

A. Title Page

Professional Development Grant Report
Conference Presentation
Modern Language Association
January 3-January 7, 2018
New York City, New York

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B. Restatement of the Professional Enhancement Opportunity

I received funding to attend and present a paper at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association (MLA) in New York City, New York on January 3-7, 2018. My paper "Hebrew Micrography in the Works of William Blake" was a part of the panel "Word and Image in British Romanticism."

My presentation explored the interplay of word and image in the work of William Blake, specifically by considering the possible influence on Blake of the Hebrew art form of micrography, the use of miniature Hebrew script to create designs and images. I contend that in many of Blake's plates, and especially in the print *π' and His Two Sons, Satan and Adam*, often called *Laocoön* by scholars, and in his *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, the influence of micrography can be clearly seen, and that this influence helps illuminate the relationship between text and image in Blake's work. By undermining a clear distinction between the visual and the textual, and between the central and the marginal, Blake's micrographic technique calls forth a vision of language that is at once a force of divine creation and an embodiment of earthly materiality. Blake's reclamation of "Hebrew art" through the creation of a Hebrew/English micrography also adds new complexity to the mythical history of art and poetry that he embraced. My presentation included images found in The National Library Archives on my research trip to Jerusalem, Israel in the summer of 2017.

C. Brief review of professional enhancement opportunity

The MLA is the most important yearly conference in all of literary and language studies. Being asked to give a paper at this conference was a great honor. While at the conference I had the opportunity to attend many panels, gather new ideas for teaching literature, and network with colleagues from Universities all over the world.

By attending panels in the fields of eighteenth-century studies, literary theory, digital humanities, and romanticism, all areas covered in my teaching, I was able to keep up with the newest developments happening in those fields. Upon returning to the classroom, I have been able to pass that knowledge and those approaches on to my students.

By presenting my research to top scholars in my field and getting their questions and feedback, I was able to improve my work and challenge myself to take my research in new and productive directions.

D. Summary of finding, outcomes, and experiences had

The conference was a wonderful professional opportunity. In addition to successfully presenting my paper and attending many panels that expanded my knowledge of my fields of study, the Wordsworth-Coleridge Society has now published an edited version of my paper in their peer-reviewed journal *The Wordsworth Circle* (see attached). This publication would not have been possible without my attendance at the conference.

E. Conclusions

Participation in the conference allowed me to present my work to a national audience, keep up on pedagogical and research developments in my field of specialty, and network with colleagues in my field. As a result of the conference, I have new ideas for the classroom and have a new peer-reviewed publication.

THE WORDSWORTH-COLERIDGE ASSOCIATION 2018

The Wordsworth-Coleridge Association is sponsoring a lunch and two scholarly sessions at the 2018 convention of the Modern Language Association in New York City.

LUNCH

The lunch will begin at 11:30 a.m., with the main course served about noon on Friday, January 5, at Carmine's Italian Restaurant—Times Square, 200 West 44th Street, New York. This event is co-sponsored by the John Clare Society of North America. The lunch is open to members and non-members of the Association and the MLA. All are welcome to attend.

Advance reservations are requested by December 20. Please remit \$40 per person, payable by check or credit card through the following web page: www.johnclare.org/WCA

SESSION 64:

POETRY AND ILLUSTRATION IN BRITISH ROMANTICISM

Thursday, January 4, 1:45-3:00 p.m.

Central Park West, Sheraton

Program arranged by the Wordsworth-Coleridge Association

Presiding: James McKusick, University of Missouri—Kansas City

1. "On Not Reading Blake's Large Color Prints," Joseph Viscomi, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
2. "Illustration and Terror: Thomas Macklin's Poets' Gallery in a Revolutionary Decade," Ian Haywood, University of Roehampton
3. "Passing Time in Victorian Illustrations to Romantic Poetry," Tom Mole, University of Edinburgh

Respondent: Seamus Perry, University of Oxford, Balliol College

SESSION 645:

WORD AND IMAGE IN BRITISH ROMANTICISM

Saturday, January 6, 3:30-4:45 p.m.

Riverside Ballroom, Sheraton

Program arranged by the Wordsworth-Coleridge Association

Presiding: Jonathan Farina, Seton Hall University

1. "Antislavery Satire before Abolitionism: Two New Images," Deirdre Patricia Coleman, University of Melbourne
2. "Blake's Wollstonecraft's Girls," Elizabeth Fay, University of Massachusetts Boston
3. "Hebrew Micrography in the Works of William Blake," Sarah Stein, Arkansas Tech University
4. "The Game of Human Life: Late Romantic Amusement, Social Class, and Illustration," Rosetta Young, University of California, Berkeley

CONTENTS

Word And Image In British Romanticism

From the Editor	1
On Not Reading William Blake's Large Color Prints Joseph Viscomi	3
Wordsworth's "Illustrated Books and Newspapers" and Media of the City Peter J. Manning	10
Victorian Illustrations of Romantic Poetry Tom Mole	19
Antislavery Satire before Abolition Deirdre Coleman	28
Blake's Wollstonecraft's Girls Elizabeth Fay	32
The Jewish Marriage Contract in Blake's <i>Job</i> Sarah B. Stein	41
Table Games 1790-1832 Rosetta Young	46
Polidori's <i>The Vampyre</i> and Byron's Portraits Mariam Wassif	53

From the Editor:

Essays by Joseph Viscomi, Tom Mole, Deirdre Coleman, Elizabeth Fay, Sarah B. Stein, and Rosetta Young in this issue of *The Wordsworth Circle* were developed from papers delivered at two sessions of the Wordsworth-Coleridge Association held in frosty New York on January 4 and 6, 2018, during the MLA convention. Seamus Perry served as respondent to one session that included Ian Haywood's "Illustration and Terror." Peter Manning's essay is adapted with kind permission from *Romanticism and the City*, ed. Larry Peer (Palgrave, 2011). Mariam Wassif's essay is developed from a conference on the gothic. The topic is so rich and the response so varied, we hope that readers of *TWC* will continue to submit illustrated essays on "Word and Image in British Romanticism," the poetry, prose, journalism, and, of great interest, the sciences. MG.

The Jewish Marriage Contract in Blake's *Job*

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"Opposition is True Friendship" appears at the bottom of plate twenty-one in several copies of Blake's early *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (78). Frequently, Blake presents a world in such contrary states as heaven and hell, innocence and experience, function chiasmatically, "married" to one another both in antagonism and companionship. On the one hand, he presents binary, mutually-opposed concepts; and, on the other, he positions these concepts only in relation to one another, as though defined through each other, with each containing and sharing key elements. Thus, Blake imagines a Bible that can be read "in the diabolical sense," not as an exclusion of hell, but a marriage between heaven and hell, and a world in which the innocent may possess more wisdom than their experienced counterparts who wander, lost in the mazes of reason (*Marriage* 80, *Songs of Experience* 46). The opposition of forces is expressed even in the formal characteristics of Blake's art work, which successfully "marries" word with image by engraving text pictorially as a manuscript image, and using images to simultaneously frame, illustrate, and interweave with the text, in a manner that expresses both harmony and discord between these elements simultaneously. W.J.T. Mitchell refers to the friendship and opposition of these arts as a "visual-verbal dialectics" and a "visible language" (*Composite Art 4, Picture Theory* 147).

The marriage of oppositions, expressed both in the content and form of Blake's work, offers an overarching figure through which to read his prints. I contend that Blake's *Illustration of the Book of Job* presents an ideal text to explore Blake's notion of marriage. While presenting a version of Christian spirituality, it uses Hebrew text and Jewish forms, expressing the ideal relationship of married opposition as that which exists between the Christian and Hebrew traditions. In doing so, *Job* explicates Blake's underlying principle of marriage, not only providing a model that can be extended to the rest of Blake's work, but revealing within it a seemingly conflicted and highly disturbing relationship to Judaism.

W.J.T. Mitchell and Christopher Rowland have noted the central importance of oppositions in Blake's *Job*, expressed in the interweaving visual and verbal qualities of the text. Mitchell argues that the set of prints works to reconcile the opposition of scroll and book (*Picture Theory* 4). Similarly, Rowland sees Blake's *Job* as an attempt to reconcile contrary aspects of divinity (84). This general theme of oppositional forces mirrors the underlying subject matter

of the biblical story, which presents a series of dialogues revealing contrasting positions regarding suffering, faith, and the relationship between human beings and God. The story begins with a conversation between God and Satan and continues through a series of discussions as Job argues with his wife, friends, and finally God. The overall intention of the book seems to be to explore the meaning of human suffering; its purposes, causes, and relation to God's will. Yet its final message remains one of the most enigmatic and uncertain in the Hebrew Bible. In the end, no answer is apparent, even after God has spoken, and what remains is a book of contraries throughout. God and Satan *oppose* each other over Job's fidelity to God, but they *agree* to take everything from Job to test his holiness. Similarly, Job *argues* with people who nevertheless *remain* his beloved wife and close friends throughout his affliction. Finally, Job repeatedly calls on God to answer him, *directing* himself towards God while maintaining an *oppositional* stance against him, at one point stating "I insist on arguing with God." Furthermore, the form of the book is primarily that of a dialogue, almost dramatic in nature, with very few narrative moments. The story unfolds as speakers engage each other through back-and-forth exchanges, addressing each other in opposition, and yet relying on a shared medium of exchange. On all levels, the story provides a series of friendships and antagonisms bound together in what Blake would call marriages.

Adapting this story, Blake emphasizes its oppositional content and form by overlaying a second series of formal oppositions that run through his art, simultaneously blending and distinguishing between the Hebraic and Christian traditions. I have previously shown that Blake makes use of micrography, a uniquely Jewish art form that utilizes miniature script to compose images, tracing Blake's knowledge of the form through his interest in Hebrew, and through the printing techniques he uniquely shared with Jewish manuscript artists of the late-18th and early 19th centuries. In micrography, a marginal script is woven into an image that essentially supersedes the referential function of the words and letters (Stein 623-640). In both *Job* and *The Laocoön*, Blake uses miniature Hebrew script that is marginal and, in the case of the *Laocoön*, neither linear nor necessarily primarily textual. Analyzing these texts, I show that Blake uses micrographic techniques, as a distinctively Hebrew art form, to inscribe a language that is both material and theological: on the one

hand, it is composed by merely inscribed letters, but on the other hand, it attempts to present the name of God and the language of creation (Stein 639-40).

Importantly, in the late 18th century, Jewish manuscript art flourished as Jewish scribes worked to preserve their tradition of micrography primarily through the art of the *ketubah*, the Jewish marriage contract. [See Images 1 and 2].

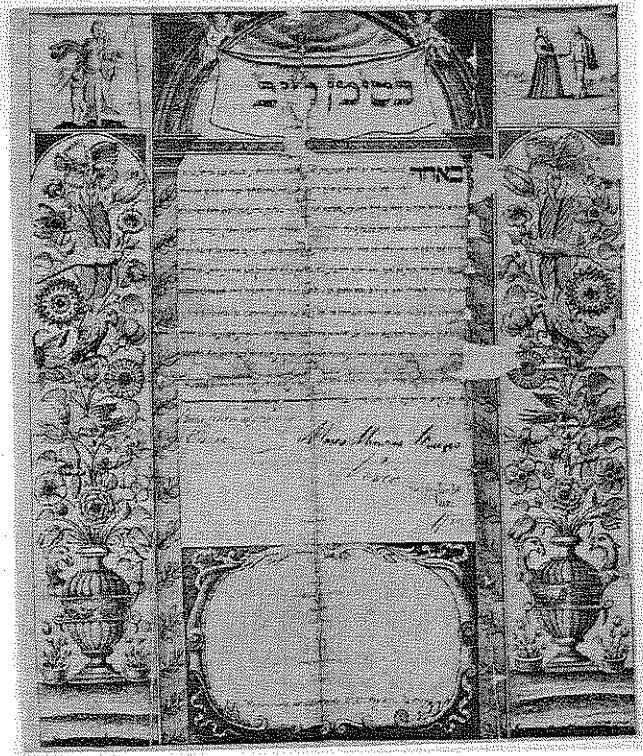


Image 1: Ketubah. London, 1816.
© Jewish Theological Seminary, New York City.

In the Jewish tradition, the *ketubah* is part of any wedding, and assures the rights of the wife within the marriage. Traditional *ketubot* printed in London around the time of Blake's work typically employ a marginal frame, contain within the frame Hebrew writing—the content of which focuses on the marriage agreement—and are printed individually from engraved plates.

In other words, *ketubot* printed in London around the time of Blake's work precisely mirror the formal characteristics and composition of many of his panels for the *Illustrations of the Book of Job*. I contend that Blake not only uses the Jewish art of micrography in *Job*, but, having certainly encountered multiple examples of *ketubot*, he based his art on the Jewish marriage contract to express this story of oppositions.

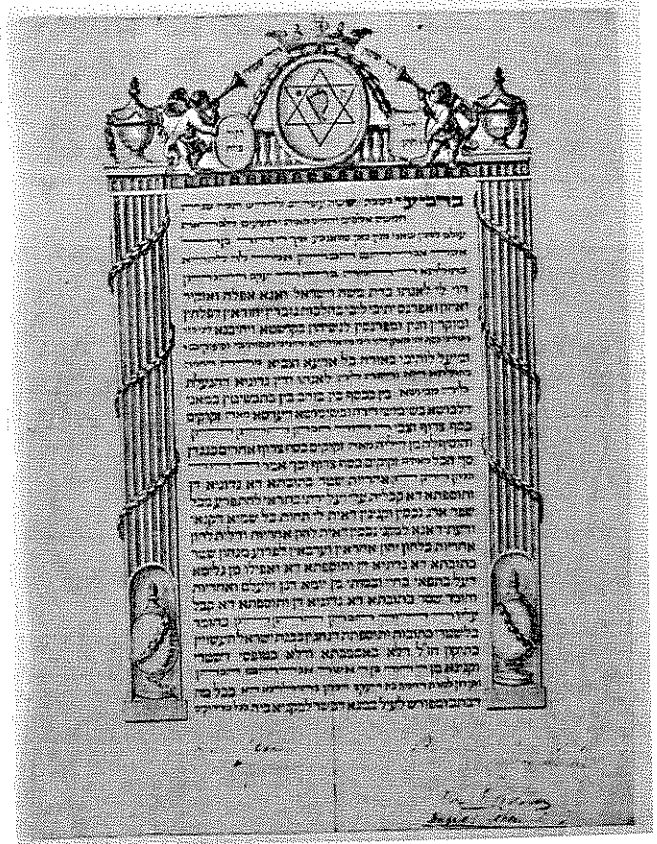


Image 2: Ketubah. Swansea, 1830.
© Jewish Theological Seminary, New York City.

A *ketubah*-based model explains the shift in style of Blake's later works. *Laocoön* and the *Illustrations of the Book of Job* mark a major departure from Blake's earlier art. He had often made use of framing and played with his margins, but the use of marginal text and the central image is accentuated here with large figures that dominate the center of the pages and marginal script used in the frame. In reference to the *Laocoön*, Morton D. Paley notes a change from the earlier illuminated books which can be read in a linear fashion unlike the *Laocoön* (57). He also notes "a parallel" between the marginal text used in both the *Laocoön* and *Job* (88). Although the shape of the letters remains consistent with his earlier work and the figures in *Job* are instantly recognizable as Blake's work, a notable shift takes place. In addition to minute, marginal text three major differences separate these later works from Blake's earlier prints. First, Blake takes earlier visual work and adds a frame that contains tiny script. In the case of *Job*, Blake bases his images on an earlier series he had completed on *Job*, commonly referred to as the Butts set, and then adds a frame, story, and commentary.



Figure 3: William Blake. “Satan Before the Throne of God.” *Illustrations of the Book of Job.* Collection of Robert N. Essick. Copyright © 2018 William Blake Archive. Used with permission.

Second, Hebrew words appear repeatedly, with the term *Malach Adonai* present in both the *Laocoön* and *Job*.¹ Third, unique to *Job*, Blake used a different style of intaglio printing than usual. Instead of etching and engraving, the *Illustrations of the Book of Job* are only engraved.

As stated above, these three defining hallmarks are the same essential characteristics of the *ketubah* that were being printed in the British Isles at that time. [Refer back to Images 1 and 2]. These *ketubot* take a previously engraved frame and add the language specific to each marriage (names, dates, and agreed upon provisions), as prints circulating in the British Isles were based on prints that originated in the Netherlands. The script was always in Hebrew. The style of printing used was intaglio with engraving but not etching. Each change in Blake’s work

reflects the style and technique used in creating *ketubot*: margins as art, the adding of frame and text, the use of Hebrew, and the technique of engraved intaglio.



Figure 4: William Blake. “Satan Going Forth From the Presence of the Lord.” *Illustrations of the Book of Job.* Collection of Robert N. Essick. Copyright © 2018 William Blake Archive. Used with permission.

The probable influence of the *ketubah* on Blake’s *Job* reveals a way of reading the text as precisely a story about the marriage of oppositions. Such a reading is reinforced by the particular liberties taken by Blake in his rendition. He combines the words of the original story from the Hebrew Bible with figures and text from the New Testament, while also combining the Hebrew text he inscribes with miniature English script. For example, the Title Plate begins with the words “The Book of Job” inscribed first in Hebrew and then in English. [See Image 5].



Collection of Robert N. Essick. Copyright © 2018 William Blake Archive. Used with permission.

By making Hebrew the first and English the second language of the text, the Title Plate gives an original, seemingly privileged status to the Hebrew, while also claiming itself as the rightful inheritor and logical fulfillment of that tradition. In another telling example, Blake's first plate after the title page explicitly states Paul's formulation "The Letter Killeth, The Spirit Giveth Life." This is a wholly Christian formulation that does not appear anywhere in *The Book of Job*. "The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life" has been used repeatedly in Christian theology to dismiss Jewish ways of reading in favor of Christian spiritual interpretations. For Blake, in this text, the letter and spirit are thus figured through yet another marriage of complex opposition. The letter can give life, just as the spirit can kill, and the spirit is a necessary complement to the letter. Similarly, two plates that strongly resemble *ketubot*, "Satan Before the Throne of God" and "Satan Going Forth From the Presence of the Lord," show how, through and as a kind of marriage-relationship, Blake's Christian spirit brings the dead letter of the Hebrew to life. [Refer back to Images 3 and 4]. In "Satan Before the Throne of God" the Hebrew words "Malach Adonai" appear at the top of the page in Hebrew script. Near this statement are comments that all relate to vision: "I shall see God," "I beheld the Ancient of Days," and "Thou art our Father in

the Likeness." The visual is as important as the verbal in this formulation. The speaker looks at God and looks like God. However, in the print, seeing is interrupted. God and Job cannot see each other, because Satan rushes to move into the middle. The motion of Satan's interruption is drawn into the lines which show him leaping, legs outstretched, moving the air and angels around him. The visual interpretation, like and as the spiritual dimension of the work, moves across the Hebrew page and interprets its letter. The Hebrew thus becomes a visual sign of its own interpellation into a now-Christian page. In the matching but distinct page "Satan Going Forth From the Presence of the Lord" we again see that Satan moves on the page and that God and Job look and turn away from each other. Satan's motion has seemed to work to sever Job from the Lord, but this very motion now begins to spin him out of control. The plate also includes a serpent as part of the ornate frame, a clear reference to the similarly depicted serpent of contraries in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Other prints make similar gestures, referring to the figure of Jesus, parts of The Lord's Prayer, and Christian mythology about the fall of Satan.

Blake gives us a combination of an English translation of the Hebrew story, rewritten again as his own spiritual interpretation. He also provides the traditional Christian interpretation of Job as a story about being patient and receiving a reward from the Lord in one's affliction. In addition, Satan plays a more central role in Blake's *Job* than in the Bible: Images of Satan are striking and he is repeatedly depicted in the central frame of the prints (*Job* 2, 5). Blake adds an evil dream in which Satan is present along with New Testament text in the margins: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth." Christopher Rowland reads Blake's depiction of *Job* as a meditation on the differing and contradictory notions of divinity: "What is true of humanity (that there are contraries) is true of the divinity also" (84).

All of these changes, while developing a reading of contraries, also serve to Christianize the text. In Blake's terms, he marries the contraries of Hebrew letter and Christian Spirit. Taking his previous images, Blake combines and thus opposes Jewish artistic practice and Christianized text in his margins. It seems that his opening reference to the letter and spirit is both a justification for the changes he makes to the text, in the name of Spirit, and also an explanation of the contraries that he will marry here: Satan and God, margin and center, the visual and the verbal, and the Hebrew letter and Christian spirit of the text. The story of Job is one of opposition and reconciliation. Blake's engravings add new meaning

by displaying the marriage and continual opposition of the Hebrew and Christian traditions. On the page, he combines Hebrew and English, Old and New Testament quotations, and reveals Jewish art as a source for Christianity with the two forever married in art and text.

Thus, the Hebrew and Jewish elements of the text are simultaneously those that are merely material: the letters, the framing, and the engraving technique. While, on the other hand, the Hebrew Bible story of Job is an abstract expression of the relationship of contraries. Hebrew must be reclaimed and yet in doing so it is brought into dialogue with Christianity. To emulate the marriage contract and its form brings out all the other contraries on which the story is built. A story written primarily as a series of opposing dialogues thus becomes the background to the visual opposition between Hebrew and English, and the Jewish marriage contract becomes a contract of marriage between two opposed and yet forever married religions and traditions. The micrographic letters that make it impossible to divide image from text as they embody both, turn into a miniature and marginal English script that turns English Christianity into the new language of the Bible, marrying two traditions to make their opposition a friendship.

Yet this "marriage" between Christianity and Judaism is not as happy as it appears to be. The attempt to marry Jewish Letter to Christian interpretation necessarily privileges the Christian at the expense of the appropriated Judaic tradition. In her article "The Question of Blake's Hostility Toward the Jews" Karen Shabetai has carefully laid out a case for Blake's anti-Semitism. She notes that he made his most clearly anti-Semitic comments in private notes (139). She also refers to another class of his writing as "philo-Semitic conversionist rhetoric" (140). Blake's *Job* fits under this umbrella because it appears to venerate Hebrew and simply want to bring it into the Christian fold. But there is no love in the gesture of Christianizing *Job*. The attempt to make this look like a friendship through the synthesis of letter and the spirit, is actually an insidious way to erase the specificity of the Jewish letter. Seeing this apparent philo-Semitism for the anti-Semitism that it is allows for the reconciliation of two aspects of Blake's work that have seemed contrary: his love of Hebrew and ancient Israelites and his apparent dislike of Jews. There is no contradiction in desiring to inscribe Christianity onto Judaism while also actively disliking those Jewish people who have not been moved by the Christian spirit. To dislike Jews

and love Hebrew is not a contrary in Blake, for his love of Hebrew is actually a love of taking and claiming Hebrew for English.

Blake's rhetorical claim over Hebrew aligns with his wish for an original Judeo-Christian Art that would supersede the classical as the source of Western Art History. In the Preface to *Milton* Blake describes this vision:

The Stolen and Perverted Writings of Homer & Ovid: of Plato & Cicero, which all Men ought to condemn: 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 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. (147)

Hebrew appears in Blake's vision in the form of the Bible, but only insofar as it is paired with an English supplement. Precisely by formulating the Bible as "sublime" (the characteristic that Blake imagines would supersede classical myth), the Bible is thereby defined through a classical term. Sublimity, as such, is not a category native to biblical Hebrew. Yet, throughout the 18th century, the notion of sublimity became tied to Hebrew and the Hebrew Bible, until it was a commonplace to write of the sublime Bible.² The specificity of the Sublime Bible that Blake calls for is the one revealed in *Job*, a Bible that claims ancient Hebrew origins and art forms while simultaneously using the terms of English Christianity of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

In Blake's sublime rendering of *Job* he marries the contraries of the Hebrew-Jewish and the English-Christian by combining Jewish forms and letters with Christian theology and phraseology. The letter comes alive as the spirit interprets it. Yet what at first appears to be love and veneration, claiming Hebrew as a privileged language, shows itself as appropriation. Making Hebrew sublime puts it at a distance, making it ancient and beyond comprehension. The reader cannot hope to understand it in all its sublime immanence, so it requires translation and conversion into the terms of the potentially less sublime but truer English.

Claiming a Jewish-Christian marriage both in its form and content, Blake's *Job* thus subsumes Jewish opposition to Christian claims. The inclusion of Hebrew art serves, in the end, to exclude Jewish interpretation of biblical text.

¹Blake's knowledge of Hebrew was limited. See Arnold Cheskin's "The Echoing Greenhorn," Sheila Spector's "Blake as an Eighteenth-Century Hebraist," and Abraham Samuel Shiff's "Blake's Hebrew Calligraphy" for in depth discussions of Blake's study and knowledge of Hebrew. All three conclude that Blake had great enthusiasm for Hebrew, but does not seem to have known it well.

²My book project, *The Hebraic Sublime: Translating Hebrew Poetry in the Long Eighteenth Century* investigates how an English notion of Hebrew as a sublime British inheritance was established and came to dominate Hebraism in the long 18th century. The final chapter of the book specifically addresses Blake's work.

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Table Games 1790-1832

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Published between 1814 and 1818 by John and Edward Wallis, the 61 by 45 centimeter engraving announces itself, at the very top, as *Who Wears the Crown: An Entire New Game*. Mounted on canvas in twelve sections, and painstakingly hand-colored, the game arranges fifty illustrated spaces depicting a variety of objects, locations and social roles into a spiral racetrack. The Wallises labeled each space to make the subject clear for the child consumers—telescope, milk pail, hatchet, Bell-man, parson, bank, field, and so on. These images coil toward the last illustration at the center, the object of the game: a golden crown, trimmed with ermine and red velvet, flanked by fleur-de-lis and laurel, radiating a faint yellow light. With its distinctive Baroque arches and jeweled crosses, St. Edward's Crown symbolizes the highest position in British society: the King. The players compete to reach this crown first, following the fates assigned to each square. Rather than an all-out race, the game runs by a different logic. If the player lands on The Telescope, for instance, at space 1, the game forwards him to The Comet at

space 6, but, if he reaches The Comet first, he pays two counters to the bank and begins the game again. In order to advance to a location or assume a social role, the player must obtain the appropriate object first. As with The Telescope and The Comet, objects appear before their corresponding destinies. The game punishes advancing too far too quickly and rewards modest movement toward victory.

As the last space, The Crown forms the notable exception to this design. After landing on The Crown at space 50, the winner must move backwards to space 45, The King, to complete his win. This break in the progressive logic of the game suggests that, when it comes to entering the very highest rungs of British society, measured advancement no longer does the trick. By disrupting the normative temporality of success—work hard and then prosper—the Wallises mark out this last victory as merely a gameplay fantasy. Unlike the other progressions—The Bell to The Bellman; The Plough to The Field—with their use-oriented, forward-looking tem-