon and Nancy Armstrong both read *Pamela* in terms of societal struggle, but also as a struggle over discourse and text. For McKeon, *Pamela,* as an early novel, is involved in "the positing of a 'new' generic category as a dialectical negation of a 'traditional' dominance—the romance, the aristocracy" (268). In the text of *Pamela*, McKeon sees what he calls Pamela's "progressive" discourse getting the better of Mr. B's "aristocratic" discourse: "the battle is over who has the power to define the meaning of these categories and to enforce acceptance of their terms upon the other" (366). The struggle is not simply between two characters, but between the respective discourses of these two characters. In Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A political history of the novel* she also views the struggle in Pamela as carried out at the level of the discourse, but she views it as primarily a struggle over gender definitions: "the rise of the novel hinged upon a struggle to say what made a woman desirable" (Armstrong 4). She writes that Richardson: "used fiction for redefining the desirable woman" (97). In Armstrong's reading, this redefinition of the feminine had large social and political consequences:

> *Pamela* carried on the same struggle to define the female that was being waged wherever writing invoked the need for female education and for the reform of sexual practices. Represented as the struggle between a master and his female servant, *Pamela* contained this struggle first within the household and then within the writing that transformed Pamela herself into a distinctively female form of subjectivity…To put it quite crudely,

> this novel is a struggle in which one fiction captures and translates the other into its terms. (118-119)

Armstrong locates the struggles in the novel at the site of gender, and puts this struggle over definitions of gender in terms of language, discourse, and translation. While Watt, McKeon, and Armstrong all view *Pamela* as an example of the early novel's involvement in social, economic, and political changes taking place in the eighteenth-century as a 'middle-class' model of society replaced an older aristocratic model, Armstrong specifically views the work of *Pamela* as that of translation. She notes that the novel "repackages political resistance as the subjectivity of a woman. It does so in order to translate the political strategy of a decided minority into an effective rhetorical tactic" (132). She uses translation as the metaphor for the struggle that many different critics have located in the text of *Pamela*.

Translation is carried out by means of a struggle, the struggle of the translator who works to bring one text, the translation, to terms with another text, the original, and the struggle between two languages which are brought into relation by the very act of translation. In the case of Pamela, we essentially have multiple languages: that of Pamela, of Mr. B, of the narrator, of the Romance tradition that precedes it, and, in the case of Pamela's own translation, the language of the prayer book. Crucially, in *Pamela* translation is not only metaphorical; Pamela herself is a translator of Psalm 137. In the first volume of *Pamela*, Pamela creates a version of Psalm 137 that reflects her captivity at B—n Hall. This psalm then reappears in the second volume when Mr. B. reads it out loud to the visiting gentry. In the second instance Pamela's psalm is juxtaposed with the versified version of the psalm from the *Common Prayer Book*. The repetition of the entire text in the second volume underlines the importance of Pamela's translation to the novel. And its importance is not only marked by its prominence in the text, but

also by its form as a translation, and therefore as a part of the discursive struggle enacted by the text.

Armstrong discusses Pamela's Psalm 137 as part of her larger argument about the impact that the rise of the novel had on eighteenth century conceptions of family and women:

> If, at an earlier moment in history, the translation of the Bible into English transferred moral authority from the church to the state, then here was an equally significant shift in the structure of power in England. Pamela's verse translates the historical and political meaning of the "common translation" of a psalm into terms at once personal and universal. This is to mark symbolically a shift in moral authority from the male institutions of state to the head of the household. (133)

For Armstrong, Pamela's translation of biblical text illustrates her claim to moral authority as the head of the household in a middle class economy. The translation of biblical text is a symbol of shifting power relations. What Armstrong does not account for in her reading is the specific choice of Psalm 137 and the implications of that text. According to Armstrong's reading Pamela could have translated any part of the Bible and the symbolic shift would be the same. In "Pamela's Textual Authority" John B. Pierce provides a similar reading of the psalm translation in which the rewriting of the psalm is a claim of individuality: "In adapting and transforming biblical events to her own life, she makes herself, as a figure of virtue, part of a pattern of faith in an oppressive landscape and portrays herself as one of the chosen people" (15). He differs from Armstrong in viewing the psalm as somewhat transferring blame away from Mr. B and toward Mrs. Jewkes, the housekeeper (a reading supported by the language of the psalm, as will be shown below), but in the end he still views the psalm as a means to Pamela's individual liberty. He views her "free manipulation of a variety of textual forms" as central to the liberty he sees her

gaining in the text. Both Armstrong and Pierce read the translation scene very positively as a sign of Pamela's independence. Jessica L. Leiman also sees a power struggle taking place in this scene, but in her reading Mr. B uses the translation as a means of gaining power over Pamela's writing. She positions her argument in opposition to Armstrong: "Although Armstrong reads this scene as a celebration of Pamela's authority and the power of the female word, it is more accurate to say that this scene dramatizes Mr. B's success in wresting Pamela's authority and her words from her" (244). As will be shown below, the very act of the repetition of the psalm and its very specific language does indeed transfer authority to Mr. B while only seeming to empower Pamela.

Michael Austin is one critic who does address the need for a specific reading of Psalm 137 in his article "Lincolnshire Babylon: Competing Typologies in Pamela's 137th Psalm." Austin reads the psalm as an allegory of Pamela's situation in which she is "Israel" and Mr. B is "Babylon." He writes: "Both passages invoke the Bible directly by importing a biblical text into the narrative, but both also employ the Bible typologically by making the actions and characters of the book representative of biblical themes and situations" (503). Austin goes on to compare the two presentations of the psalm to two different Jewish readings of the captivity in Babylon, one in which the captivity is a horrible injustice and another in which the captivity is a necessary trial by God.[43] He argues that in the first volume of Pamela, Mr. B, "Babylon," is viewed as a horrible oppressor, but in the second volume, when the psalm is repeated, Mr. B's oppression is rewritten as a trial that Pamela has passed through in order to find happiness. As Austin concludes:

> For Richardson's ideal reader, the response to this shift goes beyond simply forgiving Mr. B. for his atrocities or seeing him as a reformed rake; it includes the realization that

> everything done to Pamela was ultimately for her own good and was therefore necessary and divinely inspired. (514)

Pamela changes the psalm from a plea for vengeance on the oppressor, as in the biblical version, to a plea and thanks for her own deliverance, which gives the reader a way to read Mr. B's actions and forgive them. Austin, then, reads the psalm as a vehicle for this shift from Mr. B as attempted-rapist rake to Mr. B as acceptable husband. For Austin, the psalm serves to reinforce Mr. B's authority.[44] But while providing a telling critique of Armstrong, what Austin's allegory does not account for are the myriad and often subtle changes that Pamela makes in the psalm's content, vocabulary, and rhyme scheme. Armstrong, Leiman, Pierce, and Austin, by forgoing a reading of the very specific changes that Pamela makes in the psalm, have reduced these moments in the text to a symbol or an allegory, ignoring translation's central role. By closely reading these changes, I hope to show that this psalm is neither simply a symbolic political transfer of authority, nor an allegory with one-to-one correspondence between characters and biblical figures; rather it is a complex literary composition that subtly works to rearrange the characters and gender roles at play in the novel. It does so by means of three specific terms: turning, remembering, and forgetting. Each of these terms, in turn, becomes a stand-in for the act of translation. The translation itself is a means of turning, remembering, and forgetting in *Pamela*.

Pamela originally introduces Psalm 137 into her journal in response to a request from Mrs. Jewkes:

> When I was at my Devotions, Mrs. Jewkes came up, and wanted me sadly to sing her a Psalm, as she had often on common Days importun'd me for a Song upon the Spinnet; but I declin'd it, because my Spirits were so low, I could hardly speak, nor car'd to be

> spoke to; but when she was gone, I remembering the 137th Psalm to be a little touching, turn'd to it, and took the Liberty to alter it to my Case more; I hope I did not sin in it: But thus I turn'd it. (140)

Here, before the psalm is even begun we have already, in Pamela's description of this scene, a passage that alludes to many parts of the psalm. In the *King James Bible* Psalm 137 reads as follows:

> 1 By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept: when we remembered thee, O Sion. 2 As for our harps, we hanged them up upon the trees that are therein. 3 For they that led us away captive required of us then a song, and melody, in our heaviness: sing us one of the songs of Sion. 4 How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? 5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem: let my right hand forget her cunning. 6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: yes, if I prefer not Jerusalem in my mirth. 7 Remember the children of Edom, O Lord, in the day of Jerusalem: how they said, Down with it, down with it, even to the ground. 8 O daughter of Babylon, wafted with misery: yea, happy shall be he that rewardeth thee, as thou hast served us. 9 Blessed shall be he that taketh thy children and throweth them against the stones.

Pamela's situation, in both its events and language, echoes the events and language of the Psalm. "When I was at my Devotions" echoes the language of "When we remembered thee"; "Mrs. Jewkes wanted me sadly to sing her a Psalm" echoes "For they that led us away captive required of us then a song, and melody, in our heaviness: sing us one of the songs of Sion." Then Pamela "remembers" the psalm. Remembrance itself is a very important theme in this psalm. In the Hebrew the verbזָכַר (zachar/remember) appears twice and the verb שָׁכַח (shakach/forget) appears once. Remembrance, then, comes up in two ways in Psalm 137, once in reference to

remembering and never forgetting Jerusalem/Sion and once in the very different context of remembering the Edomites as a euphemism for getting revenge. Therefore, the concept of remembrance in Psalm 137 takes on both the valences of deliverance and revenge. Pamela invokes all of this before she has even begun her own psalm.

Remembering and forgetting play an important role, not only in this psalm, but also in the entire narrative of *Pamela*. The book begins, in the first letter, with the death of the Lady whom Pamela serves. Pamela's letter describes the Lady's last words to her son, Mr. B: "My dear Son!—and so broke off a little, and then recovering—Remember my poor *Pamela!*" (11). From the beginning, then, Pamela and Mr. B's relationship is framed as one of remembering. One could argue that the story that follows is one in which Mr. B does indeed "remember" Pamela, but not always with respectful intentions. Remembering, then, becomes a term to describe all of Mr. B's later actions toward Pamela, and is a key term for understanding the unfolding of the novel. In addition, the statement "Remember my poor *Pamela!*" is itself ambiguous. As the character Pamela reports the speech, the lady is instructing Mr. B to remember Pamela, but the insertion of "and so broke off a little, and then recovering" separates the call to her son from the statement that follows. This leaves open the possibility that it is "poor Pamela" who must, herself, "remember." What this could mean is clarified in the first scene of Mr. B's attempted seduction in the summer house, when, in response to Mr. B's questioning whether he has done her any harm, Pamela answers: "Yes, Sir, said I, the greatest Harm in the World: You have taught me to forget myself" (23). The phrase, "forgetting oneself" appears throughout the early letters in the book as a euphemism for forgetting to act chastely. From this it becomes clear that Pamela remembering, in effect, refers to Pamela guarding her chastity. As Paul Kelleher writes, "Mr. B's increasingly harrowing attempts at seduction

translate his dying mother's desire that Pamela be "remembered" into a series of sexual encounters in which both he and Pamela, respectively, "forget" themselves."[45] Kelleher, here, refers to the relation of these terms to the plot of Pamela as a "translation." In treating the issues of "remembering" and "forgetting" and their translation in the text, Pamela, is then, using the psalm that she rewrites to address the problems of innocence and seduction upon which the entire narrative turns.

The "translation" that follows Pamela's interaction with Mrs. Jewkes is in verse and based upon the already versified version of the psalm from the *Common Prayer Book.* It is important for us to remember that this makes Pamela's psalm a translation three times removed. Hebrew has been translated to English prose, which has been translated to English verse, which Pamela then "translates" into her own verse. She, however does not call it translation but says that she "turn'd" the psalm. This theme of turning will return in the second volume, and like remembrance it also has multiple meanings. At the time of Richardson's writing the word 'turn' had multiple valences. It could be used in a literary context to describe the creation of text, as in a "well-turned" phrase or trope (the Greek word for turn), but also to the creation or working of materials by turning, to a person's physical reorientation, or metaphorically to the reorientation of thoughts.[46] To refer to translation as "turning," with all of its multiple meanings, implies a certain conception of translation as a labor of creation and as a reorientation of meaning. Rather than seeing translation as simple, passive transmission of content or information, here, translation is an active force within language, reorienting the existing text and fashioning new text.

The complexity of associations brought out by this verb cannot be overstated. Johnson's *Dictionary* contains thirty-four definitions of the transitive verb "turn" before even getting to

phrases that include the word, such as "turn to" or "turn over." Beyond the simple physical reorientation of an object or the self, one possible definition of "turn" given is simply "to translate" but also "to form, to shape," "to change, to transform," "to alter," "to change to another opinion," "to alter from one effect or purpose to another," "to infatuate," " to adapt the mind," and "to retort, to throw back." The word "turn," then, encapsulates the struggle occurring in *Pamela,* one in which Mr. B and Pamela try continually, and sometimes succeed at turning each other, either by changing the other's opinion, infatuating the other, transforming the other (i.e. into a good wife or husband), or retorting to the other and throwing the other's words back in his or her face. Translation, as an act of turning, is then a crucial metaphor of the text. Even in this scene, we see Pamela actively turned, herself, by the psalm; the psalm touches her and so she turns to it. Writing of the use of scriptural text in Richardson's *Clarissa,* Robert A. Erickson notes: "As she writes the Bible, it rewrites her. This ongoing process might best be described as one of mutual 'translation'" (201). Similarly, in *Pamela,* as Pamela turns the biblical text, it turns her. The image of turning/translating accords the proper complexity to the give and take of discourse in *Pamela*; as Pamela turns out her letters, she forms and transforms her world, but the letters, in turn, form and transform her.

The relation of translation and sin is also invoked by Pamela's presentation of her psalm. By translating and transforming the biblical text into her own context, Pamela worries that she may have sinned, in other words, that her transformation of the text may have perverted its meaning. Yet, this possibility is quickly dismissed. Pamela's turning of the psalm, as all her turnings in the novel, are presented as nothing but blameless. The possibility, however, of the perverse nature of turning has been introduced. Pamela's virtue always hangs in the balance, and

any turn she takes could always lead to sin. Language itself is here put into question. Language can always be turned for good or for bad, and the act of translation contains both possibilities.

The word "turn" repeats continually in the novel with various valences, both good and bad. When Pamela's father, Goodman Andrews, comes to Mr. B to try to save her from him, Mr. B tells him: "I think thou hast read Romances as well as thy Daughter, and thy Head's turn'd with them" (96). The "turn" is conceptual, a change in the way of thinking. The link to Romances also marks the turning as feminine.[47] The word turn is introduced in a moment of accusing a man of acting like a woman, a moment where Mr. B introduces gender confusion in order to avoid answering for his actions. Shortly after this, Mr. B writes to Pamela and assures her: "a happier Turn shall reward these your Troubles" (105). Here, the turn is a turn of events. Throughout the novel much of the action happens as people take turns both "about the room" (212) and "in the chariot" (256, 259). From this we can see that the events of the novel are categorized as turns. Pamela creates the psalm by turning it just as events happen through turns, and she reorients meaning through turning the psalm just as Mr. B accuses her father of having had his head turned by Romances.

In the psalm, which I will cite in its entirety below, Pamela personally takes on the voice of the speaker, the captive oppressed by the Babylonians. In Michael Austin's reading of Pamela's psalm, he then attributes the part of the Babylonians to Pamela's oppressor, Mr. B. But the text is not so clear about this point. In the introduction of the psalm it is Mrs. Jewkes who asks Pamela for a song, and in Pamela's rendering of the Psalm she refers to her oppressor as: "she to whom I Prisoner was," "a wicked thing," "those who seek my sad Disgrace," "this Mrs. Jewkes," and "O wicked one." Here, the first and fourth examples can only refer to Mrs. Jewkes, and in context, both the "wicked thing" and "wicked one" are clearly also Mrs. Jewkes. The

only invocation that is ambiguous is the plural "those" which seems to encompass more than one subject. And the only reference to a man in Pamela's psalm is the man who "saves me from thy vile Attempts" (141-142). On the other hand, Pamela does begin the whole psalm by invoking the name of B—n Hall, a direct reference to the unknown name of Mr. B. In addition, Babylon and Mr. B share that all-important first initial. Therefore, rather than arguing that the psalm presents a one to one allegory, I would like to argue that the role of the Babylonians here is ambiguously placed upon both Mr. B. and Mrs. Jewkes. The double attribution will come back later when we read how the text turns this ambiguity in the second presentation of the psalm. At this point in the text, Mr. B and Mrs. Jewkes are both completely despicable, and it is easy for them both to play the role of the Babylonians in Pamela's text. In volume two, the ambiguity is turned differently.

Between the first and second presentations of Pamela's psalm, the text takes a huge turn of its own. Mr. B lets Pamela go free, and Pamela voluntarily returns to him because she realizes that she is in love. In a few short pages Mr. B goes from villain to hero. The transformation takes place in a scene that includes remembrance, forgetting, turning, and gender confusion. In this scene, Mr. B cross dresses and pretends to be the drunk maid, Nan, asleep in a chair in the room where Pamela undresses and gets into bed with Mrs. Jewkes. He then approaches the bed, and, with the help of Mrs. Jewkes, attempts to rape Pamela. But Pamela passes out as he attempts this, and the severity of her "fit" causes him to become compassionate. The scene ends with him leaving her (and he does not attempt to rape her again in the novel) while Mrs. Jewkes eggs him on to finish the job.

The actions and dialogue in the scene center around gender confusion. Twice Pamela calls her cross-dressing master "the pretended she" (202, 203). And when Mr. B declines to rape

Pamela, Mrs. Jewkes says of his knowledge of women: "I thought you had known the Sex a little better" (204), and later, the newly compassionate Mr. B refers to his "Unacquaintedness with what your Sex can shew when they are in Earnest" (206). At stake is the question of who is what sex and what can be known about the sexes in order to accurately differentiate them. Pamela does not know enough to see Mr. B for the "pretender" that he is and Mr. B does not know enough to see Pamela for the "pretender" that she is not. The gender confusion also carries over to Mrs. Jewkes when Pamela refers to her "vile unwomanly Wickedness" (207). Mr. B takes on the qualities of a woman while Mrs. Jewkes takes on those of a man. But while Mrs. Jewkes remains mannish and ambiguously gendered at the end of the scene, Mr. B throws off his womanly disguise and acts as an upstanding man, returning to his proper gender, and Mrs. Jewkes ends up with most of the blame in Pamela's eyes.

Several critics have commented on the prominent role of gender confusion in *Pamela*. In an Oedipal reading of *Pamela*, Terry J. Castle reads Pamela as having a "problem with what is male and what is female" (469). She reads Pamela's vision in the scene where she attempts to run away but is frightened from the field by bulls which later turn out to have been only cows as a sign of Pamela's confusion over gender-identity. In Castle's reading, Pamela marries Mr. B when she has worked through her Oedipal confusion and developed a mature form of feminine desire. Tassie Gwilliam also reads "disruptions of gender identity" in *Pamela* in her essay "Pamela and the Duplicitous Body of Femininity," noting that while the novel positions itself as opposed to female hypocrisy and gender confusion "they continue to circulate in the novel" (104, 128). Similarly, in his forthcoming book, Paul Kelleher notes that "cross-gender identifications…pose a certain quandary for the narrative." Kelleher notes not only Mrs. Jewkes's mannish qualities, but also Pamela's own propensity to identify with masculine heroic

figures. Therefore, Pamela, herself does not escape the confusion over gender identity. The gender confusion, and the attempt to resolve it in the novel, play an important part in the translation of Psalm 137. This occurs largely through the transfer of blame to Mrs. Jewkes.

Even before the attempted rape has occurred Pamela refers to Mr. B as "Wicked man" while referring to Mrs. Jewkes, more strongly, as "wicked, abominable woman" (203), and later she refers to her as "this most wicked woman, this vile Mrs. Jewkes" (204). In contrast, the day after the event, when Mr. B has stopped his advances, Pamela writes: "My Master shew'd great Tenderness for me" (205). In fact, it is in the moment of forgiving her master while foisting all blame onto Mrs. Jewkes that Pamela speaks of: "her vile unwomanly Wickedness, and her Endeavours to instigate you more to ruin me, when your returning Goodness seem'd to have some Compassion on me" (207). Even commentators have participated in this vilification of Mrs. Jewkes. Armstrong refers to Mrs. Jewkes as "the odious Mrs. Jewkes" (126). And McKeon goes so far as to blame Mr. B's worst behavior on Mrs. Jewkes. He refers to Mr. B's plots for tricking Pamela: "The most grotesque of Mr. B's inventions in this general vein may in fact be by Mrs. Jewkes" (360). The transfer of blame also plays a prominent role in Pamela's psalm when it reappears in Book II.

Pamela finishes her indictment of Mrs Jewkes by stating "she would be glad still to do me a good Turn, if it lay in her Power" (207), meaning that Mrs. Jewkes would like to turn events against Pamela. The reference to a "turn" marks the scene as the turn in the book that it is. But for this turn of events Pamela must pay a price, that of remembrance. When Mr. B brings up the topic of that night to Pamela she writes: "my Eyes overflow'd at the Remembrance and I turn'd my Head aside" (205). To remember causes pain and leads to a turning of Pamela's own head, a turning away from the painful remembrance. A few days later when Pamela speaks

to Mr. B about a conversation she overheard him have with Mrs. Jewkes. She says: "You remember it well" and follows this up by saying that she does not fear that his kindness will "make me forget what I owe to my Virtue" (215). Even though she says she will not forget, what we have here is Mr. B linked to remembering and Pamela linked to the possibility of forgetting. And although she may not forget her virtue at any time in the book, she does seem to forget the horrible things that Mr. B has done to her. She has "turned" away from the "Remembrance," and while not having forgotten herself in the sense of having lost her virtue, she has forgotten his unvirtuous acts. Here we see Pamela begin to enter in to a type of amnesia that will consume her for the rest of the book.

The rapid change of heart that Pamela has from viewing Mr. B as would-be-rapist to seeing him as a respectable husband has troubled many commentators. The turn of events creates such an incongruity in the novel as to seem paradoxical. Mr. B ends up occupying two, directly-opposed positions almost simultaneously. Ian Watt attributes this paradox to a change in societal attitudes toward a new female role. In his reading, the new woman was required to have no sexual desire until marriage and then, suddenly, at the moment of union to become a sexual being (164). Watt, then, reads *Pamela* as an allegory of this new feminine role. The paradox in the novel enacts the paradox at the heart of this version of feminine sexuality. Similarly, in *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson,* Terry Eagleton views feminine sexuality as at the heart of this contradiction in *Pamela.* He writes of the contradiction in Pamela's character as a "contradiction of patriarchy" in which "Pamela is forced to treat herself as a sexual object in order to avoid becoming one for others" (34). In other words, the social order, patriarchy, forces Pamela to think of herself sexually in order to remain non-sexual. For Eagleton, the text's view of Pamela as both over- and de-sexualized necessitates a

contradiction. For Michael McKeon, because Pamela gains all her power through her complete lack of power, "it is inevitable that Pamela should be required to be sign both of herself and of her negation, of power and of its absence" (164). The need to maintain the very social order that Pamela undoes requires a paradox: "If Pamela's reward for virtue is to have meaning, the moral authority of the social order by which it is conferred must remain intact despite the evidence of social injustice manifest in the very need for her reward" (164). The story can only provide a happy ending by rewarding Pamela with the very thing that she has struggled against. For this reason, Eagleton views *Pamela* as a "cartoon version" of the much darker *Clarissa*, in which the heroine keeps neither her virtue nor her life.

While all of these readings fruitfully point to a contradiction at the heart of *Pamela*, they do so not through the text but through the text's relation to outside societal forces. But the text of *Pamela*, itself, accounts for this contradiction through the figures of remembrance and forgetting. In fact, the contradiction is never wholly resolved. We are simply asked, along with Pamela, to turn away from our remembrance of events. For this reason, the contradiction remains (as evidenced by its prominent place in current scholarship), but is obscured. There is no accounting for it; only an act of repression, of forgetting, can reconcile Mrs. Jewkes simultaneously occupying the space of two genders or Mr. B simultaneously occupying the space of rapist and ideal husband. Here, we find ourselves back in the realm of contradiction, as a text which has carefully, and for all time, given a detailed record of these events, asks us only a few pages later to remember them selectively. This sort of memory belongs squarely in the realm of repression.[48] Events, which are too painful to remember and which contradict the new worldview presented by Pamela must be excised from memory, while simultaneously leaving unaccountable traces on the rest of the text. It is this un-accountability that necessitates commentators' going outside the text

to make sense of it. And this aporia has left its trace not only in current scholarship but also in the language of Pamela's psalm.

It is in the context of Mr. B as hero and Pamela's forgetting, that Psalm 137 appears again. By closely following the terms of remembrance, forgetting, and turning, it becomes clear that when the psalm reappears it does so to provide a reading of the strange scene of the turning of Mr. B's heart and of the amnesia and gender confusion at the center of it. Mr. B, who has discovered the psalm in Pamela's papers, insists on reading to his assembled guests Pamela's version of the psalm juxtaposed with the *Common Prayer Book* translation. Mr. B says in describing Pamela's writing of the psalm that, "She turn'd it more to her own supposed Case" (316). This is almost an exact repetition of Pamela's own description of events, but very notably Mr. B has added the word "supposed." While Pamela wrote that she had altered it "to my case…thus I turn'd it." Mr. B calls it her "supposed Case." Therefore, we can already see that in this repetition the things that were supposed in the past presentation of the Psalm will be refashioned. The theme of turning is also prominently displayed. In addition to Mr. B, Mr. Williams also makes reference to Pamela's translation as turning, saying: "Let us see how the next Verse is turn'd" (318). The addition of the *Common Prayer Book* version also completely changes the context and presentation of this psalm. Here, the reader is being directly invited to compare the texts, and to find in this comparison some insight into Pamela's work.

The first verse is as follows (I will give the *Common Prayer Book* version on the left and Pamela's version on the right):

| | |
|---|---|
| I. | I. |
| When we did sit in Babylon, | When sad I sat in B—n hall, |
| The Rivers round about: | All watched round about: |
| Then in Remembrance of Sion, | And thought of every absent Friend, |

The Tears for Grief burst out. The Tears for Grief burst out.

In this first invocation of Babylon, we have the replacement of Babylon with B—n hall, the hall that belongs to Mr. B. So, the poem begins by clearly calling on Mr. B as the figure of Babylon. As the poem continues, though, Pamela will give a different substitution for Babylon. Here, we also have the theme of Remembrance in the biblical version which has been changed in Pamela's version. Without the original juxtaposed here we would not be able to follow these terms as they are erased, replaced, and conserved, but with this juxtaposition the text takes on whole new meaning. At the moment of the invocation of Mr. B as Babylon we also have a loss of the term of remembrance, one of the most important terms in the text of Psalm 137. By following the various translations of Babylon and Remembrance throughout this text I hope to demonstrate the turn this psalm takes.

Verses two and three go as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| II. | II. |
| We hang'd our Harps and Instruments | My Joys, and Hopes, all overthrown, |
| The Willow-trees upon: | My Heart-strings almost broke: |
| For in the Place Men, for that Use, | Unfit my Mind for Melody, |
| Had planted many a one. | Much more to bear a Joke. |
| III. | III. |
| Then they, to whom we Pris'ners were, | Then she, to whom, I Pris'ner was, |
| Said to us tauntingly; | Said to me tauntingly; |
| Now let us hear your Hebrew Songs, | Now chear your Heart, and sing a Song, |
| And pleasant Melody. | And tune your Mind to Joy. |

In these verses there are several important details to note. If the psalm started by invoking the name of Mr. B through the figure of B—n hall, these two verses turn all of that anger towards

Mrs. Jewkes. The collective voice of the original psalm, which is greatly emphasized in the Hebrew text in which almost every noun and verb has a first-person plural ending, turns into Pamela's "I" and "my", and the amorphous "they" of the psalm turns into "she." The figure of the interlocutor in Pamela's psalm is female, and it is as the "pris'ner" of this woman, Mrs. Jewkes, that Pamela identifies herself.

In content Pamela's second verse bears almost no resemblance to the original second verse. In addition, while verse one and three share the same rhyme scheme with the original, verse two stands out. It uses the broke/Joke rhyme while the *Common Prayer Book* psalm provides upon/one. The ending in the word Joke, marked as out of place by its change in rhyme seems to point to the figure in the psalm whose name starts with a capital J and sounds quite similar to the word Joke: Jewkes. The relation between "Jokes" and "Jewkes" has already occurred earlier in the novel, when Pamela refers to "all your Jokes, Mrs. Jewkes" (154). Pamela has also already played with first initials by aligning Mr. B with Babylon and here Jewkes is presented as Joke even before we get the "she" that will clarify this identification. The "Joy" that ends the third stanza, while rhyming with the "tauntingly" of the original, is not the same rhyming partner as that in the original psalm, and serves to underline the transfer of frustration in the poem from the letter B to the letter J. In support of this reading, we have already seen how Pamela transferred blame from Mr. B to Mrs. Jewkes in the cross-dressing scene.

The psalm continues:

| | |
|---|---|
| IV. | IV. |
| Alas! Said we, who can once frame | Alas! said I, how can I frame |
| His heavy Heart to sing | My heavy Heart to sing, |
| The Praises of our loving God, | Or tune my Mind, while thus inthrall'd |

| | |
|---|---|
| Thus under a strange King? | By such a wicked Thing! |
| V. | V. |
| But yet, if I Jerusalem | But yet, if from my Innocence |
| Out of my Heart let slide; | I, ev'n in Thought, should slide; |
| Then let my Fingers quite forget | Then let my Fingers quite forget |
| The warbling Harp to guide. | The sweet Spinnet to guide. |

Here, we have the same rhyme schemes with one small change. While slide/guide has been preserved in stanza five, sing/King has become sing/Thing in stanza four. King, a figure which would turn us back into a paternal system of sovereign order changed to "wicked Thing!" once again shifting blame from the patriarchal, noble figure of Mr. B to Mrs. Jewkes. Without the juxtaposition, this sliding from "King" to "wicked Thing" would not be apparent, but with it we can clearly see the elision of the male oppressor figure. And in verse five we get the theme of forgetting. In the original the fear is of forgetting "Jerusalem" while for Pamela it is her "innocence." At the very beginning of the book losing one's innocence was already termed "forgetting onseself" and here, again, *not* forgetting and innocence are related, and we see the theme of forgetting linked to sexuality.

The transfer of blame to Mrs. Jewkes continues in several subtle ways in verses six, seven, and eight:

| | |
|---|---|
| VI. | VI. |
| And let my Tongue within my Mouth, | And let my Tongue, within my Mouth, |
| Be ty'd for ever fast, | Be lock'd for ever fast, |
| If I rejoice before I see | If I rejoice before I see |
| Thy full Deliv'rance past. | My full Deliv'rance past. |
| VII. | VII. |
| Therefore, O Lord, remember now | And thou, Almighty! recompense |

| | |
|---|---|
| The cursed Noise and Cry, | The Evils I endure, |
| That Edom's Sons against us made, | From those who seek my sad Disgrace, |
| When they rais'd our City. | So causeless! to procure |
| VIII. | VIII. |
| Remember, Lord, their cruel Words, | Remember Lord, this Mrs. Jewkes, |
| When, with a mighty Sound, | When with a mighty Sound, |
| They cried, Down, yea, down with it, | She cries, Down with her Chastity, |
| Unto the very Ground. | Down to the very Ground! |

In verse six, every word except for one has been conserved in Pamela's version (which the characters in the novel make note of). "Ty'd" has become "lock'd." The change seems minor, but once again it works to shift blame onto Mrs. Jewkes. Both "ty'd" and "lock'd" are metaphors for captivity, but in Pamela's specific case "lock'd" has more significance, because she has never been tied or bound, but has been locked up in the house by Mrs. Jewkes. While "ty'd," then, would carry a connotation of general captivity which might transfer blame to all who were generally involved, the specificity of the word locked refers to the particular actions of Mrs. Jewkes who committed the literal locking up of Pamela. The vocabulary turns from the general metaphorical oppression of Pamela to the specific actions of a specific character.

The difference in the rhyme scheme of the seventh verse is quite notable. Cry/city becomes endure/procure. Here, the change serves to highlight the word "procure" and remind the reader of Mrs. Jewkes's role as procuress. Pamela has already accused Mrs. Jewkes of being a "*Jezebel*," (126) and in her role as Pamela's keeper she has tried to help Mr. B in his endeavors to conquer Pamela's virginity. The word 'procuress' does not implicate the person who takes the virginity but the person who sets up and makes possible the taking of the virginity. Mrs. Jewkes has always worked under the orders of Mr. B, and yet with the implication that she is a procuress

the guilt seems to slide to her alone, as if procuring were worse than any crime that Mr. B has tried to commit.

In these three verses we also have the repetition of the theme of remembrance. In the first instance, in verse seven, "Therefore, O Lord, remember now/ the cursed Noise and Cry" has turned to "And thou, Almighty! recompense/ The Evils I endure." Just as in the first verse, remembrance has been struck from the poem. There are only two instances in this poem which seemed in its first reading to clearly implicate Mr. B The first was in the first verse when B—n hall was invoked. The second is here where Pamela refers to "those who seek my sad disgrace." In both instances remembering has been removed from the poem. In the two places that we read earlier as possible citations of Mr. B's involvement and guilt, Pamela writes as an amnesiac. But in verse eight, the third recurrence of remembrance in the text, Pamela finally calls upon the reader and God to remember: "Remember Lord, this Mrs. Jewkes." Pamela's selective forgetting of Mr. B's own horrible actions now leads to a selective remembering of Mrs. Jewkes as the sole agent of her undoing. This can be related directly back to the cross-dressing scene and Pamela's subsequent turning her head away from "Remembrance." Here, it is almost as if the psalm translation were a direct reading of that scene. The "turning" of this psalm is analogous to the "turning" of Pamela's head, in that both allow her to forget Mr. B's horrible actions and to remember Mrs. Jewkes as her oppressor.

In verses nine and ten, the psalm completes its turn:

| | |
|---|---|
| IX. | IX. |
| Ev'n so shalt thou, O Babylon! | Ev'n so shall thou, O wicked one, |
| At length to Dust be brought: | At length to Shame be brought: |
| And happy shall the Man be call'd | And happy shall all those be call'd, |
| That our Revenge hath wrought. | That my Deliv'rance wrought. |

| | |
|---|---|
| X. | X. |
| Yea, bless'd shall that Man be call'd | Yea, blessed shall the Man be call'd, |
| That takes thy little ones, | That shames thee of thy Evil, |
| And dasheth them in pieces small | And saves me from they vile Attempts, |
| Against the very Stones. | And thee, too, from the D—l. |

Here, Babylon comes back, but this times not as B—n hall, which would link it to Mr. B. Here, Babylon becomes "wicked one" in reference to Mrs. Jewkes. The poem then started by aligning Mr. B with Babylon, the oppressor, as the reader did in the first volume, and ends by completely transferring the figure of Babylon, by way of a selective memory, to Mrs. Jewkes. It is interesting to note that in the prose translation of this text this second invocation of Babylon is "O daughter of Babylon: wafted with misery." In the Hebrew text we get בַּת-בָּבֶל, הַשְּׁדוּדָה (bat-babel, hashdoodah) which means literally "daughter of Babylon, the despoiled one." So, in both the Hebrew and in the English prose translation this second "Babylon" is clearly feminine, and a figure of ruined femininity. In addition, the whore of Babylon is a figure from the book of Revelation where Babylon is referred to as "the great mother of harlots" (Rev.17:5). In a sense, Pamela's version imports this feminine mother of harlots into the figure of Babylon in her psalm. The ambiguity between Mr. B and Mrs. Jewkes as ultimate villain that we found in the first presentation of the psalm when we saw Babylon linked with the initial B in Mr. B's name, becomes, in juxtaposition with its original very clearly unambiguous. Mr. B's bad name is forgotten at the total expense of Mrs. Jewkes who we are asked to remember as a procuress, the mother of all harlots, the ruined feminine who will ruin others.

And this is where the problem of gender confusion links up with a reading of the psalm. The psalm deals explicitly with gender difference, as can be seen in the Hebrew, and even in the *Common Prayer Book* version. The daughter of Babylon is the enemy and the male "he" who

kills her children, by beating them on the rocks is the hero of the psalm. It begins by lamenting the situation of captivity but ends with this violent pronouncement that is based on the division of the sexes. It is the daughters of Babylon, and not the sons, that the text specifically invokes. The psalm reorders the world by defining a difference in gender, just as Pamela reorders her world by denying all "pretended shes" and "unwomanly women." Mrs. Jewkes, who remains ambiguously gendered after the turn the book takes in the cross-dressing scene, is given all the blame and Mr. B becomes an upstanding man by throwing off any gender ambiguity. In this book which ends with Pamela becoming the perfect wife and Mr. B becoming the perfect husband, the psalm shows us that this happens at the price of any gender bending or ambiguity and at the price of remembering anything that does not fit these models of gender. In *Samuel Richardson's Fictions of Gender*, Tassie Gwilliam notes,

> The second half of *Pamela* presents strategies for…reasserting the clarity of gender difference. That reassertion requires the scapegoating of Mrs. Jewkes as avatar of gender instability and representative of the violence of male desire, as well as the rehabilitation of Mr. B through the association with the figure of the beneficent father. (49)

Reading Pamela's psalm translation, we can see that the primary "strategy" for bringing about this simultaneous "scapegoating" and "rehabilitation" is that of repression and selective memory. It is only by forgetting to remember that Pamela is able to bring "clarity" to her situation.

In the world turned out by the Pamela's psalm Mr. B is a perfect man. In her verses the horrible revenge of the original also turns to a plea for forgiveness, but the plea is still based on gender. Mrs. Jewkes will not be harmed but saved along with Pamela. The agent of this saving will be "the Man." The "that Man" of the original turns to the very particular "the Man" which can only be a reference to one character in this book: Mr. B. In the volume one presentation of

the psalm this man seemed to refer to a person who would save Pamela from the clutches of Mr. B, but in the second volume we know that the agent of Pamela's saving is Mr. B who saves her from Mrs. Jewkes's cruelty. He has gone from oppressor at the beginning of the psalm to her deliverer from another oppressor a mere ten verses later. Whereas in the original versified psalm "that man" takes revenge by killing the children of Babylon, an act within the realm of men, here we have "the man" who saves and delivers. For Pamela, then, Mr. B's masculine actions takes on god-like qualities. This is reinforced by the reading of verses from the 145th Psalm by Pamela's father which follows shortly after her psalm:

THE Lord is just in all his ways;
His works are holy all:
And he is near all those that do
In Truth upon him call.

He the Desires of all of them
That fear him, will fulfil,
And he will hear them when they cry,
And save them all he will.

The Eyes of all do wait on thee;
Thou dost them all relieve;
And thou to each sufficing Food,
In Season due, dost give.

Thou openest thy plenteous Hand,
And bounteously dost fill
All things whatever that do live,
With Gifts of thy Good-will.

My thankful mouth shall gladly speak
The Praises of the Lord:
All Flesh to praise his holy Name,
For ever shall accord.

While the 145th psalm has verses which mention "God," here we have only the verses which refer to him as "The Lord." For Pamela, who cannot stop calling her husband "My Master," it is not such a far leap to "My Lord." As a patriarchal figure in this book, Mr. B, if not actually becoming a god to Pamela at least becomes the agent of God as her master and lord. By filling in Mr. B for the figure of The Lord in this psalm we can see how completely the transfer of Mr. B from possible Babylonian to savior is. Mr. B is just and meets the desires of all those who fear him. He saves them when they cry out and feeds them. He is generous and full of gifts. Pamela will sing his praises forever. This is not at all far off from the figure of Mr. B portrayed by Pamela in the second volume of *Pamela*. She fears him and sees him as her generous deliverer and protector. With this recitation of part of Psalm 145, the lack of culpability and praise of Mr. B presented in Pamela's Psalm 137 solidifies into the acceptance of Mr. B's ultimate and justifiable authority. All of his faults are forgotten, and it seems that "poor Pamela" has indeed turned her head and managed not to Remember.

Pamela, as psalmist, gives us insight not only into the plot and power relations at work in the novel, but also into a theory of translation. Through Pamela's work as an amnesiac translator we see Pamela and the text struggling with questions of fidelity, the relationship to an original, and memory. Especially important to an understanding of the theory of translation at work in the novel is the image of Pamela as an amnesiac translator, a translator who works not to preserve an original but specifically to repress the original. Her translation still has a relationship to this

original, but, as shown in the above reading of her translation, it is often a negative relation, one in which the translation "turns" the original in order to effectively "forget" that original content.

Pamela's Psalm 137 is at the center of the struggle at the heart of *Pamela*. As commentators have noted, at the level of the plot, the struggle is between Pamela and Mr. B or between the aristocratic and middle classes or between the languages of each of these parties. The translation brings these opposing forces into relation, and by means of the translation they come out in a new light. But pushing the notion of struggle further, we find that the translation in Pamela is also a struggle between two modes of language, one in which language keeps or guards something and one in which it erases something. Through the epistolary form, Pamela's text gives us immediate access to her story and then attempts to erase the traces of that story. Language becomes a tool of memory, although whether it serves those who remember or those who forget is undecidable. The existence of the psalm is a trace of the memory of Pamela's experience with Mr. B. Even the content, on a first perusal, looks like a witness to the violence done to Pamela, but on closer inspection the psalm serves the exact opposite purpose; it makes it possible for Pamela to forget. It both witnesses and turns away from the crime committed simultaneously. Turning, with all of its multifarious possibilities, is exactly what is happening here. The text is being both formed and transformed, the heads of the visiting gentry are turned both to witness and to turn away from the crime, and the text of *Pamela* is able to turn away from paradox and ambiguity.

Pamela, as noted above, is concerned that the turn she gives her psalm may be a sin. This possibility of sin shows a concern with fidelity in translation. As pointed out by Tejaswini Niranjana in *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*, there is a "central obsession with fidelity" in theories of translation stretching back to early discussions of

biblical transaltion (53). Niranjana presents a history of western theories of translation and concludes that three obsessions have governed the history of translation in the west: "the opposition between the faithful and the unfaithful, freedom and slavery, loyalty and betrayal" (50).[49] As Pamela translates Psalm 137, she, as a character, grapples with these same issues. How can she be faithful simultaneously to her chastity and to her master? In the slavery of captivity how can she still claim freedoms as an individual? Where do her loyalties lie? To herself? To her parents? To her God? Or to her master? In the end, these problems are dissolved in the marriage of Pamela and Mr. B. By means of this union, Pamela side-steps the need to choose. She is able to have fidelity to all parties simultaneously. But in the moment of composition, the problem of fidelity hangs in the balance. In addition, the psalm Pamela translates describes the Israelites as slaves, grappling with their fidelity to a Jerusalem that they vow not to forget. The very issues of translation are the issues of Pamela and of her psalm. In Pamela's concern that she may sin by translating, we see the issues of translation theory superimposed over the issues of fidelity and faithfulness that consume the text of *Pamela*. Translation, as a moral concern, points to all the moral concerns in the novel.

Translation, however, is not simply an echo of the problems that face Pamela, it is also the means of resolving them. The psalm, by covering over the conflicts facing Pamela, creates the possibility of fidelity to all parties. It is through language as translation that Pamela can avoid the sin she so fears. Translation becomes a means of fidelity when fidelity seems impossible. The concern for fidelity in translation is always a concern about fidelity to an original. As in the psalm, where the concern is about fidelity to the place of origin, in a translation the concern is over fidelity to a text or language of origin. This understanding of translation puts Pamela squarely within the mainstream western tradition. The fear of sinning, of betraying the original

by changing it, is, according to this tradition, the fear of every translator. But Pamela does in fact translate the psalm and she does so in a way that greatly changes its content. In this way she uses the psalm for the purposes of fidelity (to herself, to Mr. B, to her chastity), but, interestingly fidelity is not the model she uses for her translation.[50]

In *Pamela*, while fidelity seems to be a central conern of the novel, we find a mode of translation based not primarily on fidelity, but on remembrance and forgetting. Niranjana draws attention to the fact that a model based in fidelity does not consider the *force* of the translation. If the translation is not simply a clear transmission of an original, if it is in fact its own text, then this text will have its own force in the world. Pamela worries that she may sin through her infidelity to Psalm 137 but by going ahead with her sinful translation she creates a text that still has a relationship to an original text, but has its own force in her world as a translation. And the force of Pamela's translation is the force of repression. The motivated changes made to the psalm participate in a project of forgetting.

The model of translation presented in *Pamela* is one in which translation becomes a function of memory. The translated text can either help one to remember or to forget. By turning the text, the translator is also turned by that text. At first glance, this memory based model of translation may appear very similar to the fidelity based model, with remembrance on the side of the faithful and forgetting on the side of the faithless translator. But memory is not necessarily fidelity. Fidelity in translation implies conscious choice in relation to a static original text. But Pamela's remembrance is not conscious. Her head has been turned. She forgets while thinking that she remembers. Her letters and her translation, those texts which should guard her memories, become the very agents of her forgetting. This forgetting, at what might be called an unconscious level, is then the forgetting of repression. A model of fidelity assumes that

exchanges in language take place only on a conscious level, and that fidelity is a conscious choice. A model of translation as memory leaves space for those things in language which are unchosen and unconscious, marked in the text while simultaneously erased.

In this context it becomes useful to put *Pamela* in conversation with the Freudian theory of repression. According to Freud, forgetting of a word or phrase is unconsciously motivated by a desire to forget unpleasant thoughts or contradictions which are linked to that word or phrase.[51] There are several examples of this form of repression in Pamela's psalm. For example, her psalm erases the signifier of "remembrance" where that remembrance is linked to remembering Mr. B. In this way, she represses the form that Mr. B's "remembrance" for her took on in the first half of the novel with all of its duplicity and gender confusion. By repressing the signifier of "remembrance" the novel also represses Mr. B's actions and the moral and gender ambiguity that went along with them. Freud's theory also states that those signifiers which are brought to mind in place of the forgotten signifier will be related to the repressed content. In other words, in the attempt to forget, repressed content will still show itself even as it attempts to erase itself. The reading of Psalm 145, a psalm which presents Mr. B as the benevolent lord and master, gives an excellent example of the reemergence of repressed content at the very moment of its repression. Several words and phrases in the psalm actually create images of Mr. B's most terrible actions while seeming to deny that these events ever occurred. In the psalm we read that the master "will hear them when they cry" in reference to "those who fear him." The "cry" brings to mind Pamela's own cries of terror as Mr. B attempts to seduce and rape her. The psalm also presents the image of an open hand: "thou openest thy plenteous Hand." This brings to mind the image of Mr. B's open hands attempting to take liberties with Pamela. The capitalized "Hand" is one of several words capitalized in the psalm which all point back to the Mr. B's past injustice. "Truth,"

"Desires", "Eyes", "Hand", "Gifts", and "Flesh" are the capitalized words that appear even in the middle of lines. These words stand out and tell a very different story from that told by the content of the psalm. They remind the reader of Mr. B's lies, of his improper desire for his maid, the way he watched her and had her watched, the hands he used to attack her, the gifts he attempted to bribe her with, and his ultimate desire not for what was holy but for Pamela's flesh. At the very moment that the text seems most to secure Mr. B's new status, the repressed content reappears in the images and stressed words of the psalm.

The impossibility of perfect translation shows the relationship between languages and reveals the fallacy of perfectly transparent communication, but the model of translation as repression provides another possible reading of this imperfection, unconsciously motivated mis-translation.[52] If repression is at work in translation, as it is in *Pamela*, then translation becomes the agent of the repetition of this repression. *Pamela* presents the possibility that translation will always bear the mark of the translator's need to selectively remember or forget the original. The understanding of translation as transmitter of repression does not need to contradict the post-structuralist understanding that translation's imperfection models the imperfection inherent in all language. In fact, it only reveals another aspect of this imperfection. Language, with its inherent transmission of messages beyond the manifest content of a text, both opens and forecloses possibilities. The same utopian opening into the limitless possibilities of language, can also be read as the unconscious limiting of that very same language. A reading of *Pamela's* translation as a turning away from remembrance opens up the understanding that all translations may bear the mark of forgetting. To acknowledge reading of all translation as bearing the mark of the translator's own repression would be to acknowledge that every translation is, in a sense, an unfaithful one—or that every translation is turned.

In Walter Benjamin's estimation, the only text that can escape the fate of at least touching on unfaithful or "bad" translation would be translation of a truly sacred text. He writes of "Holy Writ": "Where a text is identical with truth or dogma, where it is supposed to be 'the true language' in all its literalness and without the mediation of meaning, this text is unconditionally translatable" (82). The Bible, as holy text, should be "unconditionally translatable." That is, there should be no room for interpretation in a text that is 'true.' For Benjamin, God's word is the guarantee of language's meaning. But, as shown by Pamela's 'bad' translation and by myriad translations of biblical text, even and *especially* the Bible is subject to the vagaries of translation. Only in an imagined language of God could language function at this level of 'literalness.' And it is through the figure of memory that Benjamin link's God and a text that is translatable:

> One might speak of an unforgettable life or moment even if all men had forgotten it. If the nature of such a life or moment required that it be unforgotten, that predicate would not imply a falsehood but merely a claim not fulfilled by men, and probably also a reference to a realm in which it is fulfilled: God's remembrance. Analogously, the translatability of linguistic creations ought to be considered even if men should prove unable to translate them. (70)

Here, Benjamin links the figure of the unforgettable and the translatable. As a function of time and immortality all things are forgettable and as a function of language all things are untranslatable. But in the realm of "God's remembrance" we gain access to, or at least gain the possibility to think, the unforgettable and the translatable. Here, translation, any translation made by "man," is lined up with forgetting. To forget and to mistranslate are essentially the same functions. Benjamin presents them here as merely figures of each other, as analogous, but looking to what he says about Holy Writ, it becomes clear that both perfect remembrance and

perfect translation exist only in the realm of the holy. A model of translation based on memory is a model that comprehends not only the motivated forgetting of repression but also the impossibility of perfect remembrance. Pamela's failure, then, is a human failure, the failure to remember, the failure to translate. If she sins "by it," it is an original sin.

The opening scene of *Pamela* comes as a call to remember from Lady B, a call which the text both honors and dishonors. When the text forgets this call, it does so to cover over ambiguities of gender, and to reinstate a clear distinction between the godlike husband and his subservient and loving wife. The distinction, between man and wife, according to a Christian reading of The Bible upon which *Pamela* bases its morality, is an original distinction, created in Eden before 'the fall.' The attempt to maintain the rigidity of this distinction in the face of ambiguity, shows then, not simply a comment on power relations in the eighteenth century, but also a comment on origin stories and the need to uphold their originary status.

The status of gender is not simply one question among many which *Pamela* happens to address, it is a question of original distinctions, of the origination of distinction and of signification. Pamela's need to maintain gender definitions in a text that threatens to take them from her is also her need to maintain any definitions. If gender can be undermined, then nothing is certain. Once gender has been reinstated as a stable category, all categories (and in other words, all linguistics distinctions) regain their stability in the text. Terry Eagleton writes about Richardson's epistolary style, in which the heroine's letters attempt to give the reader immediate access to experience as it unfolds, as an attempt to "abolish the materiality of the sign" (40). In other words, Richardson desires writing that is pure, that would be an original with only one meaning, a language of certain distinctions. Richardson tries to write a word to which it is impossible to be unfaithful, which it is impossible to misread. Pamela, in her desire for certainty

in gender, takes part in this desire to abolish any ambiguity in signification. Language itself is at stake in Pamela's repression and not simply middle-class politics. Pamela's sin of translation occurs in order to avoid, by means of repression, a much larger sin of the loss of faith in an origin story that guarantees the solidity, not only of gender, but of linguistic meaning.

The question of origins brings us back to the specificity of Pamela's psalm translation, which is, after all, a biblical translation. In translating biblical text, Pamela puts herself in relation to an original that is, in the world of *Pamela*, originary. John B. Pierce reads Pamela's translation as "fusing Pamela's contemporary experience with that of the ancient Hebrews" and refers to her "ability to adapt ancient tradition to modern experience" (16). Pierce sees Pamela's psalm grounded in a very specific Hebrew and simultaneously English context. [53] While Pamela may forget in order to maintain certain gender and linguistic distinctions, this forgetting is also a commentary on the very specific Hebrew origins of the psalmic text and participates in a larger English tradition of using psalm translation to write a connection to an origin that it simultaneously wishes to erase. Pamela's repression becomes symptomatic of a larger repression on a cultural level. Pamela's amnesia is the amnesia of an England that wants to claim and forget its origins simultaneously. The incorporation of the Hebrew tradition in English literature makes it possible to claim Hebrew literature for England while remaking this literature in an English, and not Hebrew, image. By changing all proper names in the text, Pamela's translation erases even these lingering marks of a hebraic history in the text. In fact, Pamela, who assumes the voice of the Israelites, has so Christianized the text that she is able to cast her enemy as a Jew, none other than Mrs. *Jew*kes.

Pamela's repression of her own history, then, takes part in a larger repression of history. Just as Pamela's psalm seems to give us the story of her captivity and not to erase it, her

translation of an originally Hebrew text seems to continue the life of that text, "to adapt ancient tradition to modern experience," and not to end it. But in both cases, the text has a force different from the content that it claims. Yes, Pamela's psalm tells the story of her captivity, but it does so to forget central details of that history. Yes, Pamela's psalm adapts an ancient text to her own experience, but in doing so she erases any historical specificity of the text. Pamela's translation struggles to secure certainty at the price of memory.

In "The Struggle for the Text" Geoffrey Hartman writes of the western struggle to incorporate biblical text into western literature. He argues that something in the Bible resists simple incorporation: "The Bible, however influential, has never been entirely naturalized and even today remains a resident alien, at once familiar and unfamiliar" (3). Hartman argues that literature and the Bible appear alike because literature is based upon the biblical text. Literature, like the Bible, is formed of redacted interetexual sources and it leaves traces that demand reading. Yet, biblical text cannot simply be reduced or understood in the terms of western narrative.[54] Hartman uses the story of Jacob wrestling with an angle to put the relationship of Hebrew and western literature in terms of a struggle, a struggle on the one hand to naturalize the Hebrew text, to bring it into the realm of literature and on the other hand a struggle to maintain Hebrew text as something separate. In Hartman's eyes this struggle is ongoing in our culture. The text of Pamela's psalm is a part of the story of the struggle. She attempts to naturalize the Hebrew text, to incorporate it fully in her own text, and to make it wholly familiar.

Understanding this struggle over the biblical text not only helps us better understand and contexualize Pamela's work; Pamela's translation can also inform our understanding of the larger cultural struggle over the fate of Hebrew text in western literature. By looking at the connections in this struggle to memory and repression, we can redefine the terms of the struggle

over the Hebrew text. Hartman, borrowing from the language of the Passover seder, describes Hebrew as a resident alien which cannot be fully naturalized. But perhaps we can also fruitfully read Hebrew as a signifier that marks a site of western forgetting, a site where the memory of an original text is claimed with certainty (the Hebrew Bible) but the actual history of that text is forgotten. This struggle, like Pamela's, is carried out by way of translation. By reading Psalm 137 in *Pamela* we can read modernity, taking up the Bible and translating it as an amnesiac.

Every speech beneath the sun,

Which from Babel first begun;

Branch or leaf, or flow'r or fruit

Of the Hebrew ancient root.

## Refiguring English Origins: A Reading of Christopher Smart

In 1765 Christopher Smart published his translation of the psalms titled *A Translation of the Psalms of David Attempted in the Spirit of Christianity, and Adapted to the Divine Service,* written in rhyming verse and including the poem *A Song to David*. In the Psalms Smart found a poetic tradition, and in David a poet, to emulate. Although Smart's work as a translator has not received a great amount of critical attention, his translations of the Psalms provide a unique vantage point from which to survey his work. Smart's psalm translations enact a very specific relationship to the Hebrew tradition and Hebrew poetry grounding a modern English poetics. Smart views English as a renewed and refigured Hebrew. He imports the logic of figural interpretation into his translation, making Hebrew a figure for the later glory of English as David was a figure for the coming of Christ, and his psalms reveal an understanding of the central role of translation in claiming the English inheritance of both Hebrew literature and religion. They developed from an understanding of language rooted in genealogy and a practice of translation tied to a notion of inheriting David's work of adoration.

Drawing on Smart's own account of his translations, critics generally invoke his psalms as an example of the Christianization of the biblical text or as historical evidence of Smart's political and religious affiliations or psychological state. Clement Hawes refers to Smart's

translation of the psalms in order to probe Smart's Anglicanism and to contextualize his other work (131). Similarly, Marcus Walsh and Karina Williamson's introduction to Smart's *Translation* sees the psalms as a way to understand Smart's religious affiliations through what they refer to as Smart's "evangelistic psalm paraphrase" (109). In *A Form of Sound Words* Harriet Guest argues that Smart's later poetry, including his *Translation*, is "within the Davidic tradition of psalmody" but her focus is on a reading of *A Song to David* and *Jubilate Agno*, and she reads the psalms primarily as a way to understand Smart's relationship to the Anglican church (245). In *The Poetry of Christopher Smart* Moira Dearnley claims that Smart's psalms are of biographical and psychological interest because they reveal an obsession with King David, but she dismisses their literary value (235). One recent account of the specific importance of Smart as a translator, Leah Orr's article "Christopher Smart as a Christian Translator: the Verse of Horace of 1767," explicitly addresses the importance of reading Smart as a Christian translator. Orr refers to Smart's translation of the psalms as an example of Smart's "religious zeal" and she points to the psalms as an example of Christianizing translation that paved the way for Smart's later Christianization of Horace, saying that "he added a Protestant bent to the Psalms" (448).

The general focus on the Christianization and Anglicanism of Smart's translations is understandable since Smart writes in a similar vein: "In this translation, all expressions, that seem contrary to Christ, are omitted, and evangelical matter put in their room" and indicates that the translation was written "with an especial view to the divine service" (4). The reading of Smart's psalms as a work of Christianizing, however, does not account for the complexity of Smart as a translator. Smart certainly did Christianize the psalms and intended the psalms for use in church worship.[55] In fact, both Smart's desire for the psalms to be accepted into the Anglican church service and his aim to Christianize the psalms are apparent in the title which announces a

translation *Attempted in the Spirit of Christianity* and *Adapted to the Divine Service*. But many translators had already Christianized the psalms long before Smart.[56] It is Smart's specific mode of Christianization which makes his psalm translations of special interest. Smart is not simply translating works of adoration into an English and Christian idiom. The work of translation is, for Smart, its own act of adoration connecting him, as translator of an original Hebrew spirit, back to the line of Jesus, David, and Adam.

I. Leaving an Impression: English Inheritance of the Hebraic

Smart's clearest explanation of his understanding of Hebrew can be found in the hymns he included with the publication of his translation of the Psalms in 1765.[57] In "Hymn 15," a hymn written for Whitsunday, a festival in the Anglican Church, Smart devotes the entire hymn to a discussion of the genealogy of languages leading from Hebrew to English:

King of sempiternal sway,
Thou hast kept thy word to-day,
That the COMFORTER should come
That gainsayers should be dumb.
While the tongues of men transfus'd
With thy spirit should be loos'd,
And untutor'd Hebrew speak,
Latin, Arabic, and Greek.

That thy praises might prevail
On each note upon the scale,

In each nation that is nam'd,

On each organ thou hast fram'd;

Every speech beneath the sun,

Which from Babel first begun;

Branch or leaf, or flow'r or fruit

Of the Hebrew ancient root.

This great miracle was wrought,

That the millions might be taught,

And themselves of hope assure

By the preaching of the poor—

O thou God of truth and pow'r

Bless all Englishmen this hour;

That their language may suffice

To make nations good and wise.

Yea, the God and truth and pow'r

Blesses Englishmen this hour;

That their language may suffice

To make nations good and wise—

Wherefore then no more success—

That so much is much to bless—

Revelation is our own,

Secret things are God's alone.

The hymn begins with the juxtaposition of the "King" who has kept his word and the "gainsayers" who are dumb. Speech and language belong to and are the provenance of God. In the second half of the verse the gift of language is "transfus'd" into the tongues of men. The tongues are both individual (each man should speak in praise of God) and general (in the following lines they become entire languages). The primary language that Smart calls for in the hymn is Hebrew (which gets its own line), with Latin, Arabic, and Greek coming after it. Here, Smart depicts the languages of holy writing and places Hebrew first and foremost among them. The primary language of praise is Hebrew. If there is a first tongue, it is, for Smart, Hebrew. The image of Hebrew as primary language is expanded upon in the second stanza where Smart refers to language as a tree branching out from the Tower of Babel with Hebrew as its root. The linguistic model Smart provides is genealogical with all languages descending from the original language of Hebrew.

The second half of Smart's "Hymn 15" turns from the ancient Hebrew root to the modern English flower, first calling on God to "Bless all Englishmen this hour" and then asserting that God "Blesses Englishmen this hour." The repetition of "this hour" situates the blessing of Englishmen in the present as opposed to the "first begun" that characterizes the spreading out of languages from Babel. And the blessing Smart calls for is a blessing of language. In stanzas three and four the lines repeat "That their language may suffice/ To make nations good and wise." Language may have spread out at Babel, but in Smart's genealogy the proliferation of languages is leading to English. In "this hour" he asks God to make English the new Hebrew. The theme of the transfer from Hebrew to English returns in Smart's "Hymn 17":

We give the glory for thy word,

That it so well becomes our tongue;

And that thy spirit transferr'd

Upon the strains of old in Hebrew sung.

God's spirit has "transferr'd" to English, given here as "our tongue." The invocation of "spirit", here, aligns easily with Pauline conceptions of the spirit and the letter. The spirit of the original, impressed upon it by God, provides itself for the English translator who can bring out that spirit buried beyond the level of the letter. Again, Hebrew is given as the "old" language with English as the inheritor of its spirit in the present. And according to Smart, the word of God "well becomes" English, as before it "well became" Hebrew.

There is, however, another side to Smart's conception of Hebrew as the original tongue. Hymn 15 invokes Hebrew as "untutor'd." Smart finds that Hebrew lacks tutoring. Hebrew, therefore, does not simply provide the example of a sublime original which English can attempt to imitate. Hebrew also has need of English in order to become tutored. English, the flower of the Hebrew root, has something to add to Hebrew. The process of Christianization is one in which the English translator brings out the impression of the original while simultaneously impressing something upon that original.

The notion of translation as "impression" comes from Smart's discussion of translation in the preface to his 1767 translation of Horace. In Smart's account, a great text, such as the works of Horace or the Bible, will bear the mark of what he calls "impression." Impression, then, comes through in the translation. And he specifically invokes the Hebrew language as the example of a language that calls for translation because it bears the mark of God's original impression:

> Impression, then, is a talent or gift of Almighty God, by which a Genius is impowered to throw an emphasis upon a word or sentence in such wise, that it cannot escape any reader of sheer good sense, and true critical sagacity. This power will sometimes keep it up thro' the medium of a prose translation; especially in scripture, for in justice to truth and everlasting preeminence, we must confess this virtue to be far more powerful and abundant in sacred writings. (v.6-7)

Smart's author is a genius, "impowered" by God to emphasize certain words in order bring them to the notice of the reader. God impresses a gift upon the author who impresses emphasis upon a text which makes an impression upon the reader. Thus, impression is both the mark left on a text and the act which leaves the mark.

According to Smart's understanding of translation, the mark of impression should come through in the work of translation. He notes that even a "prose translation" will bear the mark of impression, implying that even the least inspired translation will transmit the inspiration of original impression. If impression exists in the original verse, poetry will be the best means of its re-impression upon the translation. Biblical poetry is Smart's example of the text which best exemplifies impression. Although he is writing a preface to Horace, his explanation of impression is followed by three examples from biblical Hebrew:

> אשריך ותוב לך
>
> O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be!
>
> דרכיה דרכי נעם
>
> וכל-נתיבתיה שלום
>
> Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.
>
> מה סובו ומה יפיו

How great is his goodness; and how great is his beauty! (v.7)

The first citation comes from Psalm 128:2 in the *Book of Common Prayer*, the second from Proverbs 3:17, and the third from Zechariah 9:17, both as translated in the *King James Bible*. In each case, Smart implies that even in the inferior translation of the King James or *Book of Common Prayer* the original Hebrew impression remains. Hebrew is the original language of God's impression.

Smart invokes the Hebrew text, (going so far as to bring the original Hebrew script onto the page), in his explanation of impression to illustrate that Hebrew is *the* language of impression. As the first language, according to Smart, Hebrew is the source of God's linguistic gifts, and Smart throws his own emphasis onto the Hebrew language when he brings it into his preface. His translator, then, takes part in two types of impression, both bringing out the impression left on the original Hebrew and making his own impression through the process of translation into English. The dual role is made explicit in his translation of Psalm 40, when he writes: "Such mercies in my mouth inspire/ A song of new delight,/ A lesson for th' Hebrean lyre,/ And grateful to recite" (37). Here, Smart specifically refers to the psalm as a "lesson for th' Hebrean lyre." The original Psalm 40 refers only to a song and makes no reference to Hebrew, but Smart's text, written in English, emphasizes the fact of the psalm having been originally composed in Hebrew. Taking the text at a literal level, then, his "lesson for th' Hebrean lyre" is a psalm written to be performed on the Hebrean lyre and for Hebrew worship. In other words, it gives his psalm authenticity as coming from and existing within the Hebrew tradition. But read another way, "lesson for th' Hebrean lyre" also implies that the psalm has something to teach, not *on* the lyre, but *to* the lyre, as though Smart's version of the psalm has something to impart to the Hebrew tradition of psalmody itself. The translator both perpetuates

the impression of the original Hebrew and leaves his own impression on the Hebrew tradition in turn.

Smart's use of Hebrew has most often been read by scholars in relationship to the poem *Jubilate Agno*. Smart editor W.H. Bond had noted Smart's references to Hebrew, but assumed that he did not have any real knowledge of the Hebrew language. But in his article "Patterns of Reference in Smart's *Jubilate Agno"* W.M. Merchant discusses Smart's use of Hebrew in *Jubilate Agno* and questions "whether Smart's knowledge of Hebrew was as slight as editors have supposed" (22). Merchant points to the specific use of Hebrew in Smart's plays on words in *Jubilate Agno*: "The most elementary punning is found in the play on the Hebrew and English letters of the alphabet" (20). He specifically points to Smart's use of a play on the letter 'M' and the Hebrew letter מ (mem). Smart writes both "For M is musick and therefore he is God." And "For M is musick and Hebrew מ is the direct figure of God's harp." Here, Smart refers to the fact that mem makes the sound of an 'M' (mmm) in Hebrew and that the shape of the mem on the page looks like a harp. Merchant summarizes this play on the mem: "Another piece of wit ties the alphabet puns into the constant theme of this poem, which may be rendered by the series 'David-Harp-Music-Worship'" (23). Picking up on Merchant's suggestion that Smart may have known Hebrew, Charles Parish published an article, "Christopher Smart's Knowledge of Hebrew," which outlines every play on Hebrew language that Parish could find in *Jubilate Agno*. He concludes: "I maintain that there is no doubt about Smart's knowledge of Hebrew" (532). Marcus Walsh has refuted this conclusion in his "The Uses of Literary Evidence: Christopher Smart's 'Knowledge' of Hebrew" where he systematically considers each of Parish's examples and concludes that while Smart clearly knew the Hebrew alphabet and probably knew some words, "Most of Smart's exercises on Hebrew names in the Jubilate may be readily glossed by

reference to the Bible, or to the literature of the interpretation of Hebrew names" (356). Walsh argues that there is no compelling evidence that Smart had a reading knowledge of Hebrew. But setting aside the argument of exactly how much Hebrew Smart knew, it seems apparent that Smart had at least some knowledge of Hebrew and, most importantly, that he used the specificity of the language, as far as he did know it, to draw connections to the Hebrew tradition throughout his work. If nothing else, Smart certainly invoked the feeling and texture of the Hebrew language as he understood it, in order to create a Hebraic impression in *Jubilate Agno*.

Several examples of the specific use of Hebrew stand out in *Jubilate Agno.* In "Fragment B2" Smart writes fifteen lines making use of the Hebrew letter 'lahmed.' He begins by writing: "For the letter ל which signifies GOD by himself is on the fibre of some leaf in every Tree" (104). Here, as pointed out by W.H. Bond in his edition of *Jubilate Agno,* we have an interlinguistic play on words. The letter ל makes the equivalent of an English 'el' sound, and one of the names of God in Hebrew is 'El.' Therefore, if the Hebrew letter is pronounced as its English equivalent, 'el,' (as opposed to saying 'lahmed'), we get the name of God. Smart, then, sees the lahmed inscribed in the very "fiber" of all things, for the name of God, written in a Hebrew script, is also the logos, the linguistic force of creation. The text then goes on to present an acrostic, a common type of Hebrew poem, in which each line begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Here, Smart gives us an English acrostic. He begins, "For A is the beginning of the learning and the door of heaven./ For B is a creature busy and bustling..." and continues all the way through the alphabet twice. In these examples of the ל and the acrostic, Smart is not only using Hebrew letters and conventions, he is playing interlinguistically, using Hebrew in English in order to create his own hybrid poetry, neither English nor Hebrew, but both.[58]

The sense that English is the inheritor of the Hebrew tradition can be found throughout *Jubilate Agno*; we read in Fragment B1: "For the ENGLISH TONGUE shall be the language of the WEST" (61) and later in B2: "For the ENGLISH are the seed of Abraham and work up to him by Joab, David, and Naphtali" (101). Smart's version of what I call 'Hebrewish' is then both an invocation of the biblical text and its connection to God as the language in which one speaks the name of God, and a supplement to that language, going beyond it, bringing the Hebrew to its full potential by inscribing it in English. Smart wants to lay claim to an English Christianity and to an English language that is truly sacred. As Robert D. Saltz writes: "His program, clearly set out in the poem, is first to reform the English, who like the ancient Hebrews, have been chosen to herald a great religious revival, and to establish English as the consecrated language, as Hebrew and Latin were the sacred tongues of earlier religious movements" (Saltz 61). Smart's interlinguistic play is also an interlinguistic commentary and the performance of a new way of speaking, in a Hebrew both Christian and English.

## II. Translation and Genealogy

### *Psalm 137: Christianity as a Hebrew Inheritance*

As Smart translates the psalms, he inscribes a Hebraic impression upon the English and an English impression upon the Hebrew. He throws his emphasis onto particular words and sentences, making a very specific impression on the text. At first glance, the impression is simply one of Christianization. Smart's psalms invoke Christ by name, refer to the trinity, and mention "the church".[59] But on closer inspection, Smart's emphasis on the genealogy of languages, from Hebrew root to English flower, comes out in a focus on genealogy in general.

Psalm 137 is an example of a psalm that appears to be an instance of simple Christianization, but which also reveals a narrative about genealogy at the heart of the psalms.[60] The psalm depicts the psalmist in captivity in Babylon. The psalmist promises to remember Jerusalem always. The ending of the psalm, in Hebrew, calls for revenge upon the Babylonians and praises the man who would kill the Babylonian children by beating them on the rocks. Smart changes the call for revenge by changing it to a call for "Christian mildness":

> But he is greatest and the best
> Who spares his enemies profest,
> And Christian mildness owns;
> Who gives his captives back their lives,
> Their helpless infants, weeping wives,
> And for his sin atones.

Instead of beating the children to death, Smart's mild Christian spares them and atones for his own sins. Smart entirely reverses the call for revenge, turning it to a call to spare one's enemies. But he does not depict the Babylonians as having paid no price for their crimes.

Rather, in the lines immediately before the final verse, Smart comments on their fate:

> There's desolation too for thee,
> Thou daughter of calamity,
> And Babylon no more!

Just as Jerusalem was destroyed, Babylon will be destroyed, something Smart knows from his eighteenth-century vantage. But more than this, the Babylonian line will be cut off. Instead of a man taking revenge on the Babylonians, God has taken revenge on them by entirely cutting off their line. Babylon, without God's favor, will be "no more." The theme of generations cut off

from (patrilineal) descent also comes out in Smart's use of the word "daughter." While "daughter" does appear in the original psalm, Smart's conservation of the term, followed by the call for the end of Babylon, emphasizes the end of the Babylonian line.

In opposition to Babylon's desolation, Smart refers to the rebuilding of Jerusalem as the bestowing of God's favor:

O Lord, when it shall be fulfill'd
That thou Jerusalem rebuild,
    Remember unto good,
How "down with it, th'insulting band
"Cry'd, down with it, and mar the land
    "Where all that splendour stood."

As the closing of the psalm indicated, the rebuilding of Jerusalem is not literal for Smart; it comes about in the inheritance of the Hebrew tradition by English Christianity. Babylon will be no more, but the Christian who shows mildness will prevail as the inheritor of a Hebrew tradition, which he will improve upon. What at first appeared to be only a Christian rewriting of the call for revenge, then, turns out to be integral to a story of Christian genealogy. Smart is able to illustrate the supremacy of the Hebrew line over the Babylonian by depicting the Hebrew line continuing in England as Christianity. The Babylonian lines will be cut off, but Jerusalem will be rebuilt in Smart's England. In Psalm 137, God's favor results in continuing generations and God's punishment is an end of generations. The Babylonian daughters will be cut off from their inheritance, while the Christian Son will bring the inheritance of the Hebraic to England.

There is a kind of tension inherent in Smart's characterization of England as Jerusalem. The psalmist of Psalm 137 worries about singing psalms in a strange land, Babylon, and Smart's

psalm characterizes Babylon as "a land by God abhorr'd." But England, too, is a strange land to the Israelite tradition in any but a metaphorical sense. Making England the new Jerusalem, Smart's Christian interpolation of the voice of the psalmist serves to naturalize English Christianity as part of the inheritance of the Hebraic. The Christianization that ends the psalm can then be read as a means of covering over any tension between Hebrew and the potentially foreign English by uniting them under the banner of inherited Christian mildness.

*Jubilate Agno: Generations and Languages*

The focus on genealogy and the succession of generations fills Smart's work. In Smart, the genealogy of languages becomes an allegory for the genealogy that stretches from Adam to David and to Christ. David, as psalmist, takes on a central role in the translations, creating the impression of English translation as a manifestation of genealogical inheritance. *Jubilate Agno*, Smart's unconventional psalm, opens with a list of biblical names that represent the genealogy of the Bible.[61] The first fragment of *Jubilate Agno* begins:

> Rejoice in God, O ye Tongues; give the glory to the Lord, and the Lamb.
>
> Nations, and languages, and every Creature, in which is the breath of Life.
>
> Let man and beast appear before him, and magnify his name together.
>
> Let Noah and his company approach the throne of Grace, and do homage to the Ark of their Salvation.
>
> Let Abraham present a Ram, and worship the God of his Redemption.
>
> Let Isaac, the Bridegroom, kneel with his Camels, and bless the hope of pilgrimage
>
> Let Jacob, and his speckled Dove adore the good Shepherd of Israel.
>
> Let Esau offer a scape Goat for his seed, and rejoice in the blessing of God his father.

The names given in these opening lines list the successive biblical generations, beginning with Noah whose ancestors built the tower of Babel. The list of names from father to son gives a sense of the historical continuity of the covenant between God and his people. These opening lines also focus specifically on the power of language as the inheritance of the successive generations. The first line of the poem is addressed to "ye Tongues," which is then clarified as "Nations, and languages, and every Creature." The call is to the generations as a manifestation of "tongues" and "languages."

The list of proper names in the opening section also makes clear that one of the multiple languages invoked by Smart is specifically Hebrew. Hebrew is *the* language of naming, and the list of animals invokes the story of Adam naming the animals in Hebrew. Hebrew is not only the first language in a genealogical tree of languages, it is the language in which genealogy itself is recorded. It both takes part in and marks the succession of generations. Geoffrey Hartman's "Christopher Smart's Magnificat: Toward a Theory of Representation," contends that Smart's listing of the animals is a recreation of Adam's original naming: "The animals named by Adam in the first act of divinely instituted speech are now named again, restitutively" (438). Hartman reads the question of language as presentation as opposed to language as re-presentation as at the heart of *Jubilate Agno*. Since God is the only one who can present the world without mediation, in other words, the only one who can use language to create ("And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3)), the poet can only always fall into a mode of representation, re-presenting what God has already made present. Hartman sees Smart's preoccupation with questions of language as an expression of his anxiety about the poet's role as a creator: can the poet create without simply falling into a mode of re-creation? Hartman sums up this grappling with signification as the problem of "originality" (the poet creating something truly new) and

"Original sin" (is it a sin to be original when this is the province of God?) being "hard to tell apart" (434). Extrapolating from Hartman, we can see Smart writing himself as the new Adam, if not able to create by naming like God, then at least able to name as part of a continuing partnership of creation between God and man: "And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof" (Gen 2:19). The equation with Adam is an honor that he will later give to David in *A Song to David*.

The figure of Adam brings the origin of language and the origin of peoples into direct contact. Adam is the root of the flowering of both languages and peoples. His original naming is a poetic and genealogical act. In fact, Hartman comments, in a footnote, upon the importance of the figure of genealogy in *Jubilate Agno*: "Consider how many aspects of this poetry reflect a concern with generation: the Biblical genealogies, from which Smart borrows many names; the generic emphasis of the names themselves; the personal allusions to family; and puns that range from the simple and innocuous to the complex and atrocious" (444). What Hartman notes in passing is really a central figure of the poem and of Smart's entire poetic project.

*The Temporality of Figural Genealogy: Turn from the Old Adam to the New*

In Smart we can see generation and inheritance not simply as a description of the history of languages and peoples, but as the work that constitutes poetry. The poet, with the power to name anew, becomes the agent of generation and regeneration in language. And although Smart's listing of names invoked Adamic naming, it is the figure of King David, the psalmist, around which Smart builds his theory of poetics as inheritance. David is not the original

progenitor; he is a mediating force. He exists in the genealogy between Adam and Christ and linguistically between the original language of naming and the eventual English inheritance that Smart inscribes. The generations of peoples and languages flow through him and his psalmody. The central importance of David to Smart can be seen in his invocation of David in *Jubilate Agno.* In the poem, David and the bear are given twice as much text as the other names in his list:

> Let David bless with the Bear—The beginning of victory to the Lord—to the Lord the perfection of excellence—Hallelujah from the heart of God, and from the hand of the artist inimitable, and from the echo of the heavenly harp in sweetness magnifical and mighty. (33)

The pairing of David and the bear draws upon the story of David and Goliath, in which David recounts having fought a lion and a bear, and compares Goliath to the bear: "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, the LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (1 Sam 17: 36-37). In the Biblical account David slays the bear and Goliath. Smart writes David's victory as a blessing; David blesses with the bear by defeating it and his victory marks "the beginning of victory to the Lord." Here, we find two aspects of Smart's version of David: all his actions are blessings (not simply his writing of the Psalms but also his success as a warrior) and David is the mark of the *beginning* of the line that will lead to Jesus (the beginning of the Lord's victory). David's actions and writings become the basis for an inheritance that will become "the perfection of excellence." But while Smart begins with David's heroics fighting the bear and Goliath, he ends the line by focusing on the Psalms, calling David "the artist inimitable" and referring to his harp even as the harp is given as "mighty" recalling David's actions as a

warrior. Here, we have a sort of chiasmus. David will "bless with the Bear" and the harp is "in sweetness magnifical and mighty." David's blessing, usually associated with his psalms, has been paired with the bear, the object of his actions as a warrior, while the harp, the instrument of his songs of praise, is now magnifical and mighty like David the warrior. In *Jubilate Agno* Smart creates a narrative of generation and inheritance, where, through David and his psalms, the English people are connected directly to the Hebrew tradition, as both mighty warriors and poets, and to the inheritance of the Hebrew language.

In the note that opens the *Song to David* Smart writes of David as the figure of poetic and religious inheritance: "The best poet which ever lived was thought worthy of the highest honour which possibly can be conceived, *as the Saviour of the world was ascribed to his house, and called his son in the body*" (*Song* 27). Here, we see David, for Smart, as poet-progenitor. Smart inscribes David as the ancestor of Jesus and gives this as "the highest honour." The way that Smart presents the sentence, with David given as "the best poet which ever lived" before he describes his honor, gives the impression that the honor of being the ancestor of the Lord is the effect of a cause, being the best poet. We are not reading his poetry, the Psalms, because he was the ancestor of Jesus; on the contrary, David received that honor in return for his prowess as a poet. The poetry is the hinge upon which David and his entire blessed line hangs. In Smart, poetry and language are the driving forces of history.

In their introduction to Smart's *Song*, Marcus Walsh and Karina Williamson discuss the view of David that Smart presents in the *Song:*

> The *Song* is not only a sacred ode or hymn praising God and the creation, but also a heroic ode, an encomium on David…David is both a patriotic and a religious hero, even,

> to the extent to which he is associated with the redemption wrought by Christ, a Christian hero. (ii.114-115)

All the threads of David's character, both religious and patriotic, come together through the genealogy linking David to Christ. Walsh and Williamson also comment on "the ideal of poetry represented by David the psalmist" (111). David is both the historical (religious and patriotic) figure of 1-2 Samuel, tied to a specific genealogy, and a representation of the "ideal of poetry." David is, for Smart, a poetic figure in both senses of the word 'figure', a historical figure and a figure of language. In this way, any historical David that exists in Smart's account is also simply a poetic figure. David is both poet and poetry. The word figure brings us into the realm of figural biblical interpretation, in which a thing or character is both itself and the symbol of something else in the past or future or both. David, for example, is considered a figure both of Adam and Christ simultaneously while also being himself. Figural interpretation allows for a layered style of reading in which every occurrence in the Old Testament corresponds to—that is, prefigures—something in the New Testament and to a prophecy of events to come. Smart extends the reach of prophecy by writing prayer and adoration as part of a genealogy that stretches from the line of David and the Old Testament to Jesus and the New Testament through to a modern England that, through translation of David's prayer, can inherit his work and his relationship to the deity.

In verse forty-seven of the *Song*, Smart presents his figural interpretation of David's work, in exemplary fashion:

> Turn from Old Adam to the New;
>
> By hope futurity pursue;
>
> Look upwards to the past.

Here, Smart refers to looking to Jesus to find a new Adam, (with David as the mediating figure, also a figure of both Adam and Jesus), but the strange spatial configuration captures the image of a past that is also the beyond of the future and an origin that can somehow also come after. Figural interpretation involves a collapsing of time and text, in which history becomes simply another mode of prophecy. David is the author of poetry, but as an author of praise he prefigures the future author of praise, Christopher Smart, as well as Christ. The historical David is genealogically linked to Christ, but the poetic David is a figure out of time, able to become English through his translation as a figure of English poetics.

Perhaps the most peculiar phrase in verse forty-seven brings attention to the full complexity of Smart's understanding of the genealogical work of both figural interpretation and translation. The strange temporal configuration of "look[ing] upwards to the past" can be read in Smart as the temporality of translation. Translation gives the text a future by turning to the past. The tension in the movement of looking backward and forward simultaneously resolves itself through the figure of looking up. Rather than being an act that follows chronologically from past to future, translation cuts through time. Smart's translation does not merely exemplify this complex process of figural inscription, but figures and inscribes it in the catachresis by which one "looks upwards to the past."

David remains the crux around which such "impressions" of translation are registered in Smart's writing. In Smart's *Translation,* his psalms emphasize the name of David, often inserting his name into verses that had no mention of him.[62] Looking at Smart's Psalm 18, it becomes clear that for Smart the psalmist is the figural David that he invokes in the *Song*. In Psalm 18:28 "For thou wilt light my candle" becomes:

Thou shalt indulge a farther length

To David's life, and with new strength

My blazing lamp shall burn; (Ps.18:28)

Similarly, "thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me" becomes "The heathen shall thy name adore,/ With David at their head" (Ps.18:42). Psalm 18 does appear in the story of David and even refers to David in the final verse, but Smart has added two specific references to David, making the application of the psalm to David's story crystal clear. The lighting of the candle becomes the aid that God gives to David to lengthen his life. The "me" in "thou hast made me the head of the heathen people" becomes specifically "David." These changes are minor, but they highlight the importance of David as the speaker of the psalm for Smart. The final verse of Psalm 18 reads, "Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore" (Ps.18:50). Smart recasts this:

Great things and prosperous hast thou done

In love to David—and his Son

Shall ride the royal mule;

King David thy free choice appoints,

And from his loins thy seer anoints

A man thy tribes to rule.

Smart gives David's name twice in the verse, again highlighting the important specificity of David in the text. And Smart uses the word 'Son' to refer both to the biblical story of David and Solomon, the son of David who is anointed the King after him, and to Jesus, the ancestor of David in the Christian tradition. The capitalization of 'Son' makes clear the reference to Jesus. The specific role of David as biblical-historical figure who made great escapes from enemies

with God's help and who ruled over heathens is, for Smart, his connection to Jesus and to the Christian tradition that will follow from the Hebrew tradition. The psalm is not spoken by any man who prays in distress, but by the specific man, David. Yet David is a figure for the men of praise who come before and after him in a long line of poet-warrior-progenitors—and translators.

## III. Translation as Adoration

### *David: Man of Prayer*

Caught in the strange temporality of the figural, Smart's David becomes the model poet and translator. If other commentators have looked to Smart's claim in the title to his psalms to translate as a Christian and for the church, I have tried to focus this chapter on another part of the translation title: *of David.* One other critic who focuses her reading of the psalm translations on David, Moira Dearnley, sees Smart's psalms as an attempt to cleanse David's character of all its faults. Dearnley presents a very astute argument about Smart's understanding of the poet sharing in God's creative activity. In fact, it is as a poet "of God's universe" that she sees Smart identifying with David. Writing of Smart's admiration of David, she directly cites his reference to David in *Jubilate Agno*: "King David was for Christopher Smart a personification of the religious poet, winging Hallelujahs to the Lord, the perfection of excellence" (176). It is through the figure of David as poet that Smart is able to reconcile David as mighty warrior who kills the bear and David as harpist blessing the Lord; for Smart the warrior and poet not only do not contradict but were both equally part of David's work of praise.[63] By calling on David, Smart is able to invoke the entire tradition of psalmody in a single figure, to personify praise by giving it a proper name. It is not David as man or even David as psalmist that Smart brings out in his

work, but David as psalmody itself, David not as person but as the source of praise and as the foundation of a poetic tradition.

By reading Smart's depiction of David carefully it becomes possible to find an understanding of poetry and translation in Smart based around adoration and acts of praise. Through praise, the translator participates in the inheritance of the generations and both accepts and corrects the Hebrew tradition in English. Smart's *Song of David* appeared with the psalms and can be read as one of Smart's attempts at original psalmody. His David is a patriotic warrior, divine poet, and Christian progenitor. The opening three verses of the *Song,* which make up the first complete sentence of the work, lay out the complicated structure of David as poet and as progenitor more fully:

> O THOU, that sit'st upon a throne,
> With harp of high majestic tone,
> To praise the King of kings;
> And voice of heav'n-ascending swell,
> Which, while its deeper notes excell,
> Clear, as a clarion, rings:
>
> To bless each valley, grove and coast,
> And charm the cherubs to the post
> Of gratitude in throngs;
> To keep the days on Zion's mount,
> And send the year to his account,
> With dances and with songs:

O Servant of God's holiest charge,

The minister of praise at large,

Which thou may'st now receive;

From thy blest mansion hail and hear,

From topmost eminence appear

To this the wreath I weave.

In the first verse, we get an image of David, upon his throne, composing the psalms in praise of God—David, whom Smart has described in his introduction to the poem as "the best poet which ever lived." The words 'harp,' 'voice,' and 'rings' all invoke the music of the psalms. As Smart's own song of praise to King David begins, we get an image of David's voice ascending to heaven. David praises the "King of kings," Jesus, but Smart also praises the King of kings, David, who is the greatest example of a king, a king among kings. From David and the throne, the second verse moves outwards toward the spatial and temporal object of the psalms, God's creation. General praise turns to specific blessings and gratitude. Finally, the third verse, which ends the sentence, returns to David, but this time he is himself the object of praise. He will "hail and hear" as opposed to raising his voice to be heard. The movement in these three introductory verses is from a historical David singing on the throne, out to the object of that praise which is given here as the works of creation, and then back to David as the recipient of praise. David is both the one who gives and the one who receives praise. In the first stanza David and Smart are conflated as givers of praise, both praising the King of kings, but by the third verse it is clearly Smart who praises David. In the third verse David is called the "servant of God's holiest charge," which is then clarified as "minister of praise at large." Giving praise, is itself, God's most

important charge. To be the best at giving praise is to be the best in God's eyes. David, as psalmist is both the source of praise as the author of the psalms and the person who deserves the most praise as the best of psalmists. The structure of David as source and recipient of praise is mirrored in the model of David as ancestor of Jesus. As the ancestor of Christ, David is, historically, the source of the very "King of kings" that he praises.

The conflation of Smart with David, as giver of praise, in the opening of the *Song* reveals an understanding of Smart's psalm translations as the direct, figural continuation of David's work. Throughout the *Song* Smart returns again and again to the image of David composing the psalms to make clear exactly what David's work consisted of. In verse IX he refers to David as in "perpetual prayer." By "perpetual prayer" Smart does not mean that David spent all his time in the act of prayer, but that all his actions were prayers. He clarifies in the lines that follow:

> Clean in his gestures, hands, and feet
>
> To smite the lyre, the dance complete,
>
> To play the sword and spear.

The 'lyre' and 'sword and spear' provide images of David both as poet composing and performing the psalms and David as warrior, killing his ten thousands, with a sword and spear. Smart uses a chiasmus to present David as warrior-poet. David is depicted here 'smiting' the lyre while 'playing' the sword and spear. Smart plays with the multiple meanings of the word 'smite', which indicates striking a violent blow and brings up biblical images of God smiting the wicked, but also, less commonly, referred to playing upon a musical instrument, such as the harp.[64] In this way the 'smiting' warrior and the 'playing' psalmist become part and parcel of the same character, all of it encompassed by the figure of "perpetual prayer."

For Smart prayer prevails in every one of David's actions. In verse seventy-four even David's breath is an act of gratitude:

Sweeter in all the strains of love,
The language of thy turtle dove,
Pair'd to thy swelling chord;
Sweeter, with ev'ry grace endu'd,
The glory of thy gratitude,
Respir'd unto the Lord.

The first half of the verse refers to the act of composition of the psalms, the pairing of language to musical chords. In the second half of the verse we see David actually singing the psalms, but the verb used to describe his prayer is that of respiration. In this way, David's breath, the most basic act of existence, becomes a prayer. Simply by being and by breathing, David prays.[65] For Smart, his life is a prayer. In verse seventy-seven Smart refers to David as "the man of pray'r":

But stronger still in earth and air,
And in the sea, the man of pray'r;
And far beneath the tide;
And in the seat to faith assign'd,
Where ask is have, where seek is find,
Where knock is open wide.

When Smart presents David as "the man of pray'r," he does not refer simply to a man who prays but to a man who is made of prayer, whose life consists of prayer. David not only composes prayers, he is composed of prayer. The description of David as "far beneath the tide" is a reference to 2 Samuel 22 in which David composes a prayer that is repeated in the Book of

Psalms as Psalm 18. In the Psalm the speaker describes himself as drowning, calling on God, and having God descend and pull him out of the flood.[66] In Psalm 18 the voice of the speaker goes into God's temple and God responds to hearing the prayer by descending dramatically to earth, shaking the mountains and creating a great storm. The theophany, an actual appearance of God, is brought about by the voice of the speaker; God appears as a direct effect of David's prayer. As shown above, Smart incorporates David's name into his Psalm 18 in order to clarify that David is the one and only speaker of the psalms. David's prayer 'knocks' and the heavens 'open wide.' He 'asks' and he 'has.' Here, Smart depicts David as a man whose every action and every breath are oriented toward the Lord (asking, seeking, knocking) and shows the way in which his life of prayer brings about changes in the world (having, finding, opening wide). The response, a response found in the story and Psalms of David, is the proof of the prevailing power of prayer.

Verse fifty begins with a meditation on praise: "PRAISE above all—for praise prevails." The themes of David as warrior and David as poet are intertwined through the figure of praise. The word "prevail" has multiple connotations here. It refers to prayer as a means of prevailing upon God but also to David the warrior, who prevails in battle. Here, the prevailing of David, as poet and warrior, becomes the prevailing of praise as underlined by the echoing between the two words. The verse on praise is followed by the twenty adoration verses in which the word adoration appears in a line of every verse moving down through the text so that in the first verse it appears in the first line of the verse, in the next verse in the second line, and in the next verse in the third line and so on. In this way, the word 'adoration' literally cascades through the poem as though washing over the page:

For ADORATION seasons change,

And order, truth, and beauty range,

Adjust, attract, and fill:

The grass the polyanthus checks;

And polish'd porphyry reflects,

By the descending rill.

Rich almonds color to the prime

For ADORATION; tendrils climb,

And fruit-trees pledge their gems;

And Ivis with her gorgeous vest,

Builds for her eggs her cunning nest,

And bell-flowers bow their stems.

The adoration verses are filled with images of creation: seasons, grass, trees, birds, and flowers fill the verses and adoration cascades over and through creation. We get a catalogue of nature, but instead of being systematic and exhaustive, the catalogue remains partial and necessarily incomplete. The attempt at the list and its incompletion suggest both the desire to catalogue the whole world and the admission of the failure of the project. In the face of the attempt and failure the only option is to turn to praise and adoration. For Smart, the figure of praise encapsulates all creation. All creation exists for the purpose of praising God, and therefore the term 'praise' is the term of the infinite; praise, as a concept, is the ultimate signifier. David, as the poet of adoration, is able to take up and embody the signification of praise; he is the signifier of the ultimate signifier.

*Translation/Adoration*

In verse sixty-four, in the middle of the adoration verses, Smart turns specifically to the topic of the psalms and their translation:

For ADORATION, DAVID's psalms
Lift up the heart to deeds of alms;
And he, who kneels and chants,
Prevails his passions to control,
Finds meat and med'cine to the soul,
Which for translation pants.

The verse begins by giving us "ADORATION" and "DAVID" both capitalized in the center of the first line. The symmetry of the line around the comma gives each term, 'adoration' and 'David,' as if in apposition to the other, as though the name David were synonymous with adoration. The word 'prevails' also returns here with an additional meaning, prayer as a means not only of prevailing over God but also of prevailing over one's own passions. Through the alliteration of 'praise,' 'prayer,' 'prevails' we see that adoration is the means of prevailing over all things.

Most notably, the verse ends with a call for translation. The object of that translation is ambiguous. The soul pants for translation but it is unclear if the soul, itself, needs to be translated, (as though the act of prayer were an act of translating the soul), or if the soul is calling for the psalms to be translated, the project that Smart undertook. It seems that the verse works on both levels, referring to the psalms as a translation of the soul and as a translation of David who, in Smart's imagination, composes them, and also referring to the need for the translation of the psalms. The text of the psalms can only continue to prevail if read, sung, and prayed. This can

only happen in England by means of translation. Thus translation becomes an integral part of the concept of prevailing prayer. Just as praise is the mode of translating God's creations, translation of Hebrew is the mode of praise in England.

In Smart, then, we find a model of translation as adoration. Translation does not merely make poems of adoration available to an English audience who would otherwise be unable to read them. Translation is itself an act of adoration. The soul and the psalms "pant" for translation because translation is a process of giving praise. Through the strange alchemy of figural genealogy, Smart, as translator becomes the new David, who is himself nothing but a new Adam and a future Christ. David's project of perpetual prayer and adoration, encompassing his every action, becomes the project of the translator, Christopher Smart. Translation is the process by which Smart is able to inherit the work of prevailing prayer and translation is also the inheritance itself. That is, by way of translation into English Smart inherits the ability to translate. He becomes the new poet of adoration. Translation allows Smart to claim his genealogical birthright as the new David.

Smart's understanding of genealogy makes David the new and eternal Adam and makes English the new and eternal Hebrew through the strange temporality of figural interpretation. But Smart takes figural reading to a new level, making translation the new and eternal adoration. Translation becomes a way of renewing the prevailing power of adoration. Just as Adam needed a David to come after him, to be both the same and different, the original psalms need a translation to come after them and to be both the same and different. Smart's psalms are a figural mirror image of David's psalms. They draw on them, renewing their purpose, while adding new meaning to them. Put another way, just as in a Christian idiom, the Old Testament cannot fully be understood until it is considered from the vantage point of the New, the psalms of David

cannot be understood until considered through the process of translation. When Smart claims to translate in the spirit of Christianity, then, he is doing much more than importing Christ into the psalms; he is renewing adoration as translation.

Smart's concept of translation as adoration provides a radical model of translation that far exceeds conceptions of the fidelity to an original. In Smart there is no original or everything is original.[67] There is an old Adam and a new Adam, David/Christ/Smart. There is an old Hebrew and a new Hebrew, English. But the "old" root only comes into full flower through the process of becoming new. The process of becoming new can be understood through a metaphor of genealogy or translation, but in either case it goes beyond the linear temporality usually associated with both generation and translation. In Smart, language, in translation, becomes the vehicle and the product of an inheritance that passes in both directions.

The invocation of languages and speech in translation as the manifestation of adoration in creation seen throughout Smart's work recalls the opening of Psalm 19:

> The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.
>
> Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
>
> There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. (Ps. 19:1-3)

Psalm 19 provides a description of all creation praising God. Smart's translation focuses on the invocation of "speech" and "language" and the idea that praise of God occurs in every language. His Psalm 19:3 expands upon the image of language as the expression of the glory of creation:

> There is no nation, clime or tongue,
>
> Where their first matins are not sung,
>
> And in the spirit caught;
>
> There is no language, sound or speech,

But their melodious vespers reach,

And warble to the thought. (42)

In Smart's version "spirit" transcends individual languages and tongues and yet all languages are "caught" by spirit and become a way of repeating it. Praise catches every language.[68] Smart's invocation of matins and vespers also serves to bring his psalm into the realm of the English church service. The image of prayer stretching from morning to evening brings the reader into the temporality of prayer, in which prayers are repeated morning and evening, day after day. Repetition, then, is an inherent part of prayer. A psalm translation becomes part of a series of repetitions, always renewing praise. The renewal of praise also happens in every language through the process of translation.

With the figure of translation as the repetition of praise we return, then, to Smart's own conception of translation as impression. For Smart it is through the repetition of impression that translation transmits spirit. The force of impression is the seed which is caught in the wind of every language. Smart defined impression as a gift from God which throws emphasis upon certain phrases in language, and he found that "impression" was most vivid in sacred Hebrew texts. In other words, impression comes from the origin. It is the essential piece which transcends figuration. Impression is the figure that appears in all figures. It is the impression that God leaves on Adam through his creation which passes on to David and to Christ. It is the impression that God leaves on the psalms which comes out in David and in Smart. Impression is both the force and the product of divine force which makes translation possible. Hebrew is the best language to exemplify impression for Smart because he sees it as the first language on which all other languages and impressions must draw. In his rendition of Psalm 84 Smart invokes the image of impression:

The man is blessed, as he prays,

Whose reins thy strength receive,

And in whose heart thy word and ways

A deep impression leave. (201)

The "words and ways" of God are what create impressions. Impressions spread out from a divine source, but the way to receive impressions is through the act of prayer which takes place in language. Through languages, tongues, and speech the penitent can receive impressions. Smart views the psalms, then, as the ultimate vehicles of impression. Through translation of adoration he receives and refigures the impression he perceives in Hebrew poetry. Smart's figural definition of translation thus helps to clarify what he means by "impression" and why the Hebrew language has a privileged relationship to impression. When Smart writes in *Jubilate Agno* of God's name inscribed in ever fiber of the world and gives God's name as the Hebrew letter ל (lahmed) it is his attempt to give an image of impression as a Hebrew mark upon creation. The first marks of impression are left in Hebrew and must be refigured again and again for succeeding generations and languages.

## IV. Refiguring and Disfiguring Hebrew

### *Babel: Re-figuring Hebrew*

Smart's translation of psalmody also serves as a retelling of the story of Babel. In Hymn 15 Smart inscribes Babel into the genealogy of languages put to use for praise:

Every speech beneath the sun,

Which from Babel first begun;

Branch or leaf, or flow'r or fruit

Of the Hebrew ancient root.

Smart's Babel is a place where language begins to flower. The reading of Babel in a positive light, as a sight of linguistic flowering, is not the traditional reading of the Babel story. In Genesis 11 all people speak one language and use their ability to communicate to construct a tower which will reach heaven. In punishment for the attempt to reach the realm of God, God "confound[s]" their language so that they can no longer understand each other:

> And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. (Gen 11:6-7)

Babel depicts the necessity of translation as a punishment from God meant to keep people in their place. It aligns the multiplication of languages with confusion.[69] Smart, however, presents Babel as the beginning of the growth of a tree of languages that fruit and flower. He celebrates Babel.

Smart's refiguring of translation is, then, a refiguring of Babel. His understanding of translation as the figuration of adoration creates a new reading of the story of Babel in which Babel makes the adoration of God truly possible. Instead of viewing Babel as a loss which people suffered for their hubris, Smart sees it as the flowering of language which will lead to English translation and "bless all Englishmen this hour." Translation, instead of being an unfortunate necessity brought about when God confused the tongues of people, becomes the glorious fulfillment of a seed planted at Babel. Babel thus makes Smart's refiguration and renewal possible. It is only after Babel that language gains the genealogical properties that make Smart's understanding of translation possible. Smart celebrates Babel because he sees it leading

to languages that refigure Hebrew, and these refigurations always repeat the same Hebrew impression. In other words, Smart's understanding of Babel celebrates Hebrew as the first language, though it also (as discussed further below) silences it, making it simply the effaced point of departure for the languages which come after it.

It is the irreconcilable differences among languages that make Babel a story of loss. The people can no longer be "one" when their languages are multiple. To celebrate Babel, is then, to celebrate the splintering of languages. But unlike recent translation theory which celebrates Babel as an allegory of the inherent multiplicity of language, Smart's celebration of Babel takes place through a denial of difference in language.[70] For Smart, English, as a figure of Hebrew, is simply a new Hebrew. Smart denies difference in language by celebrating Babel not because it created multiplicity, but because it actually, through a figural understanding of the world, makes complete unity possible. For Smart, the splintering of language at Babel simply presages his own recapitulation of linguistic difference through English translation of Hebrew.

Smart's version of Babel not only denies any confusion at the root of language, but assigns Hebrew the place of honor as the first and only language. Hebrew, as the language of unity, becomes the language of indelible impression. All other languages, which come after Babel, are simply repetitions of the original impression contained in the Hebrew language. The splintering of Hebrew in multiple languages actually allows for the growth of Hebrew as its impression echoes through every tongue. What is perceived as multiplicity is, in Smart, the resounding proof of total unity. But the unity of all languages, a celebration of the power of language, also serves to silence any difference among languages.

*Dis-figuring Hebrew*

The refiguration of Hebrew in Smart has two consequences; it both renews the Hebrew language and, paradoxically, silences it. A figural understanding of history is, after all, no history at all.[71] Figural interpretation strips names and events of their singularity and makes them universally present at all times.[72] By extending figural reading to the realm of adoration and translation, Smart creates translations which strip the Hebrew language and the Hebrew psalms of their singularity. To some extent all Christianizations of the psalms which import images of Christ into the Hebrew text perform a violent refiguring, but Smart takes the process of Christianization to its limit, marking his English as simply another form of Hebrew. When Smart inscribes Hebrew letters into *Jubilate Agno* or uses the form of an acrostic he marks his psalmody as Hebraic while simultaneously erasing Hebrew through the use of English. If English is only another Hebrew, both languages have been emptied of difference even as English appropriates that (supposed) lack of difference for its own purposes.[73]

Throughout Smart's oeuvre he employs various strategies for refiguring Hebrew. Scholars have noted the radical difference between Smart's ecstatic *Jubilate Agno* and the controlled verse of the psalms. In *Prophet and Poet: The Bible and the Growth of Romanticism* Murray Roston uses Smart's *Jubilate Agno* as a key example in his argument that Romanticism grew from a turning away from classical form and a turning toward Hebrew poetic form, in other words, moving from metrical to parallelistic structures in English poetry.[74] He characterizes *Jubilate Agno* as Hebraic in spirit:

> A poem pulsating with adoration and fervor, at times almost incomprehensible in the passionate outpouring of words—the *Jubilate Agno*. It was a wild, ecstatic call to all animals, fish, insects, and birds to join him in praise of the Almighty; a call which

> scorned all rules and embellishments, adopting instead the fire and rapture of the Psalmist. (148)

Yet he sees metrical translations of the psalms as directly opposed to this trajectory in literary thought: "The directness, the swiftness and the passion of the original become weighted down by cumbersome periphrases and expansions until nothing is left of the Hebraic spirit" (131). He includes Smart's psalm translations with these, writing that they are "as diffuse and remote from the original as most contemporary translations" (148). In *Jubilate Agno* he sees Smart embracing the Hebraic, but in his psalm translations he sees him turning away from it. Yet for Smart, clearly his psalm translations were a direct inheritance of the Hebraic spirit. Although Roston may read them as diffuse and remote, for Smart the language of his psalms directly channeled Hebrew into English.[75] Presenting a similar contrast in *The Holy and Daemonic from Sir Thomas Browne to W. Blake,* R.D. Stock writes of *Jubilate Agno:* "Hebraic parallelism, repetition, synecdoche, and metonymy, together with the characteristic personal turn of the Psalmist, are expertly employed" (321). But his opinion of Smart's psalms is very different: "Unfortunately, Smart raised a great heap of verse after the Jubilate and the 'Song: hymns, Christianized translations of the Psalms. These are all unspeakably tedious, far less lively than even his most derivative earlier poems" (325). Moira Dearnley, while arguing for the psalm translations as a refiguring of David also dismisses the psalms' literary value in comparison with Smart's other poetry: "No one is going to make any literary claims for Smart's *Translation of the Psalms*…Smart helped to bury the native grace and dignity of the Psalms under the rubbish dump of bad poetry" (245). All of these critics imply that while *Jubilate Agno* embraced the Hebraic, the psalm translations served as a rejection of Hebrew poetry in favor of poetry that is "cumbersome," "remote," "unspeakably tedious," and "bad."

I have tried, on the contrary, to take seriously what is at stake for the author of *Jubilate Agno* in making the claims that he did for his psalm translations—at least to see the crucial continuities between the two projects. Even on the level of form, on the "cumbersome" and "remote" language of which critics complain, one may trace important relations between the two works. Obviously, there is a striking formal contrast between them. *Jubilate Agno* is organized around the principles of Hebrew parallelism. Most notably, the organization into "Let" and "For" verses which mirror and play with each other mimics the style of Hebrew parallelism. Parallelism also abounds in the opening lines. In the first line, the semicolon divides the line into parallel parts; "give the glory to the Lord, and the Lamb" repeats the sentiment of "Rejoice in God, O ye Tongues" both emphasizing the call for praise and clarifying the first part of the line by explaining what specifically it means to "rejoice in God." Rejoicing in God involves praising not only "the Lord" but also "the Lamb," Jesus Christ. The next two lines also form a pair, in which the second line's subject, "man and beast," has been expanded in the previous line:

> Rejoice in God, O ye Tongues; give the glory to the Lord, and the Lamb.
>
> Nations, and languages, and every Creature, in which is the breath of Life.
>
> Let man and beast appear before him, and magnify his name together.
>
> Let Noah and his company approach the throne of Grace, and do homage to the Ark of their Salvation.
>
> Let Abraham present a Ram, and worship the God of his Redemption.

The second two lines are parallel to the first line, repeating the call for praise and again expanding the image of what praise would look like. The third line, in addition to being in parallel structure with the second line is also parallel to all the lines that follow, providing the template for the entire fragment: "Let man and beast appear before him, and magnify his name

together." In the following lines, "man" is replaced with a specific proper name and "beast" with the name of an animal and then each of them will "magnify his name together" in a specific way given in the line. Line three, therefore, is in a pair with each of the following lines. Finally, within each line, the man and animal appear and then the second half of the line serves to clarify the action taken as they appear in the first half of the line. In this way, Smart has intricately made use of parallelism, the recognized structure of Hebrew poetics, in the opening lines of *Jubilate Agno*.[76]

In contrast, *A Translation of the Psalms of David in the Spirit of Christianity and Adapted to the Divine Service* makes use of standard English verse forms. While Walsh's introduction to Smart's psalms notes that he used over twenty-five different forms, the rhythmic, rhyming verses of Smart's translation all unfold in a sing-song fashion, with one very similar to the others. Smart gives exactly one stanza to every verse of the psalms, expanding each verse into a neat rhyming package. Walsh praises Smart's ability to "[make] the Psalms his own" but notes that the need to give every verse a stanza "occasionally left him with more metrical space than his invention could fill" (xxiii). The effect of Smart's style is two-fold. First, the use of English meters and correspondingly conventional English makes them appear as English compositions, leaving no clue to the Hebrew forms they are based on. Second, the expansion of every line dilutes the content of the psalms, creating an expanded but also a washed out version of the prayers. Essentially Smart's psalms, which claim to teach a lesson for the Hebraen lyre, strip the text of anything resembling the Hebraic. The sparse imagery and language of the Hebrew psalms turns into a repetitive plethora of English verse.

Smart is certainly not the first Englishman to have written metrical psalm translations which divorced the psalms from their Hebrew origins. But Smart is also the author of poetry that

actively tries to incorporate the Hebraic impression, in the *Jubilate Agno.* Smart's two versions of psalmody could not appear more different; one appears to celebrate the incorporation of Hebrew and the other to completely naturalize Hebrew through the use of English meter and form. Yet, I would like to argue, the ecstatic use of Hebrew letters and style in *Jubilate Agno* and the metered verse of the psalm translations each serve the dual purpose of refiguring and disfiguring the Hebrew language. In doing so, they also refigure and disfigure English.

In *Jubilate Agno* Smart uses parallelism and Hebrew writing to give the impression of a Hebrew text. But the Hebrew that Smart writes is an ahistorical language. For Smart, Hebrew is the first language—the language of creation—and therefore the language of poetry. The impression of Hebrew is everywhere, in nature and in text. The Hebrew that Smart inscribes in *Jubilate Agno,* though, is not any real language. Smart's Hebrew has magical properties which go beyond the realm of any spoken or written language. In the Bible and in the tradition of Jewish mysticism Hebrew takes on magical properties, but Smart's Hebrew is all his own. It is an ancient force which he divorces from the rhythms of its own language, grammar, and sound. The 'Hebrew' that Smart celebrates in his poem must be put in quotation marks. It is his own impression of Hebrew and not any impression left by a real language that he presents. While Smart's Hebrew may seem like a celebration of the tradition of Hebrew psalmody, it actually covers over a violent rewriting of that tradition. It mythologizes Hebrew and thus takes it out of history and, as literature, out of its own textual context. Smart's mythical 'Hebrew' is a language with no history and no textual specificity. It is a language that is part of his figural understanding of inheritance and generation. Hebrew is no more a real language, than David is a real man in Smart. 'Hebrew' becomes the signifier of Smart's myth of praise and thus of his poetry and is no

longer the signifier for any actual language. Hebrew, like David, becomes merely a figure, (not a poetic figure but a figure of figural interpretation), in *Jubilate Agno.*

Although written in a completely different style, Smart's psalms perform a similar function, emptying the psalms of any relation to a historical Hebrew language. Even the tediousness of his psalms, which has led critics to dismiss their value, is the means of the erasure of Hebrew poetics in Smart's translations. Rather than dismiss the form of the psalms as bad writing, we must account for the Smart's creation of these reams of English verse. The very regularity of the plodding versification serves to completely sever the psalms from Hebrew in order to bring them within the norms of an eighteenth-century decorum that set itself apart from the enthusiasms of an earlier English Hebraism, in order to make them—from the perspective of Smart's era—English. The translations, while seeming unrelated to the project of *Jubilate Agno,* actually take that project to its logical conclusion, where Hebrew simply *becomes* English. The deadly style of the psalms reveals the extent of the erasure of the Hebraic. But rather than being a break from his other poetry, Smart's psalms make the implications of claiming that Hebrew could be English clear (however unintentionally). Hebrew will be refigured until it actually disappears. But the refiguration of Hebrew comes at a cost for Smart's English which must be, similarly, emptied of difference. In the end, the disfiguring of Hebrew becomes the disfiguring of the English Smart attempts to elevate.

In a similar vein, the sanitized version of David presented in the psalms is a sign not merely of Old Testament wrath turned to Christian meekness, but also of David's naturalization as an Englishman in Smart's psalms. Smart's toned-down depiction of David in the psalms has been given attention in the work of Arthur Sherbo, Moira Dearnley, as well as Walsh and Williamson who see Smart as defending David's character by removing all mentions of David's

violence from the psalms. If in *Jubilate Agno* and *A Song to David* Smart worked to make David's role as a warrior simply part of his work of praise by chiastically intertwining it with his poetic abilities, in the psalms Smart simply makes David proper and English by giving him only the thoughts proper to an eighteenth-century English gentleman. David comes through the process of what I am calling figural translation a new man, with his warlike Old Testament ways softened, making them the simply the patriotic sentiments proper to eighteenth-century England.

In the end, Smart's refigured and disfigured Hebrew reveals something about his English. Smart's figural understanding of translation seems to approach a poststructuralist and playful version of translation in which English becomes the medium of a love song to the multiplicity of language, and Smart is often lauded for his playfulness.[77] But in the end a figural understanding of language and generations shuts down all play between languages, making everything a repetition of an original and unending language of God.[78] Smart's English, then, is also his Hebrew as his David is also his Christ. Translation, in Smart, makes all language universally one. It is a vision at once ecstatic and stifling.

"Till we have built Jerusalem…": William Blake's Psalm Illustrations and *Laocoön*"

William Blake is not usually read as a translator of the Psalms. He did, however, create illustrations for four psalms: Psalm 18, Psalm 85, Psalm 93, and Psalm 137. Blake painted these watercolors as a part of a larger project of biblical illustration undertaken from 1800-1806 for his patron Thomas Butts. The prints appear in the catalogue of paintings collected by Martin Butlin. Anthony Blunt has referred to the collection of watercolors as "Blake's Bible" (69). I would like to argue that given the breakdown in distinctions between text and image in the work of Blake, these psalm illustrations should be considered as a work of translation. At the very least, they are more interpretive than illustrative, putting a uniquely Blakean spin on the psalms.[79] In "David's Recognition of the Human Face of God in Blake's Designs for the Book of Psalms," the most comprehensive reading of Blake's psalm depictions to date, Mary Lynn Johnson provides an excellent reading of the Christology inherent in Blake's psalm illustrations. She argues that the first three renderings reveal David encountering Christ's presence, Christ's incarnation, and his installation on the throne "as the judge of mankind" (146). I would like to argue that in addition to a Christology, Blake's psalms also reveal an understanding of art as bound up with what he calls "prayer" and "praise."

In this chapter I read Blake's psalm translations in the context of the narrative of Hebrew inheritance that Blake records in his print *Laocoön* and in the preface to *Milton: A Poem*. In the *Laocoön* it is my contention that Blake makes use of the Hebrew art of micrography in an attempt to reclaim the primacy of Hebrew art from the classical tradition epitomized by the statue of Laocoön. No other critics have noted the possibility of Blake's encounter with Hebrew micrography, but a comparison of the *Laocoön* print to contemporary micrographic prints reveals the clear connection between the two. The reclamation of Hebrew history through the printed

arts opens up a new understanding of translation in Blake as an attempt to practice an art that existed, as Blake believes, before the split between the textual and visual. Essentially, Blake's biblical translation is an attempt to inscribe a moment before inscription. The opening section of the chapter consists of close reading of two of Blake's psalm paintings, *David Delivered out of Many Waters* based on Psalm 18 and *By the Waters of Babylon* based on Psalm 137, as a pair that reveal the concepts of praise and prayer in Blake. The second section looks closely at the *Laocoön* and its links to micrography, reading the implications of Hebrew micrography for an understanding of Blake's project. Finally, the third section returns to the psalms, and delves into the theory of translation implicated by Blake's conception of the practice of Hebrew art.

## I. Blake's Psalms

In the print *Laocoön*, Blake writes "Prayer is the Study of Art/ Praise is the Practice of Art." It is my contention that Blake's psalm renderings reveal a desire for psalms that are praise and not prayer. If praise is a practice and prayer merely the study of that practice, then praise is defined, for Blake, as active while prayer is passive. Praise is the act of the artist who for Blake is a prophet.[80] Thus, in Blake's terms, praise is the act of speaking for and with God. It is an active embodiment of a connection with the divine. Prayer, on the other hand, is passive, a study of that which has come before it. It comes after the fact, beholding the act but not taking part in it.[81] For Blake, then, the versified psalm translations of his predecessors would have seemed merely prayer, the repetition of biblical text that is simply the "study of art," while his psalm illustrations reveal the psalms in a new light, as praise, as the face to face encounter with God that is the "practice of art."[82] In particular, Blake's Psalm 18, *David Delivered Out of Many*

*Waters* (1805), depicts the psalmist involved in praise and not prayer, while his Psalm 137, *By the Waters of Babylon* (1806), depicts the despair and sadness of the psalmist forced to pray.[83]

In *David Delivered Out of the Many Waters*, Blake's painting of Psalm 18, we see a bound David engulfed in water up to his armpits. David's arms, tied in ropes, stretch out across the surface of the water as he looks up into the face of God who comes to deliver him. [See Figure 1.] This is a moment of theophany, of God's actual appearance in the biblical text. Because of its dramatic natural imagery and invocation of divine presence, Psalm 18 was a favorite example of the sublime throughout the eighteenth century.[84] Blake's illustration, however, is more interested in the relationship between the psalmist and God than in the sublime trappings of God's theophany. The first sixteen verses of the psalm are as follows:

> A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: and He said, 1I will love thee, O LORD, my strength 2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. 3 I will call upon the LORD who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. 4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. 5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. 6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. 7 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. 8There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. 9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. 10

> And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. 11 He made darkness his secret place: his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. 12 At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire. 13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire. 14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. 15 The channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. 16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.

In comparing Blake's depiction to the psalm itself we must first give attention to the context provided. Psalm 18 is a repetition of text from 2 Samuel: 22 where David is seen composing the psalm in thanks to God for saving him from his enemies. Therefore, we can safely assume that the figure in ropes at the bottom of the painting is David, or at least a mythical David figure for Blake, that is, David the psalmist.[85] David is depicted in water up to his armpits in a literal depiction of verse 4: "the floods of ungodly men made me afraid." But, just as in the psalm, the flood waters of Blake's painting are metaphorical, depicting the stance of the psalmist in distress. It is at the moment of ultimate distress, just as the psalmist would be pulled under, that he calls out to God. In fact, in Blake's painting, the ropes around the psalmist's arms mirror the murky shapes in the dark water and it is as if the psalmist is already submerged. Blake's depiction is of this very crisis moment, when the psalmist is close to death and from this stance of distress turns and calls up to the Lord. Simultaneously, the print also depicts verse ten in which God rides upon the wings of the wind. What follows is God actually lifting the psalmist from the waters,

but Blake's print is suspended in the moment where David is still drowning, and God is descending.

The image makes a composite of two moments in the psalm, the first in which the psalmist drowns and turns to God and the second after God has already heard him and descended. Whereas in the psalm there is a clear demarcation between the moment of near loss and turning to God and God's subsequent descent, Blake's composite makes loss and salvation not the two opposite ends of a narrative, but simultaneously occurring within a single moment. There is no salvation without the experience of despair. In Blake, being lost and being saved, apparent opposites, are actually the same. Through the figure of David, Blake collapses the apparent narrative of Psalm 18 and reveals it as a depiction of one moment—the moment of being lost/saved.[86]

In addition to the strange temporality of the painting, there are other marked differences between the psalm and Blake's depiction. As noted by Mary Lynn Johnson, Blake's is a strangely subdued version of the theophany. In the psalm God's descent comes with fire, lightning, and the cracking of the very foundations of the earth. In Blake's version of the theophany the look exchanged between psalmist and God is almost serene. This has led Johnson to argue that the painting cannot be a depiction of Psalm 18, but is more likely Psalm 69: "Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies" (Ps 69:14-15). Johnson's argument that the plate depicts an encounter with a Jesus who is more merciful than wrathful is certainly true, but the presence of the cherubim and the apparent splitting of the waters, mountains, or skies around God also place us firmly in the realm of Psalm 18 (Johnson 130). Blake's version of Psalm 18 is more than

simply an illustration or repetition of the text; he interprets the relationship between psalmist and God and depicts the very moment of deliverance. He may excise the anger that God displays, but many of the elements of those verses are present in the painting, if changed to fit Blake's project.

The depiction of dark and light in the print deserves special attention because of how it plays with the text of the psalm. God's appearance, the theophany, is given primarily as storm imagery and the storm is depicted in terms of a battle between dark and light. In the psalm God is associated with a coming darkness. "Darkness was under his feet" and "He made darkness his secret place: his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies." Then as he descends through darkness, he creates burning coals from his nostrils and sends out lightning to split up the darkness. He brings the dark storm down to the earth. In contrast to the darkness, Blake's God descends in light. Of particular notice are his feet. Whereas in the psalm "darkness was under his feet," in Blake's depiction the feet are very prominent and yet there is nothing like darkness underneath them. And yet, there is a contrast given between dark and light in the print. The waters that the psalmist is pulled down into are very dark in comparison to the rest of the print. In part, as Johnson has argued, the change from a God of darkness to a God of light depicts the merciful qualities of Jesus for a Christian rendering of the psalm, but it also serves to highlight the plight of the psalmist as of central importance to Blake. While the Jesus figure takes central stage in the print, he is presented as a light figure in a light background. David, on the other hand, is a light figure in a sea of darkness. The contrast of dark and light in the bottom of the print, serves to pull the reader's attention to the David figure. The light figure turns up out of the dark waters. The psalmist is both lost and saved simultaneously, pulled down and turning up at once.

Blake's central interest in the painting is the stance of the psalmist in time and space. The time of the psalm has been collapsed, and the undecidability between being lost and saved highlighted by the bound psalmist. It is unclear if he is turning as he rises out of the water or if he looks up as he is sinking into the depths. For Blake, this stance is that of praise. The collapsed moment of desperation that leads to contact with the divine is the moment of praise. In a moment the psalmist will have been delivered, but in this moment he is still sinking. Prayer, for Blake, is something codified. As he states in the *Laocoön*: "Prayer is the study of art/ Praise is the practice of Art." Temporally, prayer comes afterward, it is a codification of a moment of being saved that has already taken place. To pray is to repeat something already given. To repeat the text of Psalm 18, is to study what has happened to David, but it is not to be in the moment of composition. Praise, on the other hand, is a moment out of time, a moment in which the words burst forth out of darkness and out of despair. It is a practice, in other words, a moment full of action, instantaneous and present to itself, a moment of contact with divinity. Blake's depiction of Psalm 18 is a depiction of petition. The David figure is bound, sinking, and yet turns upward, bobs for a moment on the surface, and at the moment of finally going under finds himself face to face with God. This is not only a moment of theological significance but also a depiction of the very moment of artistic creation. For Blake, the stance of praise is the stance of the artist. The drowning figure gives us a depiction of the artist in the moment of creating art.

The strangest element of the print which must be accounted for is the presence of the cherubim in the painting. They are both background, depicted in a geometric configuration that makes them part of the air and water, and foreground, the central figures in the painting. While the interaction between David and God should take center stage in the painting, it is the cherubim who do so, looking out directly at the viewer. While David's face is mostly obscured

and his back is turned outward, the cherubim's faces, especially the bottom three, are depicted in detail. In relation to the text of Psalm 18, the cherubim are also odd for several reasons. First of all, Psalm 18 describes God as descending on only one cherub: "he rode upon a cherub." Johnson notes this discrepancy and suggests that the depiction is closer to Psalm 104:3, "who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind" (Johnson 130). In addition, these cherubim have only some of the physical characteristics of cherubim as given in the Bible. In Ezekiel, the cherubim are flaming, covered with eyes and with four heads: of a lion, eagle, ox, and man. But they are said, just as Blake depicts them, to have four wings, two which stretch upward and two which cover their bodies (Ezekiel 1:6, 1:11). These are definitely cherubim and not simply "the wings of the wind" of Psalm 104, and yet, they are also uniquely Blakean. Even their plurality indicates that they are more than simply the single cherub that God rides upon in Psalm 18. In order to fully understand Blake's psalm we must be able to account for the centrality of these strange figures.

The cherubim present themselves as the mediating force or figure between David and God. The Jesus figure in the painting does not get his feet wet, literally or figuratively. It is the cherubim that descend to touch the psalmist. David and God do not touch, but the cherubim provide the connection between them. In Blake's conception of praise, the psalmist is able to touch upon the divine in a moment of total loss. But what makes that connection possible? It is the mediating force of the cherubim. Their geometric quality shows that they are not characters or creatures with their own volition, they are the embodiment of a force, creating a matrix out of their bodies. With crossing arms and wings they fill the space between the psalmist and his God. They stand in for the ineffable moment of connection created in an act of praise, in an act of artistic creation. It is this force or essence of praise, created in the practice of art, which Blake

attempts to capture in his painting. This is the reason that the cherubim are so strange and take such center stage in the interpretation of a text in which they seemed to play such a small role.

In Psalm 18, Blake attempts to capture the purity of the moment of praise without falling back into prayer. The only way for him to leave prayer behind, is to attempt to leave the realm of language by turning the psalm into a painting. The psalm, in language, is always a repetition in numerous ways. First of all, Psalm 18 is already a repetition of 2 Samuel 22, and therefore already divorced from any original presence of text. It is *the* example of the psalm as a prayer repeated in that it is the only psalm that is given elsewhere in the Bible. Second of all, the daily repetition of the psalms in prayer is a common feature of Christian worship, and therefore the text of Psalm 18 is firmly rooted in what Blake would call "prayer." And more abstractly, the language of the psalms is necessarily a repetition in that it is language. Language functions by repetition. In order to be comprehensible, language must repeat sounds, words, and phrases which are learned and shared by a group of speakers. Language, as something that each person is born into, is always a repetition. No word can ever be entirely original. Blake, then, who wants to depict a moment of pure creation, of organic praise, gives us the psalm without any language. The medium of painting provides an alternative because it seems to escape language. At the very least, by providing a semiotics of images in place of the semiotics of words, painting provides a way to imagine an opening in the all encompassing world of language.[87] David's call to God is given in the painting as an action, as a stance, as a moment of mediation between man and God, not as the repetition of language.[88]

In contrast, Blake's depiction of Psalm 137, *By the Waters of Babylon*, is a depiction of a moment of prayer, a moment distinctly lacking in the connection given in Psalm 18. [See Figure 2.] Psalm 137 is spoken from the point of view of the Israelites in exile and held captive by the

Babylonians. Remembering Zion and Jerusalem they weep as the Babylonians require that they sing a song, but the psalmist asks "How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?" and worries that he may forget Jerusalem. Finally, the psalmist concludes by asking God to visit revenge upon the Babylonians for what they have done:

> 1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yeah, we wept, when we remembered Zion. 2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. 3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. 4 How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land? 5 if I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. 6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. 7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raise it, raise it, even to the foundation thereof. 8 O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. 9 Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

On the surface, Psalm 137 does not have a very close relationship to Psalm 18. While Psalm 18 gives thanks to God for saving the psalmist, Psalm 137 is a psalm that describes loss and disconnection. The only clear connection between the psalms is the theme of vanquishing one's enemies, but where Psalm 18 thanks God for victory, Psalm 137 begs for a future revenge that seems uncertain in the moment of prayer. Yet, Blake's depictions make clear that he presents these two psalms as a pair. The "Waters" in both titles and the dark waters that creep along the bottom of the both prints echo one another, and the central figures in both are bearded and bound, mirroring the image of David from the Psalm 18 painting. But where the psalmist in *David Delivered out of Many Waters* is depicted in a moment of connection with the divine, the

psalmist of *By the Waters of Babylon* is depicted in a moment of total disconnection from his God. Both the geographical and mental language of the psalm serves to highlight the feeling of disconnection. Geographically, the psalmist speaks from the position of having been carried to a strange land. He is literally in a position of geographic separation from the place where one speaks to God, from Jerusalem, and asking how he can sing God's song when absent from the location associated with God. As the psalm continues in anxious worry about forgetting Jerusalem, we see that the place of Jerusalem is a stand in for the deity himself. To forget Jerusalem would be to forget God, and to then be disconnected not only physically but also mentally. The fact that the disconnection has been violently forced upon the speaker is all the more reason to feel a separation from God as a protector.

Blake's Psalm 137 appears to be set in verse three, as the Babylonians require the Israelites to sing "a song of Zion," and plays with the theme of disconnection. A Babylonion woman points to the harp that has been hung in the tree and the psalmist, in shackles, sadly considers her request. The despair in his face and in the faces of his wife and children are a reaction to the request to sing a song for God not only "in a strange land" but also under duress. The distress here is not the same "distress" that leads the speaker of Psalm 18 to call out to God. The song in Psalm 137 is a song that the psalmist is asked to recite from memory, not for God but for the benefit of the Babylonians. The words, a song that the psalmist already knows, will be repeated but the connection to God is not present. Once again, as in Blake's Psalm 18, the strange composition of the picture gives a clue to its meaning. In key respects, the painting is awkwardly composed. At first glance, the painting appears orderly with the Babylonians on the left and the slaves on the right creating bounding columns which frame the central figures, the bound man and his family and two Babylonians who require a song.  But the harp at the center of

the composition seems almost to have been almost slapped into place by the artist. In the curving and soft lines of the composition, the harp creates a starkly geometric and jarring presence. It throws the symmetrical composition into complete disarray and confuses the eye in what would otherwise be a very orderly illustration. The woman's arm creates a line to the harp, the harp makes a line down to the man's head, and his eyes look back to the woman, creating a strange triangle at the heart of the painting. The triangle disarticulates the whole composition as it becomes the new principle of composition, making the painting appear as a series of separate elements set next to one another and not a composed whole.

The harp, although a depiction of exactly what is given in the text, seems not to belong in this painting. And it is the pointing, the demand placed upon the harp, that creates the asymmetrical triangle at the heart of the print. Whereas Psalm 18 is an image of symmetry, down to the very faces of the cherubim that descend as a symmetrical geometric force, here the coerced prayer makes a mockery of the apparent symmetry. The visionary, inspired moment of praise is turned into a failed composition which creates the impression of the separation of the elements. The disarticulation becomes literal when one looks closely at the central figures in the psalm. At first, the figures appear to be a man and woman sitting side by side with their children behind them. But on closer inspection there are limbs that cannot be accounted for. The bearded man appears to have three legs. If the third leg, the farthest to the left in the composition, belongs to the woman, then where is the man's second foot? In addition, the bundle in the woman's lap appears to be the back of a human head with tendrils of hair. An arm reaches up from below to cradle it. One would assume that this is the woman's arm, but the angle and proportion of the arm make this impossible. The head seems to be severed, as it has no clear owner. In short, the center of the painting, although not seeming so at first glance, is actually filled with

disarticulated body parts. There may be multiple explanations for this. Very possibly Blake had begun the composition with one group of figures and changed it while leaving some of the details behind. One could argue that the disarticulated head and arm belong to a third, hidden person who holds his head and lays it in the woman's lap. But however one explains it away, the fact remains that at the center of the composition the human figure has been reduced to a collection of limbs and heads that have been separated from any clear bodily owner. Not only has the composition been disarticulated by the strangely placed harp, but the bodies of those forced to pray have been disarticulated as well. The disarticulation in what appears at first glance to be an orderly composition, echoes the separation at the heart of the psalm. To sing a song of Zion in a strange land is exactly what Blake opposes when he writes his visionary poetry. For Blake, the mere repetition of the biblical text in England or any other 'strange land,' will not bring forth the ecstatic moment of prophecy that he desires. To repeat the codified prayers already recorded in the psalms would be to pray and not praise, to create chaos in the place of symmetry and composition.

To repeat the songs of Zion would be, simply, to give in to the demands of the Babylonians. Here, another theme (that one also finds Blake's print *Laocoön* and many of his other works) enters the psalm: the theme of Empire. In the *Laocoön* Blake excoriates Empire as the enemy of art, writing of those that destroy Imaginative Art: "For their Glory is War and Dominion Empire against Art." The Babylonian Empire is here opposed to the work of the psalmist. The background of classical, or perhaps neoclassical, structures serves as a link between Babylon and the classical empires of Greece and Rome which Blake will implicate in the *Laocoön.* As in Psalm 18, the main figures are surrounded by a supporting cast of characters organized according to geometric principles, as though they were a force more of composition

than actors with their own force. But instead of cherubim who create the mediation between psalmist and God, here we have figures of empire and those that empire enslaves. On the left, a king with crown and royal robes stands while another figure looks over his shoulder. (It should be noted that this King's red robes stand out in contrast to all the other coloring in the painting. The red robes are simultaneously royal robes and robes the color of the blood which Empire sheds.) The spears that indicate the violent force of the Babylonian empire tower over them in vertical lines. On the right are those enslaved to that empire with their oars and shackles creating a perfectly symmetrical reflection. Even the figure peering over the shoulder is repeated on both sides. The power of Empire is reflected in the abjectness of those it enslaves. It is specifically the force of Empire that cuts off the psalmist from a moment of connection. The bearded and bound figure at the center of these forces gives praise in *David Delivered out of Many Waters* but can only pray in *By the Waters of Babylon*. The absolute force of the Babylonian Empire is here exactly opposed to the force of the cherubim in Psalm 18. While both are abstracted to become part of the composition, each force is the background of and basis for the encounter or non-encounter with the divine.

The question of empire brings us to another element of Blake's print, his depiction of the Jewish children. Psalm 137 was a popular psalm for English adaptation due to its graphic depiction of a call for violent revenge. Christian psalmists would take this and turn it to a call for mercy for one's enemies, thus illustrating the supposed difference between the Jew and the Christian.[89] The psalm is a Jewish call for revenge that can be turned to a message of Christian mercy. For Blake, this is not the case. The children Blake draws into the print are clearly Jewish children and not the children of the Babylonians. The psalm clearly states that the Babylonian children should be dashed on the rocks so that the Babylonians will have done to them what has

already happened to the Jews, implying that the Babylonians have violently murdered the children of the Jews. The revelation that the psalmist's children have been murdered comes at the end of the psalm, and reveals that the sadness of captivity and absence is more than it seemed; it is also the despair of having seen one's children brutally murdered. That Blake wants to call attention to the Jewish loss and suffering is clear in his inclusion of the young children hiding behind their mother. Instead of rewriting the psalm in the mode of Christian mercy, Blake here defends the original call of the psalm, depicting the full horror that has been visited on the psalmist. The children are still present in the moment of the painting, but any reader of the psalm knows that they will soon be dead. They are almost ghosts already as they cower behind their mother and father. Blake's psalm is not part of the standard Christian re-rendering of Psalm 137. Rather, it depicts the violent horror that Blake saw at the root of Empire and the link of the forces of Empire to what he saw as the fundamental disconnection of art from the deity in the repetition of formal religious language, like that given in prayer.[90] As Blake writes in the *Laocoön* print: "The outward Ceremony is Antichrist."

And yet, in closing this reading of Blake's Psalm 137, it must be noted that while the moment described in the psalm may be one of disconnection and anxiety about the absence from God, the psalm itself seems a spontaneous song addressed to God. In Psalm 137, that is, we do not get the song that the Babylonians demand of the psalmist, but the psalmist's own response to that demand: sadness, anger, despair, and a song. Yet, the spontaneous speech for the psalmist then becomes the codified Israelite song that is Psalm 137, and is, in a sense reinscribed back into the realm of the demanded prayer. In Blake, however, we get a painting in the place of the forced repetitive speech of the psalmist, which, by leaving the medium of song to depict a song, escapes the very problem given in the verses of Psalm 137. That is, while Psalm 137 must use

song to discuss the imposition of song, a painting circumvents the entire problem of forced speech by leaving the realm of speech, or at least pointing to possibility of something outside of speech. Thus, Blake is able to give us the moment of disconnection without himself participating in the very disconnection that he depicts. Blake, in interpreting the psalm paints a moment in which an artist is divorced from art, in which a psalmist is divorced from praise, but in doing so he creates a work of art that reclaims the tradition. Blake's own painting, as the practice of a different art, then, itself becomes the agent of redemption for the moment depicted. It attempts to speak for the dead children and for the shackled and bearded psalmist, in a way that speech never could.

## II. Blake's Laocoön and the Hebraic

The entire reading of these two psalms, *David Delivered out of Many Waters* and *By the Waters of Babylon,* as opposing pairs depicting the difference between praise and prayer is dependent on the interpretation of a line from the print *Laocoön*. [See Figure 3]. The *Laocoön* is one of Blake's latest works, considered by many scholars to be exemplary of Blake's mature thought on many topics, including Empire, art, money, war, and religion. At the center of the print is a drawing of the classical statue *Laocoön,* a depiction which Blake had created in 1815 for a stipple engraving for John Flaxman's article on sculpture in Rees's *The Cycloepaedia; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature.* Blake's print *Laocoön* was a re-rendering of the statue as an engraving and the generally accepted dating of Essick and Viscomi places it in 1826 (230).[91] The statue depicted was considered to be *the* example of sublime, classical sculpture. Blake's reframing of the central figure as יה [Yah] and not the Trojan Laocoön presents the engraving as a subversion of this eighteenth-century critical tradition. But what is

the justification of reading these psalm prints with the *Laocoön* aside from their shared authorship? I contend that there are numerous reasons to read these works together, the most salient being that both the *Laocoön* of 1826-27 and Blake's 1805 and 1806 psalm paintings take part in a Blakean project to reclaim the Hebraic tradition for English poetics and English art. In addition to the understanding of the Hebraic in these prints, the similarity of the central figures should be noted. The *Laocoön* statue portrays a figure bearded and bound by snakes much as David and the captives are bound by chains. In addition, the themes of praise/prayer and empire that figure prominently in the *Laocoön* are brought out in Blake's psalms. Blake specifically refers to the Babylonians as enemies of art in the *Laocoön*, invoking the image of the spears and robes of the Babylonians who demand a song of the psalmist in Blake's Psalm 137. Finally, the *Laocoön*, like the psalm depictions, is a compound creation—both visual and textual, and playing at the edges of the relationship between text and image.

While Blake's psalms reclaim the Hebrew tradition by reworking a Hebrew text, the *Book of Psalms*, the *Laocoön* reclaims Hebrew by reclaiming a Hebrew art form, micrography. Blake's work has often been read in relation to the Hebraic and Judaism. Links between Blake, Judaism, and the Hebrew language have been enumerated by many scholars. Marsha Keith Schuchard's *William Blake's Sexual Path to Spiritual Vision* makes a particularly important contribution by tracing the links between Blake and the Jewish influenced practices of Swedenborg and the Moravians. Schuchard concludes that Blake, as a "serious student" of Swedenborg, came into contact with many ideas adapted from Jewish mystical practices (216). Sheila Spector also links Blake to Jewish mysticism, arguing that his work was profoundly influenced by Kabbalah.[92] In addition to the Jewish/Hebrew connection through Swedenborg, Peter Ackroyd details the friendship between Blake and publisher Joseph Johnson in his *Blake: A*

*Biography* (158). Johnson published the work of Jewish authors including David Levi, who became the eighteenth-century "standard authority" on Judaism for both English Jews and gentiles (Chard 96, Popkins 98).[93] All of these historical associations between Blake and those who may have introduced him to Jewish ideas are somewhat circumstantial proof of any knowledge he may have had of Judaism, but it is known that Blake undertook the study of Hebrew. In an 1803 letter to his brother William Blake writes: "am now learning my Hebrew. אבג".[94] Scholars have made much of Blake's relative knowledge of Hebrew or lack thereof.[95] Both Arnold Cheskin and Sheila Spector conclude that Blake did not have an especially deep knowledge of the Hebrew language. Spector argues that "he knew a different kind of Hebrew," referring to Blake's mythical understanding of the language (213). Unfortunately, as Cheskin notes, the identity of Blake's Hebrew teacher and his possible connections to London's Jewish community, has not yet been discovered (Cheskin 183).[96] But whether Blake knew Hebrew well or only a little, he certainly invoked the Hebraic in his prints and poetry, making use of Hebrew letters and calling for a return to Hebrew art after what he viewed as the perversion and corruption of classical influence. In his psalm depictions, *Laocoön, Milton: A Poem,* and many of his works Blake is participating in an English reworking and reclamation of the Hebrew tradition. But one area of the connection between Blake and the Hebraic that scholars have not noted is the possible influence of the Hebrew art of micrography, the art of using tiny Hebrew letters to create images.[97] It is my contention that in many of Blake's plates, and especially in the print *Laocoön,* often referred to as *ה' and His Two Sons, Satan and Adam* by scholars, we can see the influence of micrography, and that an understanding of this influence on Blake's work can illuminate a deeper understanding of Blake's attempt to claim the Hebrew tradition and to break down the barriers between text and image.

In her history of micrography,"Micrography as Art," Leila Avrin defines micrography as "minute script…written into either geometric or abstract forms or woven into the shapes of objects" (43). Micrography developed as a scribal practice in the ninth century in Egypt and Palestine (Tahan 10). Scribes, forbidden from elaborating on the biblical text and from creating illustrations, began to turn the notes in the margins of text into images, using the letters themselves as the medium for depiction (Avrin 45). These notes, which usually explain possible different pronunciations for the text, were formed into the shapes of animals or other abstract designs. While micrography is related to other forms of illumination and to Arabic designs that used text, it is a uniquely Jewish practice.[98] Micrography eventually spread to Europe, flourishing as more than a marginal art form and reaching its peak of popularity in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Spain and Italy (Tahan 11). Elaborate drawings and designs made entirely out of lines of script became the frontispieces for Hebrew texts. Script was formed into the shapes of animals or used to create geometric designs, creating a carpet effect.

Although Hebrew micrography waned somewhat in popularity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the eighteenth century marked a great revival in Hebrew manuscript art (Tahan 11). Emile G. L. Schrijver notes: "From about 1710 onward one can with justification speak of a real flowering of Hebrew manuscript production" (33). Where the printing press had brought an end to much of the manuscript creation in Europe, the Jewish practice of micrography flourished in the eighteenth century in Jewish marriage contracts (ketubot) and books used for ritual observance such as the Book of Esther (the megillah), the Pryaerbook (siddur), and the book for the Passover Seder (haggadot) (Nameny 57). While Italy and Holland were the centers of micrography in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the eighteenth century saw the spread of micrography to Central Europe where Moravian, Bohemian, and German artists continued the

tradition (Nameny 53, 59).[99] These eighteenth-century manuscripts were primarily ornamental and no longer part of the margin notes of the biblical text (Nameny 57). For the most part, England was not a center of micrographic production in the eighteenth century. However, the practice of micrographic illumination of the marriage contract spread from Italy to the community of Sephardic Jews in London, and a copy of a popular Italian marriage contract design was in use in London until 1850 (Nameny 31, 35). The earliest example of a definitively English micrographic work is a circumcision book created in London in 1826, the same year of Blake's *Laocoön***.** Whether or not Blake encountered micrography cannot yet be proven definitively, but we do know that micrographic images were present in England at the time and that Jewish scribes in Central Europe were creating masterpieces of micrography. It is also clear that Blake had a profound interest in both Hebrew art and printing and manuscript techniques. The revival of Hebrew manuscripts in the eighteenth century was, at least in part, a reaction against the monopoly of the printing press on textual creation and a desire to keep alive the art of the scribal manuscript (Nameny 28). Blake, too, created works which valorized the individuality of the manuscript and attempted to create printed work that would appear as a manuscript.[100] If Blake, in his forays into Hebrew study and mysticism and in his devotion to the art of printing had come upon an example of micrography, it surely would have captured his fancy. In fact, it is my contention that the similarities between Hebrew micrography and Blake's print *Laocoön* are unmistakable, and that Blake must certainly have been influenced by Hebrew micrography.

Surrounding the image of the statue in *Laocoön* are miniature lines of text which snake about the image and fill the page with blocks of text, just as in micrography. The letters of the text are themselves full of squiggles, with small ts that curve at the ends and ampersands snaking about the page. Looking at Blake's print it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to decide

what is text and what is illustration. The whole print ripples like the torso muscles of Yah/Laocoön, and snakes about as if to encompass the statue just as the snakes in the statue encompass its central figures. In addition, the image itself is created through a process of engraving, and is therefore made up of drawn lines. The text takes on shape and becomes image, while the image consists of nothing but the written line. The Hebrew text in the print exemplifies this undecidability between text and image, being both written text and, to a western eye, unfamiliar with the Hebrew language, simply image. The words יה [yah], מלאך יהוה [malach adonai/Angel of the Lord], ישע [Jesus] and לילית [Lilith] all appear in Hebrew script and are both simply words and also the signification of Hebrew script to the eye of an English speaker.[101]

Many scholars have noted the ways in which text becomes image and image becomes text in this print, but none have linked this with the printing practices of Hebrew micrography. In "Blake's Laocoön: A Degree Zero of Literary Production" David E. James comments on the combination of text and image in the print, but concludes that the text has been arranged in its strange sequence due to the necessity of writing in the space left by the depiction of the statue (228). Similarly, in *The Traveller in the Evening: The Last Works of William Blake* Morton D. Paley explains the print's appearance simply: "Blake would have found himself with a plate presenting large empty areas inviting the addition of text." Paley also points to the inability to read the print "in a linear fashion" (57). In *Blake, Nationalism, and the Politics of Alienation* Julia M. Wright takes the argument about the lack of linearity in the print to its radical limit, arguing that Blake's print enacts an attack on "causality and linearity," but she also makes the claim that the print lacks "generic recognizability" (2). In other words, Wright wants to argue that Blake's *Laocoön* has no genre. In contrast, I would argue that the genre is that of micrography, and that far from having no principle of organization or simply being organized

based on the necessity of page layout, Blake's principle of organization is that of the very "Hebrew art" that he makes reference to in the print. When Blake refers to "Hebrew art" it has been assumed that he referred to the Bible, but what if "Hebrew art" should be taken more literally, as referring to a Hebrew form of art?

A comparison of *Laocoön* to the print "King Solomon Written with Song of Songs," a micrographic creation by Marcus Donath of Nitra, dated 1819-1820, reveals many similarities between Blake's print and the practices of micrography in the 1820s. [See Figure 4.] In the "King Solomon" print we find examples of both types of micrography, with Hebrew text used in blocks to give a carpet effect and used to outline the image of a seated King Solomon. As in the *Laocoön* print, the text appears in the spaces around the central figure and Hebrew writing is oriented in every direction. It is not my contention that Blake saw this particular print. I have chosen this print because it is contemporary with Blake's print and clearly illustrates many of the techniques used in the *Laocoön*. There are also certainly differences between the prints. In "King Solomon" the figure is itself a work of micrography, whereas in Blake's work the micrography only appears around the central image. And yet, the similarities are striking: the use of text as image, the curving lines of script, the blocks of script that surround the figure, and the use of Hebrew script. The breakdown of text and image noted by scholars of this print does indeed belong to a genre. The genre is Hebrew micrography. Blake makes use of both types of micrography, using it to create shapes on the page and also to create a carpet of language. In addition, Blake includes a clue to what he is undertaking by making us of Hebrew script in the print. Simply using Hebrew script on the page does not, of course, make this micrography, but the combination of Hebrew text and the use of the English script as image, reveal Blake's print as an example of English micrography.[102]

In addition to reading the print as the radical limit of the breakdown between text and image, scholars have also noted the ways in which Blake's print engages with the history of the classical statue and rewrites its origins as Hebraic.[103] Specifically, Blake's long title "*יה & His Two Sons, Satan & Adam as they were copied from the Cherubim of Solomons Temple by three Rhodians & applied to Natural Fact or History of Illium*, writes a very different history for the statue than that being written by art historians of Blake's day such as Winkelman and Lessing.[104] In Blake's mythical art history, the image of the Laocoön was copied from a Hebrew original. The figure depicted is not Laocoön at all, but יה [Yah], a name for God. Not only is the statue of Hebrew origin, it depicts man's origin and fall. The greatest work of classical art turns out, in Blake's account, to be an appropriation of the Hebrew tradition. Blake is interested in the Laocoön not as a story out of Virgil, but as an object, as a classical statue and as a stand-in for that classical tradition. The story Blake tells with his new title is a genealogical narrative of western art. It is also a linguistic narrative in which Hebrew names are more original than their Greek counterparts.

I would like to argue that Blake's reclamation of the classical tradition for a narrative of Hebrew artistic primacy does not stop at the title given to the print, but is written into the very fiber of the print through the use of micrography. What better way to reclaim classical art than to surround it with the encircling lines of a Hebrew art form? Two arts meet on the page and one surrounds and reclaims the other. In this way, not only the content but also the form of the print, enacts Blake's project. Just as the snakes encircle the figures in the statue, Blake's snaking, micrographic text encircles and cuts off the life of the statue, calling it back to what Blake understood to be its Hebrew origins. *Laocoön* scholars have read both the breakdown of language into its material elements and the narrative inheritance that Blake writes in *Laocoön*,

but only by reading the print as micrography can we see that these elements of the print are not separate. By incorporating micrography, Blake rewrites both the form and history of English art as inherited from the classical tradition.

Several years before undertaking the *Laocoön* print, Blake created a freehand drawing of the Laocoön group. [See Figure 5.] The drawing is clearly of Laocoön/Yah and his sons wrestling with snakes, but it is very different from Blake's engraving of the statue. The figures are positioned differently with Laocoön/Yah's arms both stretching up to hold the serpent above his head. The drawing is incomplete with the figures of the two sons only sketched in to the sides of Laocoön/Yah. In addition to the changes in composition, the piece also has a completely different feeling to it. Whereas, the drawing of the Laocoön statue is substantial in Blake's rendering, solid and frozen, Blake's drawing imparts a sense of movement and energy to his figures. In the *Laocoön* print, the group of figures are pictured on a pedestal, which takes up a large part of the very full print. In this way the depiction of the statue highlights the fact that it is a statue. In the *Laocoön* print Blake is reclaiming the classical art forms embodied in the Laocoön statue and so his print stresses the fact of the group of figures as a statue. The forms are frozen in awkward positions and the pedestal marks them as a work of art put on display. In contrast, the drawing of the Laocoön seems to depict figures freely moving. In place of the pedestal we have only the very prominent left foot of the central figure. In Blake's drawing Laocoön/Yah is a man caught in a moment of struggle, not a statue put on display. Erik McCarthy has argued quite convincingly that the drawing represents Blake's attempt to create the original Hebrew artwork which he claims the statue was based upon (80). In other words, this is the Hebrew יה [yah] and not Laocoön at all. The Yah figure so closely resembles the central figures of Blake's psalm illustrations discussed above as to be uncanny. His head even tilts at the

same angle as the bearded man in *By the Waters of Babylon*. The drawing, then, certainly participates in the reclamation of the Hebraic for Blake. But what we find in the *Laocoön* print is that several years later Blake found a new way to reclaim this tradition. His purely visual depictions changed into the composite work found in the *Laocoön* and in Hebrew micrography. In the *Laocoön* print Blake expanded his ability to claim Hebrew art by positing a direct confrontation between the Hebraic and classical arts.

Exactly what Blake means by "art" can be interrogated by looking at the many repetitions of the term in the print itself.[105] In addition to the reference to Hebrew art, "Hebrew art is called Sin by the Deist Science," the print contains many definitions of art, including: "The Old & New Testaments are the Great Code of Art/ Art is the Tree of Life," "Christianity is Art & not Money/ Money is its Curse," "Without Unceasing Practise nothing can be done/ Practise is Art If you leave off you are Lost," and "Prayer is the Study of Art/ Praise is the Practise of Art." In these statements "Art" is equated with a constellation of concepts: the Bible, the Tree of Life, Christianity, Practice, and Praise. But it is important to note that the Bible is not art itself, but a code of art from which art grows. It is through the practice and propagation of the code in Christianity and through the practice of praise that art is manifest. In the *Laocoön*, the practice of Christianity and the practice of art are the same: "Jesus & his Apostles & Disciples were all Artists." Hebrew art, then, is that art which grows from the practice of the code, and is more than the "Old & New Testaments" upon which it is based. The print also aligns art with imagination in opposition to science, money, imitation, and empire: "Israel delivered from Egypt is Art delivered from Nature & Imitation", "Art Degraded Imagination Denied War Governed the Nations", and "These are not the Works of Egypt nor Babylon Whose Gods are the Powers Of this World. Goddess, Nature. Who first spoil & then destroy Imaginative Art/ For their Glory is

War and Dominion Empire against Art." "Art," then, is something very specific in the print. Art is the practice of Christianity that is based in imagination and inspiration.[106] It stands in opposition to war and empire. And more than an object, "art" is a practice that descends not from "Egypt" and "Babylon" but from the Hebrew tradition. The work of the artist is to continually enact this artistic tradition.

Micrography, as a uniquely Hebrew art form without an apparent link to the traditions of the empires that he deplores, would have had great appeal to Blake. In the print he refers specifically to "Hebrew art" and in the preface to *Milton: A Poem* he calls for exactly the reclamation of art that he enacts here:

> The Stolen and Perverted Writings of Homer & Ovid, of Plato & Cicero, which all Men ought to contemn are set up by artifice against the Sublime of the Bible; but when the New Age is at leisure to Pronounce, all will be set up right, & those Grand Works of the more ancient & consciously & professedly Inspired Men will hold their proper rank, & the Daughters of Memory shall become the Daughters of Inspiration.

Here, Blake writes a very similar history to that given in *Laocoön*; classical art is stolen from and a perversion of the "more ancient" and "Sublime" Bible, just as the statue attributed to classical artists was copied from a Hebrew source. The poem calls for "Inspired Men" to take their inspiration from the Bible and not from classical writing. In this example, Blake is clearly referring to the realm of the written word, comparing classical authors to biblical authors. In contrast, *Laocoön* takes on not only the written word, but the history of art in general. But whereas in the realm of the written word it is easy to hold the Bible up to the poetry of Homer or Virgil, in the realm of art history there is no given Hebrew equivalent of classical sculpture. Yet, for Blake's narrative of art history to be complete he must have an example of a truly Hebrew

art. In the print, Blake imagines the art that would have adorned the Temple as his example of great Hebrew art. This form of Hebrew art can only be imagined; if it ever existed, it is lost. But the missing element, the missing "Hebrew art" that could correspond to the *Laocoön* in Blake's geneaology, is provided by micrography. Micrography is a uniquely Jewish art form. It has a relationship to other modes of illumination and printing, which would have struck a chord with Blake, but it is an art form that belongs uniquely to the Hebrew tradition. This Hebrew art provides Blake both with an imagined Hebrew origin for all art and with a mode by which to reclaim classical art.[107] In *Milton*, Blake proclaims the need to return to a biblical example, but in the *Laocoön* Blake enacts the return by making use of the art of Hebrew micrography.

The discovery of micrography in Blake's print has implications not only for an understanding of the artistic genealogy that Blake inscribes in his work, but also for an understanding of the noted breakdown between text and image in Blake's oeuvre. Blake continually plays with the limits of text and image in what W.J.T. Mitchell refers to in *Blake's Composite Art* as a "visual-verbal dialectics" (4).[108] Even in his earlier work, such as *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* the drawings that accompany his poetry cannot be considered merely illustrations. Often, the drawing depicts something outside of the text or seems even at odds with it.[109] The complicated relationship between the sister arts of painting and poetry is brought to new heights in Blake, where, according to Northrop Frye, neither text nor image is subordinated to the other (41). Through micrography, the breakdown of forms in Blake becomes part of his stated prophetic project to reclaim sublime ancient forms. The dissolution of the limit between text and image is exactly the art form that the Hebrew tradition has to give to the English tradition. Blake's emphasis on composite art forms throughout his oeuvre can then be read as an expression of the Hebraic element that he wishes to incorporate into his work. What

appears the most novel in Blake's work is actually an attempt to re-imagine the most ancient forms of art and poetry.

In a sense, the Hebrew letters' own compositeness, being both text and simply shape to non Hebrew speaking readers, situates Hebrew at a place or time before the division between text and image. The origin of all things, inscribed in the Hebrew text of Genesis, corresponds to the origin of art prior to its disarticulation into separate fields. In Genesis creative power is written as linguistic agency: "God said, 'Let there be light!' and there was light." God's speech is the very material of creation. The Hebrew letter and its inscription as word/image in micrography draw upon the image of language as a creative force. Micrography makes the creative force of letters literal by using them as the very material of artistic creation. Just as God forms Adam from the dust and Adam will return to dust, the scribe forms the shapes out of the material of the letters and yet the forms retain their materiality as merely letters. Micrographic language becomes the sign of the creative force with which Blake endows all his language, but more than this, it is the sign of "art" as it existed in the moment of creation. This art at the origin would be something unimaginable, inhabiting the place of God's own creation and inaccessible to human understanding. But in Blake's prophetic call for an art of the imagination and in his repeated attempts to inscribe an art form that is simultaneously visual and poetic, we can see Blake pointing to a mythical origin of the arts from which he imagines his art springs. The implications of Blake's use of micrography, then, go beyond the explication of Blake's genealogy of western art as inherited from the Hebraic tradition and touch upon Blake's conception of creation, art, and poetry.

A fuller understanding of micrography can then help to illuminate Blake's concept of language, specifically the creative force in language. The use of language as image in

micrography draws out the material aspects of language. Language as the inscription of individual letters is brought to the forefront by the use of the alphabet and the written line as form. But the materiality of the micrographic text calls for two different, and essentially opposed, interpretations. On the one hand, the materiality of language can be understood theologically as the extension of a Jewish tradition that invests the written alphabet with force and creative power. On the other hand, micrography also invokes materiality not as a creative force, but as the disarticulation of language from any referential power, in other words, language as merely inscription. Each reading of micrography would then call for a radically different understanding of Blake's project.

In "La lettre hébraïque et sa signification" Colette Sirat presents a theological reading of micrography's materiality. She defines what makes micrography essentially Jewish and differentiates it from other material uses of script, such as the calligram: "The principle of micrography is different: the text used to "draw" geometric, vegetable, animal, or human forms or large letters is present but is not read. We are in the presence of writing that does not emerge as readable content, a text that finds its *raison d'être* in something other than sequential, linear reading" (18, my translation).[110] She concludes that the central importance of the Hebrew alphabet is itself the message conveyed. This essentially theological understanding of micrography links it to a long Jewish history of investment in the power of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In particular, the Jewish mystical tradition of Kaballah endows Hebrew words and the individual letters of the Hebrew alphabet with enormous significance and power.[111] In the Kaballistic tradition of Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia, the letters of the Hebrew alphabet take on great importance as they are combined and recombined in a "science of the combination of letters" in order to form the many names of God (Scholem 134). In addition to the kabbalistic

tradition, micrography is also a prime example of Jewish investment in the written form of God's name. The prohibition on speaking God's name means that the name appears only as written language (Sirat 30). For this reason the tradition of the Geniza developed, a place to bury written texts that bear the name of God. The written language itself becomes a body which must be given burial rites (Sirat 30).

If we are to embrace the theological understanding of micrography, Blake's embrace of the tradition of "Hebrew art" can then be read as a celebration of the creative and mystical powers of the Hebrew alphabet. If, as Sirat contends, the significance of micrography is that its reference is the alphabet itself, then Blake's use of it in his primarily English print, could signify an investment in the holiness of the English language. Given this understanding of micrography, when Blake inscribes the name יה [Yah], one of God's many names in the Jewish tradition, he is pointing to the force of God's name behind every inscription which combines the letters of the alphabet. I would like to argue, however, that while Blake may have invoked micrography in order to signify an English claim to the Hebrew tradition, he would have found the Jewish theological understanding of micrography limited in several ways. While Sirat's account of micrography clearly situates it in the history of Jewish theology, by limiting her account to theology she does not fully delve into the implications of micrography's materiality. Sirat refers to micrography as language that has a "presence" and a "raison d'etre." In Sirat's account, the language of micrography becomes the sign of language which is the sign of the presence of God as the inscription of his name in the very material of the alphabet. Micrography is then the reinscription of God and God's creation in its most basic form, as nothing more than the alphabet.

It is true that in Blake's explicit message in the *Laocoön* and in *Milton: A Poem*, we can find evidence for a theological understanding of language, poetry, and art. In *Milton: A Poem* Blake desires "To cast aside from Poetry, all that is not inspiration" (Plate 44). In the *Laocoön* he equates art with the divine body: "The Eternal Body of Man is The Imagination, that is God himself The Divine Body/ It manifests itself in his Works of Art." Inspiration and imagination, which have an instantaneous and present quality, are simultaneously the divine body and its manifestation in art and poetry. This view of art corresponds with the theological reading of micrography which invests language with divine properties. In this reading of micrography and of Blake the reduction of language down to its material elements or back to a pre-disarticulated state, in which language and image are one, is a means of invoking the divine presence in language and art. Mitchell has noted that Blake as a "tendency to treat writing and printing as media capable of full presence" (Picture 117). Blake's own invocation of the divine in art dovetails so nicely with Sirat's rendering of micrography that it is almost tempting to leave the reading of Blake's print here in the realm of the utopian, and to argue that Blake invokes micrography to further an art that would have the power to incarnate the divine. Certainly, this is one aspect of the *Laocoön*, but it ignores the critical flipside always simultaneously at work in Blake.

In Blake, the divine body is not the only body that comes into play. It is true that in the *Laocoön* print Blake refers to the "The Eternal Body of Man" and to "The Divine Body," linking them both to imagination and to art, but he also refers to Adam as a creation that can be destroyed, as a physical body: "He repented that he had made Adam (of the Female, the Adamah) & it grieved him at his heart" and "What can be Created Can be Destroyed/ Adam is only The Natural man & not the Soul or Imagination." The material body of man, of Adam, was

created and can be destroyed. We have seen this disarticulation of the human form made literal already in *By the Waters of Babylon* where the moment of forced prayer is embodied in bodiless limbs and a head at the center of the composition. This is the other side of the materiality engendered by micrography. Micrography points to letters as the basis of creation and the basis of connection to the "divine presence" and as the articulation of a "divine body" that Blake invokes in the *Laocoön,* but simultaneously micrography points to the fact that creation is nothing but material: the dust of the earth, lacking presence, a body without the divine. The destruction of creation is written in its very creation, as material. In "A Wall of Words: The Sublime as Text" V. A. De Luca writes about the ways in which Blake's text becomes "a wall of words," liberating "the signifier from the signified" and revealing the underlying materiality behind the referential function of language (220, 227). In *Literal Imagination* Nelson Hilton notes the material quality of Blake's written language: "Blake participated in, and manifested, a vision of the word as object …the word becomes more than the mark of an idea" (3). Similarly, Mitchell discusses how Blake makes a body out of language, "asking us to see his alphabetic forms with our senses, not just read through or past them to the signified speech or 'concept' behind them, but to pause at the sensuous surface of calligraphic and typographic forms" (Picture 147). The letters that make up the images of micrography may be an attempt to touch the divine, but also ultimately fail to be anything other than letters, material. Destruction of the word and of the body is, then, inscribed in the creation of the micrographic image.

The critique of an understanding of micrography as the presence of a holy alphabetic creative force does not need to come only from the contemporary, critical understanding of signification and materiality; it can be seen specifically in relation to the breakdown between holy and secular language in Blake. While certainly revealing a creative force in language,

micrography also functions to call into question the sanctity or holiness of any particular use of language. Originally, micrography was created out of marginalia, notes meant to convey concrete information about the biblical text. While the text to which they provided commentary was considered too holy for this type of elaboration, the purely communicative and practical nature of the marginal notes provided an opening for artistic expression. The least artistic text, those words meant to convey simple information, became the site of elaborate art, while the artistically crafted text of the bible was too essential for elaboration. Micrography, then, brings out the tension between sacred and secular language. It is both essential and marginal. The need to inscribe it in the margins points to the apparent frozenness of the biblical text as codified and sacred. The supplemental power of the micrographic text comes to interrupt the static use of language, pointing to the plastic nature of all texts, including those that are sacred and holy. The micrographic text appears as simply a supplement in the margins, but turns out to reveal that the lines between original and commentary are always blurred at the site of inscription.

Blake's work also calls into question the central holiness of the biblical text. Blake played with the images and narrative of the Bible, but put them to work as part of his own cosmology.[112] A key text for understanding Blake's deconstruction of the separation between the holy and demonic is *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. In fact, this text plays with many of the same themes brought out in the *Laocoön* including Bodies, Empire, Good and Evil, and the distinction between Prayer and Praise. The "Proverbs of Hell" given in the text closely resemble the aphoristic quality of the text in the *Laocoön* print. It also specifically questions the perceived differences between the holy and the demonic. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake's narrator, discussing his relationship with an angel/devil, refers to a diabolical reading of the Bible: "we often read the Bible together in its infernal or diabolical sense (Plate 24)." Even the

Bible, the "great code of art," is not off limits for Blake's irreverence. In fact, simply by implying that the text has another "sense" Blake questions its status as sacred. Sacred texts, if truly sacred, should not be corruptible by "diabolical" interpretation, but this is exactly what Blake finds in the biblical text.

The tension between the holy and "infernal" in Blake also comes out in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* through the focus in the text on "contraries."[113] Just as in the *Laocoön* print, where the two snakes are named "Good" and "Evil" in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake also presents us with Good and Evil and claims that these are the names that religion gives to contraries. In this way, Blake makes Good and Evil forces in the world, but removes the moral judgments tied to them. Similarly, on the bottom of Plate 20, there is a picture of a large serpent, the Leviathan, and in several of the extant copies of the text we can see the motto "Opposition is True Friendship." The theme of serpents tied to the force of opposition or contrariness returns in the *Laocoön* in the form of the snakes that surround the central figures and in the form of the micrographic text which swirls around the page. The holy nature of the micrography coexists on the page with the diabolical nature of it. The material language which brings us closest to a holy moment of artistic origination is also the language which points to the impossibility of language being anything other than its formal elements. The opposition engendered in the references of Blake's language, Good and Evil, Art and Science, becomes a tense opposition that embodies the entire page and the very form of composition. Text and image oppose one another as friends, combining and splitting simultaneously in the inscription of text as image.

Blake's work draws upon the biblical text, but is in no way limited by what it finds there. Similarly, micrography turns the Bible into the material of another art form. When the lines of a psalm are engraved as a micrographic image, they remain psalmic while taking on an entirely

new character. Returning to the *Laocoön* we find that this ambivalence between sacred and demonic text is also inscribed in the *Laocoön*: "Is not every Vice possible to Man described in the Bible openly." The biblical text, for Blake, is both holy and demonic, both connected to and divorced from the divine presence. And what seems to be divine of demonic cannot be so easily defined. The energy of art may be closer to the demonic, while the holy text of the Bible describes sin and vice. The material of art, the forms of the letters that make up sacred text, are both divine and common. The art form that comes before the breakdown between image and text, the divine art form that I argue Blake attempts to engender with his use of micrography, has already been lost at the moment of any inscription. Micrography, no matter how holy or original it seems, can only stand in for that art form and point to the fact of that originary form's disarticulation at the origin. The divine body is always already the body of Adam, which can be created and destroyed. The holy is always already inscribing the vices of the demonic.

*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* also serves as the proof text for the breakdown of the very opposition on which my reading of the psalms is based: that of prayer and praise. Whereas in the *Laocoön* prayer and praise are opposed in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* they are presented as equivalent: "Prayers plow not! Praises reap not!" (Plate 9). One explanation would be that over the next thirty years Blake's conception of prayer and praise changed. But read in light of the theory of contraries we can see that the seemingly opposed nature of prayer and praise could be read as a productive contrary, in which the two are not so clearly different from one another. Knowing when we are clearly in the realm of prayer, simply repeating outward forms, or when we are in the realm of praise, ecstatically connecting the divine, might seem like it should be simple, but these two opposed states are not so easy to distinguish. One may think that he is purely praising God, only to find that he is participating in prayer. One may think that

she is merely praying, forced to do so by the forces of empire, and find that a song of praise comes forth. The separation of the two is only clear in the realm of the ideal, in the material world they prayer and praise cannot be so easily divided. The divine presence is always already absent from the artist, who must continually practice his art of praise in order to attempt over and over again to reach out and back to an original force, but who is always in danger of merely praying.

## III. Blake as Biblical Translator

Turning back, now, to Blake's psalm depictions in the light of his use of micrography in the *Laocoön*, we can better understand Blake's impetus for visual translation of the biblical text. The *Laocoön* print clarifies the relationship of the praise/prayer distinction to the breakdown of a distinction between text and image in Blake's work. Praise, as the continual practice of art, is embodied in Blake's composite art. Prayer, as the repetition of solely textual forms would lie on one side of the text/image opposition, while an art form that was both text and image would operate across the space of that opposition and would be both pre- and post-linguistic. The psalm depictions reveal the space of the psalmist as outside of speech while clearly invoking the text of the psalms and are, thus, both text and image. The psalm illustration brings the words of the psalm with it, but works to disrupt the formal nature of the written text. In *David Delivered out of Many Waters* the temporality of the psalm has been collapsed, indicating that praise inhabits a realm either before or outside of time. To touch upon the divine is to go back to a time before Adam named the animals, to a language that is pre-linguistic, a language that we cannot imagine because it would come before speech. Taking up the text, outside of the linguistic, avoids the mere repetition of the holy or not-so-holy biblical text, and allows Blake to attempt to transcend

the opposition of the verbal and visual. The combined textual/visual nature of Blake's work is invoked in the painting by the bodies of the cherubim whose strange shape resembles the Hebrew letter א [aleph].[114] Their bodies are both the force of mediation between psalmist and God and the expression of the Hebrew alphabet, making them an early indication of Blake's work, twenty years later, in the realm of micrography. Like micrography, the psalm "translations" make an attempt at contact with an original, divine presence. And yet, Blake acknowledges the impossibility of a perfect non-language when writing that everything created can be destroyed. Everything good is also evil. The closest we can get to the artistic-linguistic perfection invoked in the psalm depiction is to inhabit the realm of its impossibility. This is why the print for Psalm 18 must have a pair in Psalm 137.

*By the Waters of Babylon* depicts the psalmist who in severed from connection with the divine and whose prayer is nothing but the trappings of divine speech, a demanded repetition that reaches nowhere. What we find in the *Laocoön*, though, is that these two moments, opposing forms of worship, are not wholly separate. They are the two sides of one coin. The lack of connection in Psalm 137 is always the underside of the ecstatic connection found in Psalm 18. Even when moving into the realm of the image, the codified text remains as the image's shadow. Praise and prayer may be contraries, as in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, but they are tied to one another. In *By the Waters of Babylon* the psalmist forced to pray fears a separation from God, but the poignant expression of this fear springs forth in a moment of praise. Similarly, in *David Delivered out of Many Waters* David finds connection to the deity in a moment of despair, but even in this moment of connection the mediating force of the cherubim fills the page. There is no direct connection without mediation. Even if we escape from linguistic mediation in the

form of prayer and into the realm of the visual, mediation remains. Each moment of psalmody is haunted by its twin moment.

The use of micrography in the *Laocoön* to reclaim a Hebraic art history for England also resonates with the psalm paintings, which are the animation of that very tradition. If, as I have contended, Blake viewed Hebraic art as art preceding the splitting of art into poetry and painting, then to paint the Bible would be to return the tradition to a more original form. To give the language back its visual partner would go far beyond illustration, actually performing a repair and rearticulating the disarticulated art forms. If the verbal is visual in the realm of divine creation, then these psalm paintings would not only interpret the role of the psalmist but would be an attempt to touch upon the Hebraic origins of all arts in Blake's estimation. Simultaneously, it would point to the impossibility of this reanimation. The artist may be a prophet, but he is not a divine creator. Any attempt to reunite the verbal and visual will always only point to their continued separation. In fact, the distinction between the human and divine creator is the reason for Judaism's ban on images in the holy text. Micrography crops up in the margins of these texts as an attempted answer to the ban, but is also a symptom of the ban on images. Similarly, the psalm illustrations point back to the psalms as nothing more than the repeated "songs of Zion." The myth of Hebrew as the original language of creation, holy and perfect, is both invoked in the psalm illustrations and in the *Laocoön* print, and questioned by the very printing of the Hebrew text on the page. The Hebrew letters, including the name of God, which Blake inscribes on the *Laocoön* print may be holy but they are also just forms printed on a page. The psalm illustrations may depict the connection to the divine, but they are only drawings inscribed on a page, pointing to their own failure to be anything other than what they are.

From the realm of history, art, and contraries we can see a theory of translation emerge in Blake's work. Looking at the free play between text and image in Blake it is not only possible but almost necessary to read Blake's movement from text to image as translation. In Blake the relationship between forms is akin to the relationship of one language to another.[115] Each has its own valences but aims at the same referents. It is difficult to bring the cadence of the written word into the realm of the visual and nearly impossible to bring the immediacy of the visual image into the narrative unfolding of the text, but these differences of form and of temporality do not, for Blake, preclude the attempt or preclude the relative success of the translation. Who would claim that the stale, versified forms of woe given in the rhyming versions of Psalm 137 popular throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries are better translations of the moment given by the Hebrew psalmist than the drawing of a man's face in anguish as his small and soon to be dead children behold him in captivity? If Blake's translation fails, it does so as all good translations must.

Accepting then, that these are translations, they advance a radical theory of translation in which translation could be the means of overcoming the opposition between text and image or of embodying that opposition and playing within it. The pure language that Walter Benjamin has argued translation aims at, is here expanded beyond the realm of the linguistic.[116] Blake, like Benjamin, puts forward a theory of a holy language which would be the only perfect language, but Blake's twist on holy language is that it is like no language ever heard or seen. Blake's holy language, the thing which *his* translations aim at, is a composite language; not a composite of different speeches, as in something pre-Babelian, but a composite of various media, as in something pre-Genesis 1:3. Blake's imagined pure language stretches back before God ever speaks, before the fiat lux: "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon

the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen 1:2). The dark, formless waters that cover the bottoms of both psalm paintings are this formless void in the moment before anything has been spoken or created. The psalmist pulled down in the waters is simultaneously lost and saved, but is also able to touch upon primordial art. In Blake, then, translation occupies the space of the formless deep. If it does not get us to the deep, it at least reveals the impossibility of ever figuring this deepness in any available language.

The insistence on the "practice" of art and praise illustrates two things about art and translation in Blake: first, the temporality of art is immediate and continual and second, the goal of perfection is not the goal of his art at all. Practice is something that one must repeat.[117] Art is not something that has happened or that can have happened. It is not a historical event. It belongs to the time before time, and its continual practice can only point to the impossibility of ever, in any sense, completing it. Hebrew, and the Hebraic in Blake, becomes the stand-in for time out of time. If it is the original language or if it can stand in as that mythical original language it can then serve as a marker, pointing back to the origin. If God speaks "Let there be light" in Hebrew, then the Hebraic touches upon and comes just after the moment that Blake aims for. It is the language closest to the pre-linguistic. It is the moment of history closest to something ahistorical. In Blake's mythical world, Hebrew does not need to be historical first; it needs to stand for that which is ahistorical and alinguistic. The shapes of the Hebrew letters become the symbol of Blake's composite form before there could be a notion of compositeness, because it is before anything has been split which must be recombined. But the word "practice" reveals the Blakean insight that the goal of art is not to actually touch these depths, but to gesture towards them repeatedly. If Blake's art could actually become this primordial "art" then art would end. There would be no need to practice anything because we would already be in the realm of perfection.

To *practice* art, to *practice* praise, and to *practice* translation is to reach out for this abyss and to fail, but in the failure of Blake's translation lies the production and insight of his art.

In essence, what we have here is translation rooted in the materiality of inscription. As explicated in detail in the work of Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida, the materiality of the letter reveals the divorce of the signifying event from its own reference, not by revealing that the text is merely material but by revealing the contingent nature of the inscription of language.[118] Language, far from being a pure metaphysical value, occurs in time and place. Language seems to give us access to the thing that it refers to, to the primordial moment of reference itself ("God said 'Let there be light,' and there was light"). But the material value of language, the fact that it must be inscribed on something, somewhere, reveals that it is only ever an event separate from any primordial moment of signification. The continual repetition of the inscription of language is its materiality. What Blake calls "practice," deconstruction might call "the inscription of the textual event" or "the eventness of the event."[119] In other words, language seems to give us access to the moment where God moves upon the deep, to a moment of purity, but it always has already come after the moment of first speech and is a repetition, a continual practice. (And it should be noted that even in the primordial moment, God moves *upon* the deep and waters; already there is an act of inscription even before the moment of first inscription.) The materiality of the micrographic letter inhabits this territory, both calling upon the theological, metaphysical significance of language and pointing to its impossibility.

Blake's psalm translations break the psalms down to their material limits, to a moment of presence/non-presence at the heart of the psalmic appeal to God. He translates the codified, inscribed language in order to un-codify it, to reclaim it for his mythical history and for something that would come before the necessity for translation. He aims, in his translations, for a

form of speech that would not be recognizable as speech. He calls his non-speech "praise" in the *Laocoön* and attempts to inscribe it as the micrographic image. "Praise" would be something truly original, primordial like the waters in the prints. "Praise" would never be a repetition and would be unrepeatable. And yet, by translating, Blake is himself participating in the act of repetition. His reiteration of the psalms is nothing but one more act of inscription, one additional repetition in a string of repetitions stretching back to an un-inscribable origin. Blake's psalms reveal translation as an original repetition.

In the end, the psalmist who attempts the practice of praise, will find that he has merely prayed. Similarly, the micrographer who thinks that he has touched the divine presence will find that she has merely scratched a shape on a page. The collapsed moment of loss and redemption that Blake inscribes in *David Delivered out of Many Waters* is an illustration of the plight not only of the psalmist, but also of the translator who can only be saved by drowning. Similarly, the bound figure of the *Laocoön*, which seems to be set up in opposition to the sublime Hebraic, inhabiting a history of art that has separated poetry from visual art and has ignored the holy Hebraic at its root, is none other than the artist of that very Hebraic tradition. The artist/translator finds himself bound, wrestling with the snakes and ropes which would pull him down into a primordial abyss, which is exactly where he wants to be.

# The Struggle for Origins: Psalms as Interruptions in the Eighteenth Century

## I. Hebrew origins made English

Although John Dennis, Samuel Richardson, Christopher Smart, and William Blake seem to have little in common as a group, they all participated in a tradition of naturalizing psalm translation in the long eighteenth century.[120] That is, they all endeavored to make the Hebrew Bible uniquely English and to claim Hebrew for a practice of modern English poetry and poetics. But each author went about the process of 'naturalizing' Hebrew in very different ways, developing translations based on a unique understanding of the purpose and power of translation. It is the differences in their approaches which reveal the complexity of both the practice of translation and the incorporation of the Hebrew tradition in eighteenth-century England.

Each author views translation differently. For Dennis, translation serves as a harmonizing force between the biblical and (neo)classical and between passion and reason. Moreover, he sees translation as a connection to an original spirit that existed before the fall and he invests biblical translation with redemptive power for both poetry and people. Richardson, on the other hand, presents a translation based on the force of memory. In Richardson, Pamela's translation becomes the vehicle for forgetting and remembering selectively. For Smart, translation is based in a genealogical understanding of languages and the figural interpretation of the Bible and history. He makes English another Hebrew by eliding the differences between each language, until Hebrew becomes simply a prefiguration of his own English. Blake, radically translating through paintings, makes translation the means of overcoming the split between the visual and the textual.

Each of these four authors provides a different version of translation, but all of them conceive of translation as a textual connection back to an origin. Dennis finds an origin in God's creation, but sees creation as needing the supplement of poetry just as Hebrew needs the supplement of the English language with its neoclassical understanding of poetry. Richardson's origin is the origin of difference itself as marked by gender distinction in his text. To forget through translation is to cover over any confusion at the site of original distinction and signification. Smart's origin is an original "impression" left by God on the Hebrew language. His concept of the conservation of original impressions is what makes it possible to read all languages as the figure of other languages. Each language becomes the other, but the kernel of impression remains. Finally, Blake's origin is a pre-linguistic moment before God speaks and Blake's Hebrew art becomes the marker of the pre-linguistic. By placing Hebrew at the origin of languages and of signification itself, each theory of translation becomes a theory of the relationship of the English to its Hebraic origins and a means of creating a new Hebraic modernity for English literature. Hebrew and all that 'Hebrew' signifies become mythical. The myth of Hebrew becomes the myth of the origin of English literature, religion, and culture.[121]

In my argument I have focused on how the concern with Hebraic origins figures in two psalms in particular that are especially important to these authors: Psalm 18 and Psalm 137. Through interpretations of Psalm 18 and Psalm 137, each author develops a specific understanding of origins and of the relationship of Christian England to its supposed Hebrew origins. Psalm 18, depicting the actual appearance of God, marks a moment of total connection between the psalmist and the divine origin of the world. Dennis's translation focuses on the passion of the connection to God, but also on the need to reign in and mold that passion through the imposition of grammar. The English takes up the Hebrew and makes the connection to God

both legible and comprehensible. A direct connection to the origin is mediated through poetry, properly conceived. Smart's Psalm 18, however, puts the focus on the figure of David as the speaker of the psalm and David's genealogical line as the inheritor of the psalm tradition. The inheritors of David's poetic tradition, then, also inherit the connection to the divine depicted in the psalm. To be figured in David's line is to possess divine connection. In contrast, Blake's painting of Psalm 18 focuses entirely on the moment of connection between the psalmist and God. Any connection back to an origin depends on the practice of prayer, and specifically, for Blake, on the practice of spontaneous prayer. Rather than repeating the psalms more properly or inheriting the psalm tradition, Blake's Psalm 18 reveals a desire to continually renew the psalm tradition. Only in a moment of originality does the psalmist touch the origin in Blake.

Psalm 137, on the other hand, depicts a moment of total disconnection from one's origins. The psalmist has been physically taken from the place of his origins, Jerusalem, and brought to a strange land. The psalm meditates on how to remember the absent origin. In Richardson, the absent origin becomes a site for meditation on memory and a vehicle for forgetting. While the psalm claims that it will never forget Jerusalem, Richardson's psalm does exactly that, helping Pamela to forget the situation she has come from and to create a new story of her captivity with Mrs. Jewkes as the sole criminal. The psalm's concern with remembrance of origins allows Pamela to forget her origins. Smart's Psalm 137, on the other hand, focuses less on the memory of the psalmist and more on God's memory. God will remember both the Babylonians and the Israelites, ending the line of Babylon and continuing the line of the Israelites down through Christ and to the English who will inherit a new Jerusalem. Remembering Jerusalem becomes the rebuilding of Jerusalem in England. The absent Jerusalem returns as the figure for the future of England. Blake's painting of Psalm 137 focuses the story of

absence from God on the call for song, linking the moment of repetition of a prayer to the moment of disconnection. In Blake, repeated prayers lead to separation from God, while spontaneous praise brings connection. The absent origin is the inevitable outcome of poetry that has become nothing more than repetition.

Whether we look at Psalm 18's direct connection to the divine or Psalm 137's depiction of being absent from divine connection, translations of the two psalms serve as vehicles for the struggle of a newly defined English modernity with its supposed origins in Hebrew. Whether that originating force must be harnessed and tamed, forgotten and elided, inherited and naturalized, or revived and embraced as the site of alterity depends on the work of the translator. In each case we are not talking about Hebrew as a historical language. A mythical Hebrew of the origin comes to stand in for God's creation and for the roots of English Christianity. In the different approaches to the origin we can see the eighteenth century struggling to claim a connection to the myth of its own history.

## II. The Psalms: An Interrupting Genre

In each instance the choices made in translation of Psalm 18 or Psalm 137 reveal a proposed relationship of the psalmist and of the English to their own origins. The work of this dissertation has primarily been to reveal the ways in which a reading of the psalms can help us better understand the poetry and translation theories of each eighteenth-century author. But if the psalms have helped us read these authors in a new way, I would also like to propose, in conclusion, that these authors can perhaps provide a new way to understand and read the psalms. Although it is difficult to find a united narrative of psalm translation in the varied approaches of Dennis, Richardson, Smart, and Blake, in each instance the psalm, in translation, has served to

interrupt and to disrupt the writing of each author. In all four authors the psalm stands out as a genre of interruption.

In Dennis, the psalm becomes part of a critical essay. Literally, then, it interrupts the genre that it is part of, breaking away from the reasoned argument. While it is part of the argument, as an example, it also interrupts that argument, breaking up the line on the page. The form of the essay, reasoned and logical, needs the interruption of the moment of awe that Dennis finds in Psalm 18. The psalm's interruption is, in turn, made logical again through its explication in the essay. But the moment of psalmic interruption remains. The genre of praise and passion that the psalm brings to the essay calls into question the very foundation of the mode of the argument. The reasoned essay has need of the passionate psalm. The essay, as a genre of logic, is not complete without its interruption by another genre. The play between genres also serves to reenact Dennis's own argument about the harmonization of reason and passion. The bringing together of a genre of reason, the essay, with a genre of passion, the psalm, creates the strongest argument. The Hebrew tradition of psalmody, through the essay, is brought into the English tradition of reasoned argument. But the interruption and tension between the two remains.

In Richardson's *Pamela* the psalm interrupts the epistolary genre. Again, the verses on the page break up the form of the letter. In the novel, Pamela writes down everything that happens to her, creating a minute to minute record of her mistreatment, captivity, and ultimate salvation. On the surface, it seems that the call to "Remember" given in the first scene is fulfilled by Pamela's actions as a writer. In other words, she writes her letters *to* remember. The epistolary genre is a genre of memory and of the continuous recording of empirical experience. But the psalm, although incorporated into the letters, intervenes, disrupting the narrative of remembrance and allowing for a space of forgetting. In the psalm, Pamela rewrites and translates

the story of her captivity. It is in the psalmic revision, based on a psalm that stresses the essential importance of remembrance, that the seeds of forgetting are planted in Book I and later cultivated in Book II. In other words, for Richardson, the psalm, as a genre, interrupts the function of the novel as a genre. In the end, the psalm is only pointing to the very failure of the epistolary genre to be a perfect record and to the failure of language to perfectly capture and transmit a content; but the inherent failure of the novel as a record of events is only brought out through the interruption of the psalm.

In Christopher Smart, the understanding of the psalm as a genre of interruption becomes more complicated. It is one thing to contend that the psalm interrupts an essay or a novel, but it is something more radical to contend that the psalm, as not-quite poetry, actually interrupts the genre of poetry. In Smart, the 'poetry' of the psalms becomes his English poetry. In the *Jubilate Agno,* which opens with a call for praise and makes use of parallelism for its poetic structure, Smart can be seen making use of psalmody. The poetic structure and voice of *Jubilate Agno* make it a very strange eighteenth-century composition. In fact, it is the very strangeness of the poem which has made it so attractive for post-modern scholarship. In a sense, *Jubilate Agno*, with its psalmic structure and voice, presents itself as an interruption of eighteenth-century poetry. The conventions of the psalms make *Jubilate Agno* a poem that is not quite a poem. In stark contrast to this, Smart's *Translation* performs no interruption, because it lacks the very conventions of the psalm which made *Jubilate Agno* so strange. Smart's *Translation* presents the psalms as poetry proper, and by doing so it makes the psalms appear as though they could be simply poetry. By attempting to claim the psalms as a prefiguration of English poetry, Smart makes the psalms nothing but English poetry. His model of translation, based in the figure of a

continuous genealogy, denies any interruption. But in the *Jubilate Agno*, the possibility that the psalms could interrupt poetry remains.

The psalms as a genre out of genre come into Blake's work as part of his interruption of the practices of poetry, painting, and printing. Blake sought to create new forms and genres and in doing so he embraced the Hebrew tradition, which provided him with the genre of prophecy but also of psalmody. Blake's entire oeuvre could be said to perform an interruption of the poetic tradition. In seeking for new forms Blake turned back to biblical forms to find a poetry radically other to the English tradition. Murray Roston's *Prophet and Poet* argues that Romanticism developed out of an interest in Hebrew literature and its influence on English poetry. He aligns the turn from neoclassical poetry to romantic poetry with a turn to the inspired, first-person voice of the psalms and the natural imagery of the Hebrew Bible. Perhaps Romanticism also turned to the Bible to find inspiration for the interruption that it would perform in the history of English literature.[122] Blake publicly called for a turn back to the Bible and to the practice of praise found in psalmody. But he did not merely copy the forms or words of the Bible, instead he created his own Bible as his own inspired interruption of English poetry.

For each author, the psalm functions as an interruption in their argument, narrative, or poetic structure. The psalms, then, appear as interruptions in eighteenth-century England. Their interruptive quality comes out in their translation and incorporation into the English cannon. Where the psalms interrupt eighteenth-century texts, they perform the deconstruction of the very works in which they appear. They stand as questions of the logic of the essay, of the 'accuracy' of the epistolary narrative, and of the very definition of English poetry. Through the interruptive power of translation, the Hebrew psalms both interrupt and found the language of a new English modernity as it struggles to define itself in terms of its past.

[1] Hannibal Hamlin's *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature* is a study of the central role played by psalm translations in the centuries leading up to the period framing this study.
[2] In her Introduction to *Origins and the Enlightenment* Catherine Labio refers to the eighteenth century as "the period arguably more obsessed than any other with the notion of origins—of ideas, languages, nations, wealth, the universe, and so on" (1).
[3] Hamlin also discusses the difficulty of defining the genre of psalmody in his Introduction (3).
[4] Much of twentieth century psalm scholarship has been devoted to dividing the psalms into sub-genres such as praise, lament, and thanksgiving as pioneered in the work in Herman Gunkel. The relatively recent genre scholarship of authors such as Walter Brueggemann and Harry P. Nasuti has followed from the earlier work of Gunkel. Gunkel worked to develop a system of categorization of the psalms through attention to their structure, voice and sentiment. It is from the work of genre critics that we get the categories of psalms of lamentation, praise, rejoicing, etc. The goal of this work is to catalogue the psalms to better understand them as text and better use them for the purpose of prayer. In *Defining the Sacred Songs* Nasuti takes genre work one step further by trying to understand how changing genre definitions lead to different interpretations of the same psalms.
[5] Here, I refer directly to Freud's essay on the uncanny, or unheimlich, in which he defines the uncanny as something that is at once familiar and strange. This strangeness in the place where one expects to find familiarity then breads fear and dread.
[6] In "The Struggle for the Text" Geoffrey Hartman refers to the sparseness of the Hebrew, which appears as an alien in western discourse.
[7] Tehillim is the plural form of tehillah, which comes from the root word חלל (halal). (The word hallelujah is another form of halal.)
[8] In her comments on an earlier version of this chapter, Jill Robbins has noted that it may be more accurate to call these self interruptions rather than interruptions of God. Following the lead of Michael Fishbane who argues that Psalm 19 calls out to God without a response given explicitly in the text, but that the call itself figures the fact of response, we could see the psalmist's call as a self interruption that figures the interruption of God while not actually being able to enact it (Fishbane 90).
[9] Another example of a psalm interrupting a biblical narrative occurs in Jonah 2:2-9 when Jonah prays from the belly of the whale. The text has a classic psalmic structure with Jonah describing how he was afflicted, called out to God, was saved, and will now give thanks. But there are many incongruous elements. Temporally, in the psalm Jonah describes already having been saved, but in the narrative he is still trapped in the whale at the moment of prayer. The imagery is also somewhat confusing. While the psalm does describe drowning with weeds grabbing at the psalmist, it also describes traveling to the bottom of the mountains and having the bars of the earth close about him. These are not events that occur in the narrative. It seems likely that this psalm was added into the story of Jonah and does not entirely belong there. As in Exodus, the interruption of the narrative by the psalm, creates a moment of pause and prayer at the center of the narrative. In Jonah's most abject moment, the language of the psalm intervenes to give voice to that moment. It adds details to the narrative, but also calls the narrative into question by adding details that do not entirely fit with the circumstances of the story.
[10] Maurice Blanchot has linked prophetic language with interruption in his discussion in *The Book to Come:* "Speech prophesies when it refers to a time of interruption, that *other* time that is always present in all time and in which people, stripped of their power and separated from the possible (the widow and the orphan), exist with each other in the bare relationship in which they had been in the desert and which is the desert itself—bare relationship, but not unmediated, for it is always given in a prior speech" (81). I would argue that the speech of the psalms is an example of mediation in and as interruption, both speaking to the other and revealing the bareness of the relation between others. (In *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* Ian Balfour cites Blanchot's invocation of interruption as part of his own definition of prophetic language (Balfour 1).)
[11] Although this may be considered dialogic, in a Bahktinian sense, in that different viewpoints interact and are incorporated into the text, the speech between speaker and God does not create a dialogue, proper.

[12] Paul H. Fry and Ian Balfour both discuss the apostrophe and its implications for presence/absence. In *The Poet's Calling in the English Ode*, Paul Fry writes about the ode as at once an invocation of presence and a realization of the failure of presence. According to Fry, the ode essentially forecloses exactly what it calls for in the need to call for it. To call to a presence is to acknowledge that presence as not present. While Fry writes about odes and not psalms, his approach to the question of address and apostrophe in the eighteenth-century ode will inform this project's approach to the call to God in the psalms. Similarly, in *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* Ian Balfour writes, not of the ode but of prophecy: "The prophet is both the vehicle of divine presence and the sign of its absence" (68). Balfour goes on, through a reading of Bishop Lowth, to align poetry with prophecy. The poet prophet then becomes both the sign of the presence and absence of the divine.

[13] For a detailed history of psalm translation in the period see Hamlin.

[14] In the essay Derrida links the interruption at the heart of signification to the Jewish practice of questioning of God (as seen in the psalms) (67).

[15] Tejaswini Niranjana's *Siting Translation : History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* reads Benjamin's, Derrida's and De Man's theories of translation as they relate to questions of post-colonialism.

[16] Julie Candler Hayes claims that scholarship in the eighteenth-century "rejected the notion of Hebrew as a god'given Adamic tongue" and she gives Richard Simon as her example (174). While radical, Enlightenment philosophers such as Simon may have rejected the notion of an Adamic tongue, this was certainly not the case for everyone in the eighteenth century and certainly not in England.

[17] Howard D. Weinbrot notes,"Numerous commentators taught that Hebrew was the world's original, complete, and perfect language; it also was spoken by God and written by the prophets" (408).

[18] Murray Roston (126-142), Frank Edward Manuel (166-167), Julie Candler Hayes (174-175) , and Jonathan Sheehan (148-159) all give different accounts of this same narrative.

[19] For general reading on Psalm 18 see Kenneth J. Kuntz's "Psalm 18: A Rhetorical-Critical Analysis" and Donald K. Berry's *The Psalms and their Readers: Interpretive Strategies for Psalm 18*

[20] For a discussion of the probable composition of the psalm see James Kugel's *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (173-180).

[21] See Augustine's Expositions, vol. 6, 158-177

[22] In Marjorie Hope Nicolson's *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, she reads a letter Dennis wrote about his travels through the Alps as an example of early eighteenth-century sublimity, and in *The Religious Sublime* David B. Morris devotes an entire chapter to reading Dennis's theory of sublimity. In "John Dennis and Neoclassical Criticism" Irène Simon reads the conflicting views of Dennis as theorist of the sublime and proponent of neoclassicism and concludes that the split in criticism of Dennis reflects a split between passion and reason in Dennis's own work.

[23] For a more detailed accounting of Dennis's life see H.G Paul's *John Dennis: His Life and Criticism* , the preface to Hooker's *Collected Works*, and Avon Jack Murphy's *John Dennis*.

[24] Pope lampooned Dennis as "Sir Tremendous Longinus" in the 1717 play *Three Hours After Marriage*, but their feud was already underway; in 1713 Pope published *The Narrative of Dr. Robert Norris, concerning the strange and deplorable frenzy of Dr. John Dennis, an officer in the Custom-House* in response to Dennis's attack on Joseph Addison's *Cato.* Dennis also carried out ongoing feuds with Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, and was famously made fun of in Jonathan Swift's *Tale of a Tub*.

[25] In John Morillo's article "John Dennis: Enthusiastic Passions, Cultural Memory, and Literary Theory" he argues that Dennis's writings never fully accounts for the fall.

[26] See my Introduction as well as James Kugel's *The Ida of Biblical Poetry* for a discussion of the understanding of biblical verse in this period. Essentially, it was believed that portions of the Bible, including the psalms, must have been composed in verse, but the principle behind this organization was not understood. Not until later in the century when Bishop Lowth put forward his theory that biblical poetry did not have proper meter but was organized according to the principle of parallelism, did people begin to understand the organization of biblical poetics.

[27] The word 'enthusiasm' had many negative connotations at the time of Dennis's writing, being associated with the religious enthusiasm of those who had executed Charles I as part of the English Civil War. For an account of Dennis's use of the word 'enthusiasm' as it related to the political and religious conditions of the time see Morillo. Dennis's attempt to rehabilitate the term and to bring passion into the understanding of poetry was ridiculed by later authors and contemporaries, including Pope, and earned him the nickname Sir Tremendous Longinus.

[28]It is unclear exactly what Dennis's religious affiliations were. Some have aligned Dennis with the Cambridge Platonists (see Hope Nicolson), but Hooker writes: "Dennis was a steadfast champion of the Church of England" (cxvii).

[29] In Donald K. Berry's *The Psalms and their Readers: Interpretive Strategies for Psalm 18* he identifies these lines of Psalm 18 as theophanic, depicting an actual appearance of the deity. Berry separates these verses from the rest of the psalmic text, writing of its use of "mythic language:" "In the theophany, images of water and fire combine in a mysterious amalgam…The themes of light and darkness are combined with the fire and water imagery of the theophany, for the waters surrounding Yahweh are 'darkness', and his lightnings are 'brightness'" (98).

[30]David Morris writes that "Psalm 18…became a favorite illustration of sublimity in the eighteenth century" (19). Much later in the eighteenth century, Bishop Lowth cited these same lines, writing of "the force, the grandeur and sublimity of these images" in his *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (77).

[31] For further discussion of the Psalm 18 and the theophany also see Kenneth J. Kuntz's "Psalm 18: A Rhetorical-Critical Analysis," and Frank Moore Cross Jr. and David Noel Freedman's "A Royal Song of Thanksgiving."

[32] Dennis biographer and critic Avon Jack Murphy writes of Dennis's interest in 'the fall' and its relation to the regularity and order of rules: "Firmly convinced of the macrocosm-microcosm analogy, he sees everywhere signs of our Fall. Jugglers and Italian opera singers performing before large audiences, theatrical factions that keep sound plays off the stage, Alexander Pope's unjustified success, widespread foreign luxuries, stock-jobbers' pernicious influence upon a greedy public, Jacobite plotting against the king, treacherous High Church priests—all indicate a radical disorder throughout society. To reestablish literary, social, and political order, we must choose methods that themselves evince order. In literature, we must insist upon rationality and regularity, upon methods and forms that mirror the reason immanent in God's planning" (10).Through the rules, Dennis seeks to raise poetry and society from their fallen status.

[33] In *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* Dennis has defined poetry using the word "pathetick": "Poetry then is an imitation of Nature by a pathetick and numerous Speech" (23). By giving the psalms as "the most Pathetick Divine Poetry" Dennis is then clearly elevating the psalms and making it clear that they fit into his notion of sublime religious poetry.

[34] James L. Kugel's *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History* gives a detailed account of the understanding of parallelism as it developed in English literary history.

[35] Lowth, Robert. *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews.*

[36] Of course, it is likely that the repetition of the phrase at the end of both lines is due to scribal error. In other words, it originally appeared at the end of only one of the lines, but the scribe's eye wandered up or down when copying the text, writing the phrase into both verses. But in any case, the psalm as it now stands, contains the repetition.

[37] In his history of Christian Hebraism, *The Broken Staff*, Frank Edward Manuel argues that "by the middle of the eighteenth century…Christian Hebraism had passed its prime" and discusses the lack of Hebrew knowledge among the educated in comparison with previous centuries.

[38] Dennis was one of the first important proponents of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Early twentieth-century biographer H.G. Paul writes of Dennis's importance as a Milton critic: "If Dennis were entitled for no other reason to a permanent place in the history of literary criticism, he should be remembered as perhaps the first ardent and persistent champion of Milton, and he should be recognized for having repeatedly

praised and emphasized that poet's 'Sublimity and matchless Harmony,' qualities which have stood the test of more than two centuries" (195). Dennis was the first critic to treat Milton's work systematically and he made use of his reading of Milton to bolster his argument for religious poetry. In her book *Beautiful Sublime: The Making of Paradise Lost, 1701-1734* Leslie E. Moore argues that it was critics of the early eighteenth century such as Dennis who essentially created the idea of "sublime Milton" and set up the tropes by which Milton finds his way into the modern imagination, even to this day. Prior to Dennis, there had been some controversy about Milton's use of blank verse. John Dryden, Dennis's mentor, had come out in favor of Milton in a 1688 epigram but wrote about him and his use of blank verse with some reservations in his 1693 "Essay on Satire." Dryden writes of Milton: "It is true, he runs into a flat of thought, sometimes for a hundred lines together, but it is when he is got into a track of Scripture" (qtd. in Thorpe, 338). Dennis defended Milton against attacks on his blank verse, writing in his 1692 "The Passion of Byblis": "I am not so miserably mistaken, as to think rhiming essential to our *English* poetry. I am far better acquainted with *Milton* than that comes to. Who without the assistance of Rhime, is one of the most sublime of our *English* poets" (Dennis in CW, 3-4). He also addresses Dryden's contention that Milton's poetry goes "flat" when it gets too close to scripture, writing: "The late Mr. *Dryden*, with a great deal of Injustice, us'd to attribute the Flatness of *Milton*…to his getting into a Track of Scripture…Whereas the thing that made him sink, was plainly the Poorness and Lowness of the Ideas. For how could the Works of corrupted Man, afford any other to Gods and Angels?" (*Grounds* 351). Here, Dennis directly opposes Dryden and claims that it was when Milton turned to the works of humans as opposed to the works of God that his poetry would go flat. For Dennis, as opposed to Dryden, scripture is exactly what can give sublimity to poetry.

[39] Dennis's view of Milton's sublime use of religious ideas persists into current Milton criticism. James Sims writes: "Paradise Lost does not owe its chief excellence to the Bible, but rather to Milton's skillful poetic use of the Bible; the Bible, on the other hand, does not derive its authority and convincing power from the poem, but rather brings them into the poem via Milton's catalytic mind" (Sims, 3). Here, we see a modern take on Dennis's formulation in which Milton as masterful poet brings divine subject and sublime poetry to their heights.

[40] Joseph Addison, in 1711, provided a reading of *Paradise Lost* in *The Spectator*. He also argued for a reading based on Aristotelian rules, and he is usually given credit for being the first prominent reader of Milton in the eighteenth century. In a Dec. 9, 1721 letter Dennis accused Addison of stealing his reading of Milton. For more on this feud and Dennis's attack on Addison see H.G. Paul (72).

[41] In *Milton's Epics and the Book of Psalms*, Mary Ann Radzinowicz argues that Milton's work was heavily influenced by the Psalms. Radzinowicz contends that Milton had a "persistent interest in the psalms," "Milton's engagement with the psalms as preeminent instances of the poetry of the Bible, poetry capable of recapture in English versification, began early, persisted through his public career, and came to fruition in his two epic poems" (81). Here, Radzinowicz makes reference to the fact that, in addition to his use of the psalms in his epics, Milton had translated several of the psalms into verse form and often references the psalms in his writing about education and Christianity. Radzinowicz puts forward the thesis that Milton not only borrowed content from the psalms, but used the biblical style of parallelism as a guiding force in his poetics. This last contention is problematic given that the idea of parallelism as the system of biblical poetics was not introduced to England until the publication of Bishop Lowth's *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews.* But whether or not Radzinowicz's contention that Milton used the poetics of the Bible is correct, the argument she lays out showing the saturation of the psalms in *Paradise Lost* is very compelling. In *The Bible and Milton's Epics* James Sims argues that knowledge of the Bible is essential to an understanding of Milton: "Milton made his epics such virtual mosaics of Biblical echo, paraphrase, allusion, idiomatic structure, and tone that a reader steeped in the English Bible is subject to the illusion (received either consciously or unconsciously) that the author speaks with the textual authority backing every phrase of his poems" (Sims 9). Barbara Lewalski has argued in her *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms* that Milton's epic is a combination of many Renaissance genres including that of psalms.

[42] Dennis has been credited as a major influence on Wordsworth. See James A.W. Heffernan's "Wordsworth and Dennis: The Discrimination and Feeling" where he refers to an 1814 letter from Wordsworth in which Wordsworth mentions Dennis: "Poetic passion (Dennis has well observed) is of two kinds: imaginative and enthusiastic, and merely human and ordinary" and to an 1842 letter from De Quincey who claims that Wordsworth "had an absurd 'craze'" for Dennis at one time (Heffernan, 430). Also see Edward Niles Hooker's discussion of the relationship between Dennis and Wordsworth in *The Critical Works of John Dennis* (lxxiii).

[43] For a detailed reading of *Pamela* as a trial narrative and the relation to happiness see Vivasvani Soni's "The Trial Narrative in Richardson's *Pamela*: Suspending the Hermeneutic of Happiness."

[44] Paula R. Backscheider's *Eighteenth-Century Women and Their Poetry* gives an account of Pamela's psalm that draws on Austin's account: "Thus, Pamela demonstrates a cultivated skill, the ability to write poetry, in a way that contributes to her characterization as intelligent, charitable, and pious. The reworking of this psalm into the text of the novel is also part of the thematic importance of B.'s repentance (133).

[45] This citation from Paul Kelleher is taken from a paper given at the 2010 ASECS conference in Albuquerque, NM and will be incorporated into a forthcoming book chapter.

[46] Oxford English Dictionary.

[47] For more on the link between the Romance tradition, femininity and the early novel see Margaret Anne Doody on the reception of the Romance tradition in *Pamela*: "It is quite evident that all three of Richardson's novels are not an innovation but a development, by an artistic genius, of a minor tradition established by the writer of love-stories told in the feminine voice" (Natural Passion 24).

[48] See Freud's reading of "Signorelli" in the first chapter of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*.

[49] For a detailed history see Niranjana, pg. 49-63, including references to translation in England in the eighteenth century, pg. 54

[50] Of course these notions of "meaning" and "original" are problematic. This model assumes that the original has one single meaning that a translator (or any reader, for that matter) has total access to, and that the purpose of translation is to convey this unchanging meaning in another language. It is a textual model in which writing has one meaning, and a translation can either convey or obscure that meaning. But, as Tesjawini Niranjana writes, basing her argument on the work of Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man: "The notion of fidelity to the "original" holds back translation theory from thinking the *force* of a translation" (58). Here, Niranjana puts "original" in quotation marks in order to highlight the metaphysical assumptions at the heart of an understanding of a pure original, which is then either betrayed or treated faithfully by a later translation.

[51] Here, I am reading the "Signorelli" example from *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1901)*, Freud's first example of his model of repression of the signifier.

[52] See Benjamin's "Task of the Translator" and Jacques Derrida's "Des Tours de Babel" for a reading of the possible insights to be gained by the impossibility of perfect translation.

[53] See my Introduction for more on the specific links to the Hebrew tradition.

[54] Erich Auerbach's "Odysseus's Scar" in *Mimesis* presents a detailed reading of the relations between the Hebrew and western traditions through an understanding of the Hebraic and Hellenic.

[55] See Moira Dearnley's "Psalms by Christopher Smart at St. Mary Islington." Dearnley makes reference to one known example in which "the first three stanzas of Smart's version of Psalm 41" do show up in a program from 1765 in which the Charity Children sung his psalms at Duke Street Chapel. She goes on to discuss recently found evidence of the psalms being used elsewhere, at a special service at St. Mary lslington. Smart and his family had lived in Islington before his confinement. She suggests that there they may be other examples in other hymn sheets from special services if searched carefully.

[56] In fact, James Merrick's translation *Psalms, Translated or Paraphrased in English Verse*, published the same year as Smart's was much better received than Smart's own work. See reviews in *Monthly Review*, xxxiii, 1765, (240-241) and *Critical Review*, xx, 1765 (208-216). For a detailed discussion of the reception of the psalms in relation to Merrick see Walsh and William (iii. xvi-xvii).

[57] As noted by Karina Williamson and Marcus Walsh in their introduction to Smart's *Hymns*, the genre of hymns provided more license to the author than that of psalm translation: "The eighteenth-century English hymn was the result of a process which began with the metrical psalter, embraced freer, and especially, evangelizing methods of paraphrase (or, more strictly, 'imitation'), took in other parts of Scripture, and eventually produced hymns more or less immediately suggested by scriptural text or texts" (9). The hymn is still a genre based on scripture and meant for use in worship, but it is freer since it is not limited by the text of a single psalm.

[58] In *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* Ian Balfour notes Smart's focus on Hebrew letters and that he infuses these letters with "spirit" through the "inventiveness" of translation which Balfour argues Smart views "as a ubiquitous phenomenon" (35-36).

[59] See, for example, Smart's Psalm 84.

[60] Walsh gives Smart's Psalm 137 as a key example of his Christianization of the psalms. (xxiii)

[61] Thomas Keymer's article "William Toldervy and the Origins of Smart's *A Translation of the Psalms of David*" discusses the appearance of a very early reference to Smart's Psalms in a 1756 book by Toldervy which implies that Smart was already composing the psalms in the madhouse and that their translation most likely corresponds with the dates of the writing of *Jubilate Agno*. Keymer presents the reference as further evidence of the likely influence of psalmody on *Jubilate Agno*. Walsh and Williamson have also noted several references to psalm translation in *Jubilate Agno* (iii. xi). Therefore it is likely that, although their forms and styles are completely divergent, the psalms and *Jubilate Agno* were composed at about the same time.

[62] Translations previous to Smart's, including the very influential evangelical translation of Isaac Watts, have incorporated the name of David into the psalms, but Smart's focus on David goes beyond all other previous translations.

[63] Smart's depiction of David took part in a larger eighteenth-century debate about David's character in which Smart aligned himself with David's defenders. Steven L. McKenzie's *King David: A Biography* discussed the many views of David presented by writers in the eighteenth century: "Writers have viewed David in different ways. For poets, he was the psalmist inspired by God and inspiring them to the highest form of praise...Christopher Smart's 'A Song to David' (1753) praised him as the ideal man" (3). McKenzie sees Smart as defending an ideal David against detractors who saw many of David's actions (killing thousands, sleeping with a married woman) as immoral. See Walsh and Williamson (105), Dearnley (173-6) and Sherbo (172-4) for a detailed discussion of the controversy around David's character in eighteenth-century England. It should be noted that Weinbrot is very skeptical of the evidence that Smart participated in this debate, noting that it is impossible to accurately date Smart's 'Song.' He calls for a more compelling explanation for Smart's focus on David (463).

[64] Oxford English Dictionary.

[65]Breath brings us into the realm of wind which is also a figure of "spirit". The Hebrew 'ruach' is the word both for spirit and wind. The breath, then, becomes a figure of Chrisitian "spririt" in Smart's invocation.

[66] See my chapter on John Dennis for a more detailed discussion of Psalm 18.

[67] It is important to note that the lack of an origin in Smart is not the same as the idea that the origin is radically displaced as found in deconstruction. Whereas deconstruction's model of translation as occurring at the origin serves to displace and multiply the possible meanings of a text, for Smart the coincidence of translation and origin solidifies the sameness of the text and its many repetitions so that the origin actually becomes the defining principle of everything that will follow.

[68] Both Watts and Merrick translated Psalm 19, but neither put undo emphasis on the reference to speech and languages. Smart's focus here is all his own.

[69] Modern commentators read Babel as a biblical explanation of the need for translation. See especially George Steiner's very influential *After Babel* and Jacques Derrida's essay on translation theory *Des Tours de Babel*.

[70] Jacques Derrida's *Des Tours de Babel* discusses the "confusion" of language at its origin and translation as a manifestation of language's inherent inability to be present to itself. In Derrida the multiplicity of languages in translation reveals something about the functioning of all attempts at linguistic communication. Rather than seeing translation, then, as a necessary evil, Derrida celebrates translation as a way into the inner workings of language.

[71] It isn't really possible to talk about a discipline of "history" proper for those who first used figural interpretation. In that context, the figural would be pre-historical—a prophetic mode, parallel to and not necessarily in opposition to "history." However, in the context of the eighteenth century, we can certainly see figural readings of the Bible directly opposed to a historical understanding of the Hebrew past.

[72] As noted in my introduction, Jill Robbins writes about the necessary suppression of the Hebrew Bible that takes place through the process of figural interpretation (8).

[73] Here, it may be helpful to turn back to Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility* where he characterizes eighteenth-century translation as "domesticating," making the foreign language seem entirely familiar through the process of "fluent" translation. In this instance, Smart's translation, in essence, domesticates both Hebrew and English simultaneously.

[74] Parallelism as the defining feature of Hebrew poetry was presented in Bishop Robert Lowth's lectures which are widely considered a major influence on Smart. In "Reason in Madness: Christopher Smart's Poetic Development" Robert D. Saltz argues that rather than reading Smart's *Jubilate Agno* as 'mad' text, we can read it as "a poetic experiment, an attempt to write a psalm that is both traditional and unfamiliar, both public and highly personal" (Saltz 67). He links this "attempt" directly to Lowth and the Hebrew tradition: "Generally, what Smart took from Lowth's *Lectures* was a way of adapting his psalmistic vision to forms recognized as Hebraic, specifically those connected with David" (Saltz 60). In *The Religious Sublime*, David Morris argues for the division of Smart's work into the realms of praise and prophecy, lining up praise with *A Song to David* and prophecy with *Jubilate Agno*, but in spite of this division he also sees Lowth's work as having had a profound influence on both texts: "Smart's two best works, *A Song to David* and *Jubilate Agno*, reflect his understanding both of Lowth's lectures and of the tradition of the religious sublime" (Morris 170). Both Saltz and Morris view the blueprint of psalmic structure provided by Lowth as a major source of Smart's work.

[75] One may argue that Roston's own concept of "Hebrew" is itself a part of the very eighteenth-century understanding that he writes about. He has bought into a certain version of the language as simple, more direct and more pure than, for example, English, just as eighteenth-century writers did. He has essentially imported this view directly into his book straight from the authors he writes about.

[76] *Jubilate Agno* and *A Song to David* have also been linked to the tradition of Jewish mysticism. In her article "The Pillars of the Lord: Some Sources of 'A Song to David'" Katherine M. Rogers makes the argument that the section of the *Song* which describes the pillars of the Lord is based in the teachings of Jewish mysticism, the Kabbalah, where there are ten emanations of God, the sephirot, seven of which are subordinate to the other three. She sees in Smart an argument for the first three Sephirot as the trinity, and the seven remaining emanations as his pillars: "That he was familiar with this general type of thinking… is made clear by his two mystical alphabets in the *Jubilate Agno* and his exercise on the *lamedh*, i.e. 'L' or 'El,' a Hebrew name for God, where the mystic significations revealed through accidents of spelling and sound are fully in accord with the Cabalist tradition" (527). For a more detailed discussion of Smart's pillars and the probable link to Jewish mysiticism see the addendum to *A Song to David* in Walsh and Williamson.

[77] See Hartman and Hawes for examples of critics who celebrate Smart's playfulness.

[78] The opposition between the positions of Smart and post-structuralist critics such as Jacques Derrida has already been noted by Geoffrey Hartman who claims that Smart's understanding of the presenting power of language can be used to critique Derrida's position. However, I would say that the opposite is equally true and that the understanding of translation provided by deconstruction can be used to critique Smart's position and to reveal the violent suppression of difference at the heart of it.

[79] Similarly, Bo Lindberg has written of Blake's illustrations for the Book of Job that they are "interpretive rather than illustrative" (282).
[80] Blake wrote many of his texts as "prophecies." For a detailed reading of Blake's prophetic works see David V. Erdman's *Blake: Prophet Against Empire.*
[81] The prayer/praise distinction is not set in stone, and like Blake's many contraries, does eventually break down, as I will show in the chapter. But for the purposes of laying out the tension between prayer and praise in the psalm paintings, I will first present the two as simply contrary.
[82] Mary Lynn Johnson's article expertly details the importance of face to face encounter with God in Blake's illustrations of the Biblical text.
[83] Butlin dates *David Delivered out of Many Waters* as 1805 work and *By the Waters of Babylon* as work of 1806 (462, 466).
[84] See Morris, 18, but also my detailed discussion of the significance of Psalm 18 in my chapter on John Dennis's translation of Psalm 18.
[85] Mary Lynn Johnston notes: "Blake consistently seeks to liberate the visionary David from the historical David." (123)
[86] The sudden shift from loss to praise is actually something common to many psalms of lament, which lament God's absence but suddenly turn back to God in the offer of praise. See, for example, Psalm 13. Blake's painting enacts the psalmic turn back to God, but makes it simultaneous with the moment of loss.
[87] However, it should be noted that the very fact of a semiotics of painting reveals that painting, too, takes part in language's repetition. It does, though, provide a figure of the escape from repetition that Blake desires by *seeming* to be outside of language.
[88] In the Introduction to *Blake and his Bibles* Mark Trevor Smith writes of Blake's encounter with the Bible and its relation to repetition: "Blake re-creates the Bible in two opposing ways: he rewrites by repeating, imitating, honoring, but he also rewrites by denying, contradicting, making new" (xi).
[89] See, for example, Pamela's forgiving "turn" in Chapter 2 of this dissertation or Christopher Smart's Psalm 137 in Chapter 3.
[90] There are many sources on Blake and Empire. David V. Erdman's *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* outlines Blake's distaste for Empire as does Julia M. Wright's *Blake, Nationalism, and the Politics of Alienation.*
[91] Geoffrey Keynes had dated it as 1820 in his edition of the print.
[92] For a detailed reading of Blake's link to kabbalah see Sheila Spector's two excellent books *Wonders Divine: The Development of Blake's Kabbalistic Myth* and *Glorioius Incomprehensible: the Development of Blake's Kabbalistic Language*.
[93] Richard H. Popkin's "David Levi, Anglo-Jewish Theologian" details the influence that Levi had on the eighteenth-century English understanding of Judaism. He both translated Jewish texts for Jews living in England who no longer studied Hebrew and provided exegesis of Jewish texts for gentiles (101). He argued publicly on behalf of Jews against both evangelicals and deists, while maintaining his position as *the* authority on Judaism.
[94] In "The Echoing Greenhorn: Blake as Hebraist" Arnold Cheskin notes that this is the equivalent of writing "ABC" in English (178).
[95] For detailed accounts of Blake's relative knowledge of Hebrew see Arnold Cheskin's "The Echoing Greenhorn: Blake as Hebraist" and Sheila Spector's "Blake as an Eighteenth-Century Hebraist."
[96] Cheskin notes: "One of the interesting unsolved problems connected with Blake's Hebrew is his means of acquiring it. Unfortunately, even in an area like this, where no Hebrew writing is involved, the scholarship is problematic. Damon indicates the problem of Blake's acquisition this way: 'We do not know who Blake's teacher were…[In] London…he continued his [Hebrew] studies, probably with some local rabbi…' G. E. Bentley Jr. seems to have found the solution. Basing his claims on the January 1803 letter to James, Bentley identifies William Hayley as Blake's tutor. The letter, however contains no reference to Hayley in this capacity" (183).

[97] Another key area in Blake studies that relates to Judaism is the discussion of Blake's level of anti-Semitism. For a detailed reading of anti-Semitism and Blake's attitude to Jews see Karen Shabetai's "The Question of Blake's Hostility Toward the Jews" where she argues that critics have been too quick to dismiss Blake's anti-Semitism as simply of his time period. She notes several examples of excessive affect in Blake's anti-Semitism which she claims cast a shadow over the rest of his work. Ted Holt's "Blake's 'Elohiim'and the Hutchinsonian Fire: Anti-Newtonianism and Christian Hebraism in the Work of William Blake" is a recent addition to the study of Blake's Hebraism.

[98] Micrography is also a possible source for Apollinaire's calligrams.

[99] Blake's publisher Joseph Johnson had connections with publishers in Germany, and it is possible that Blake may have come into contact with micrography through this connection.

[100] W.J. T. Mitchell notes Blake's investment in printed text that appeared to be a "hand inscribed manuscript" (Picture 129) and Blake's desire to break down the distinction between calligraphy and typography (Picture 144-145).

[101] The "purely graphic qualities of the text" highlighted by the use of Hebrew script in the *Laocoön* has been noted by David E. James (228).

[102] Another text of Blake's which appears to bear the mark of micrograhy is his *Book of Job,* published in 1826 and contemporary with the *Laocoön* . Miniature print decorates the edges of many of the illustrations in an echo of micrographic forms. Christopher Rowland's compelling study of Blake's *Job* in *Blake and the Bible* notes the miniature text around the illustrations but explains it as a mark of the inferiority of the text in relation to the illustration in order to "prioritise the image" (14). I would argue that micrography is a much better explanation for the miniature printing and that Blake's use of micrographic techniques in *Job* presents an interesting case for further study. Paley has also noted the Job illustrations as "a parallel" to the breakdown in text and image found in the *Laocoön* (88).

[103] Irene Tayler points to the story in Virgil which the statue depicts in which Laocoön attempts to warn the people of Troy against the Trojan Horse and is later punished by the gods in the scene depicted in the statue. Tayler reads Laocoön as a figure of war for Blake. Similarly, Paley reads the Laocoön as "an artistic icon of Empire" for Blake. By surrounding the image with his own text calling for the end of Empire, Tayler and Paley see Blake as attempting to defy the war and empire that he sees the statue as a symbol of. James sees Blake using the figure of Laocoön in order to critique his own participation in the artistic economy that had necessitated his creating the drawing for Flaxman in the first place. In other words, Blake reclaims the statue to reclaim his own autonomy as an artist. Wright views Blake as working in opposition to classical art and the rules that govern it. All the critics agree that Blake is making use of the Laocoön statue for his own purposes and to write his own story of art history.

[104] For a detailed discussion of the reception of the Laocoön statue in Blake's day see Paley and Wright. Keynes notes that the Graeco-Roman Laocoön had come to represent anything he most hated- "materialism associated with Urizen…and unimaginable art" (29).

[105] In *Blake's Altering Aesthetic* William Richey notes the importance of the term"art" in the *Laocoön* (134). Morris Eaves, in his discussion of Blake's theory of art in *William Blake's Theo*ry *of Art,* cites the *Laocoön* as a key example the Romantic humanism he sees underlying Blake's work in which imagination replaces reason (95).

[106] Blake has made a very similar argument about the link between art and the imagination at the end of *Milton: A Poem*: "These are the destroyers of Jerusalem, these are the murderers Of Jesus, who deny the Faith & mock at Eternal Life: Who pretend to Poetry that they may destroy Imagination: By imitation of Nature's Image drawn from Remembrance." In this section of *Milton,* Science is also described as "despair" that will "destroy the wisdom of ages." But interestingly, in *Milton* Blake writes of poetry, but in the later Laocoön he writes of "art." The poetry of the imagination from *Milton* becomes the Hebrew art of the Laocoön.

[107] This genealogy, itself, is of course imagined. Micrography, having only developed in the 9th century is not actually ancient. But in the imagined history that Blake inscribes here, the practice of micrography stands in for the most ancient of artistic forms.

[108]Mitchell's more recent reading of Blake's use of the visual in Picture Theory refers to Blake's "visible language": "Blake's text unites poem and picture in a more radical sense than simply placing them in proximity to one another. Blake treats his pictorial art as if it were a kind of writing…Blake's images are riddled with ideas, making them a visible language—that is, a kind of writing" (147).
[109]For an example of the play and conflict between words and image in Blake see Walter Reed's reading of Blake's *Tyger* in "Dimensions of Dialogue in the Book of Job: A Topology according to Bahktin." Northrop Frye's "Poetry and Design in William Blake" also discusses the rebellious nature of Blake's 'illustrations': "More surprising than the independence of the words from the design is the independence of the design from the words" (36). Specifically in relation to *The Songs of Innocence* Frye notes, "so far from simplifying the text, the design has added a new dimension of subtlety and power" (37).
[110] "Le principe de la micrographie est autre: le texte utilisé pour "dessiner" des forms géométriques, végétales, animales, humaines ou des grandes letters est present mais n'est pas lu. Nous sommes en presence d'une écriture qui ne se révèle pas par son contenu lisible, d'un texte qui trouve sa raison d'être dans autre chose que dans la lecture des séquences linéaires."
[111] As noted above, Sheila Spector has devoted great care and attention to the relationship between Blake and the traditions of Kabbalah.
[112] Christopher Rowland's recent book, *Blake and the Bible,* provides a detailed reading of Blake's use of biblical figures and forms to both embrace and critique the Bible: "While there can be few writers and artists whose work is so permeated with biblical themes, Blake is at the same time on of the Bible's fiercest critics" (2). The collection of essays, *Blake and his Bibles,* edited by David V. Erdman is another excellent resource. "The Word Within the Word" in Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry* also discusses Blake's use of biblical imagery.
[113] Martin K. Nurmi has addressed Blake's "doctrine of contraries " in *Blake's Marriage of Heaven and Hell: A Critical Study* where he argues that Blake's contraries do not negate each other, but co-exist in a way that could be creative if we would stop pitting them against each other (29). Both Mitchell and Rowland read Blake's contraries in his *Book of Job.* Mitchell gives a list of many of the oppositions found in Blake: Book/Scroll, Mechanical/Handcrafted, Reason/Energy-Imagination, Judgment/Forgiveness, Law/Prophecy, Modern/Ancient, Science/Art, Death/Life, Sleep/Wakefulness, Literal/Spiritual, Writing/Speech-Song (35). I would note that we could easily add Prayer/Praise to the list. Rowland discusses the contraries Blake identifies in the deity and concludes that they are a reflection of the nature of both humanity and divinity (84). Walter Reed has discussed this tension of contraries in the Bible and in Blake in terms of a Bahktinian 'dialogue.'
[114] Mitchell notes Blake's exploration of the use of "human letters" in his notebook (Picture 148).
[115] Nelson Hilton has noted the resemblance of Blake's images to a foreign language: "All Blake says is that we should 'enter the image' and 'be one with him,' suggesting that experience where, after months or years of hard study at a new language, we suddenly find ourselves in its terms" (231).
[116] See Walter Benjamin's "Task of the Translator."
[117]The OED defines several uses of the word 'practise' in 1826 including the repetition of an exercise, the carrying out of religious devotion and the undertaking of a profession. For Blake, practice is all three of these.
[118]For an in depth discussion materiality in relation to Romanticism, see Paul De Man's essays in *Aesthetic Ideology*, Jacque Derrida's reading of De Man's concept of materiality in "Typewriter Ribbon", and Rei Terada reading of both De Man and Derrida in "Legacies of Paul De Man: Seeing is Reading". All of these readings take their point of departure in Kant's third critique.
[119] See Derrida's discussion of materiality and the textual event in "Typewriter Ribbon" (154).
[120]What I call 'naturalizing' translation here is closely aligned with what Venuti calls 'domesticating' translation.
[121] My use of the term "myth" comes from the work of Roland Barthes in *Mythologies.* In Barthes, myth is process of signification by which ideological content (here, the notion of a sublime, Hebraic origin for England) is added to a signifier (here, 'Hebrew') but is naturalized so that it appears to be the natural

signified of the signifier. In other words, the translation of Hebrew texts created and perpetuated a myth which made 'Hebrew' signify glorious English origins.

[122] In *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* Ian Balfour notes that Blake's prophetic moment is "decidedly of the order of time and yet can be abstracted from time, marking an interruption in its 'flow'" (149-150). In other words, Blake's prophetic art is a performance of interruption.

# Images

Figure 1: William Blake. *David Delivered Out of Many Waters*. © Tate, London.

Figure 2: William Blake. *By the Waters of Babylon.* Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop, 1943.404. Photo: Katya Kallsen © President and Fellows of Harvard College

Figure 3: William Blake. *Laocoön* or *ה׳ and His Two Sons Satan and Adam*. 1826-1827. ©Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

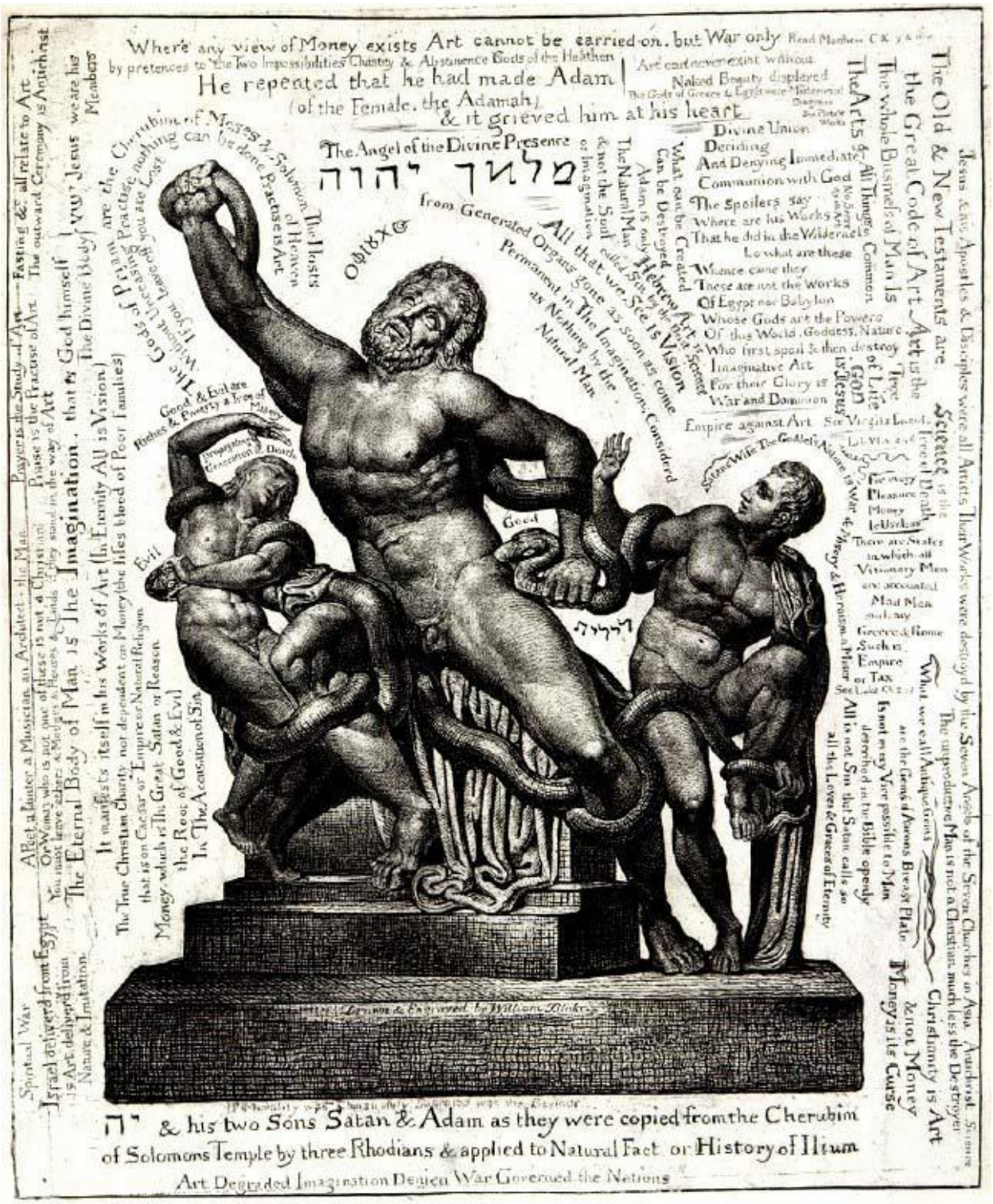

Figure 4: Marcus Donath of Nitra. "King Solomon written with Song of Songs" in *Circumcision Book*, 1819-1820. Staats-und Universitatsbibliothek Hamburg.

Figure 5: William Blake. *Free Drawing of Laocoön*. ~1824. ©Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

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