

An Inverted Pilgrimage: Blake's *Milton* and *The Pilgrim's Progress**

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"Note here that Fable or Allegory is seldom
without some Vision. Pilgrim's Progress is
full of it."¹⁾

"This Book will make a Traveller of thee,
If by its Counsel thou wilt ruled be."²⁾

William Blake's *Milton*, as its title suggests, is about the hero John Milton's "unexampled deed" (2:21), about his descent from Eternity to Ulro and into Blake's cottage garden at Felpham, to "her(Ololon) redeem & himself perish" (2:20), and his subsequent ambiguous return to Eternity. The poem has frequently been taken, therefore, as an oblique but telling Blakean critique of "Milton's religion" (22:39); Florence Sandler, in particular, has done eminent work in this direction.³⁾

However, a sufficiently detailed analysis of *Milton* in relationship with John Bunyan has not yet been attempted.⁴⁾ Discussions of the relations between Blake and Bunyan have been generally restricted to pointing out that Blake took the concept of Beulah from Bunyan — a moony, female space "where contrarieties are equally true" (30:1) for Blake; whereas for Bunyan it is the country where "the Sun shineth night and day" (*PP*, 154).

But a closer reading of *Milton* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* will reveal that there are more similarities and common features between them than are generally assumed. Echoes from Bunyan found in *The Gates of Paradise* (1793; 1818) or 28 water-colour illustrations (1824)

to the First Part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* which are Blake's interpretative pictorial commentary on the work⁵, are the surest index that Bunyan had a particular fascination for the imagination of Blake. Furthermore, poems written in the 1790s reflect Blake's reading of Bunyan, while his letters, especially those written during his stay at Felpham (1800-03) where he composed *Milton* as he eventually tells us (36:21-24), are permeated with references to Bunyan that will shed some light on the interrelations between *Milton* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Although it would be interesting to extend and elaborate on the various consequences resulting from the distinction and interrelations between the two works, and to connect them with some of the important political and religious issues of the time, the aim of the present article is less ambitious: to indicate some similarities and dissimilarities between the two, particularly in terms of the extent to which Bunyan and Blake have recourse to the "allegorical dream vision" genre and, closely related to it, the "pilgrimage/journey" motif. Such a study is certainly in order because it is here that a significant common denominator between the two and its transformation are most clearly observable. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, I'd like to argue, is one of the pretexts of *Milton* as informing as *Paradise Regained* and Milton's journey is essentially an inversion of Christian's pilgrimage; the Blakean "Miltons Track" (34:24), in other words, is diametrically opposed to the Bunyanesque "way to the Celestial City" (PP,119). Indeed, both works are remarkably alike in many respects but they will in the final analysis turn out to be, in Blake's phrase, "oppositions" in an important sense.

I

References and allusions to *The Pilgrim's Progress* abound in Blake's letters written during and shortly after his stay in Felpham. The letter

in which Blake for the first time expressed his enmity towards his patron, William Hayley who figures in *Milton* as Satan, and announced *Milton* "descriptive of those Acts"⁶ during his sojourn in Felpham, is that of 25 April 1803 to Thomas Butts, where he reminds us of Bunyan's Christian struggling through "the Valley of the shadow of Death":

I perceive that the sore travel which has been given me these three years leads to Glory & Honour. I rejoice & I tremble: "I am fearfully & wonderfully made." I had been reading the cxxxix Psalm a little before your Letter arrived. I take your advice. I see the face of my Heavenly Father; he lays his Hand upon my Head & gives a blessing to all my works; why should I be troubled? why should my heart & flesh cry out? *I will go on in the Strength of the Lord; through Hell will I sing for his Praises,* that the Dragons of the Deep may praise him, & that those who dwell in darkness & in the Sea coasts may be gather'd into his Kingdom. (italics mine)

The italicized phrases could well refer to the outcry of Bunyan's pilgrim in the dark valley; "I will go on in the Strength of the Lord" is a quotation from Psalm 71:16 and it is also an exclamation which was uttered by the pilgrim when he was attacked by the foul fiends at Hell's mouth and succeeded in saving him. The "sore travel which has been given [him] these three years" may suggest his trouble and contention ('travail') with Hayley over the value of his "Just Right as an Artist & as a Man"⁷ to follow his own genius, but it will also indicate his journey ('travel') to Felpham and his three years' stay there. These would show that Blake is identifying his own condition as a victim of Hayley's psychological assaults with that of Christian and also his travel with the pilgrimage of Christian.

In the letter of 4 December 1804 to William Hayley, the Blake-Bunyan comparison is directly voiced:

I was about to have written to you to express my wish that two so unequal labourers might not be yoked to the same Plow & to desire you if you could get Flaxman to do the whole, because I thought it would be (to say the best of myself) *like putting John Milton*

with John Bunyan.... (italics mine)

The project on the part of Hayley to print and illustrate Hayley's unpublished material under the supervision of John Flaxman is rejected. It is Hayley's conventional opinion of Bunyan as the rude man's John Milton that Blake is assuming here. Blake, knowing Hayley's evaluation of Bunyan, obsequiously but ironically declines the offer, for he has already come to a new appreciation of the depths and complexities of Bunyan's prophetic character.⁹ The identification of Christian with Blake himself is especially obvious when Blake, citing Psalm 71:16 again in the letter quoted, goes on to say, "I shall travel on in the strength of the Lord God as Poor Pilgrim says." "Poor Pilgrim" is certainly Bunyan's Christian and the scene evoked is again that perilous pathway through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. The final reference to the Bunyan syndrome in the chronology of Blake's correspondence is found in another letter to Hayley of 28 December 1804 when he was informed of the death of Samuel Rose, a counsel for his trial for high treason at the Chichester Quarter Session:

Farewell, Sweet Rose! thou hast got before me into the *Celestial City*. I also have but a few more Mountains to pass: for I hear the bells ring & the trumpets sound to welcome thy arrival among Cowper's Glorified Band of Spirits of Just Men made Perfect. (italics mine)

Perhaps the trial at Chichester is closely associated with the trial of Faithful and Christian at Vanity Fair, and the "Celestial City" is, needless to say, the heavenly Jerusalem in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The mountains Blake conjures up here are probably meant to signify the Delectable Mountains which Bunyan places within view of the Celestial City: Blake again compares himself to Christian as a pilgrim. Another thing to note in the same letter is that Blake after lamenting Rose's passing writes that "certainly I am that Dreamer". What are the implications of "that Dreamer"? Does it refer to himself as a foolish

dreamer who is distracted by "Abstract folly" even while at work?; or, is it an allusion to a man who can "See Visions, Dream Dreams & prophecy", "unannoy'd" by "pernicious" "Doubts"?⁹ If he takes dreaming as delusive before the Felpham period, Blake now acknowledges its visionary and prophetic aspect, and by "Dreamer" with an emphatic "that", he seems to suggest the dreamer-narrator of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and hence the implicit identification of Blake with Bunyan.

It should be clear now that Blake, in relation to his patron during the Felpham period, presented his mental predicament as comparable to that of Christian; his personal concern and involvement with *The Pilgrim's Progress* was serious enough to authorize a comparative study of *Milton*, the most 'personal' of all Blake's works and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan's spiritual autobiography.

II

In reading *Milton* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* what strikes the common reader in the first place is their resemblance in form: that each work consists of two halves. And then he will be aware that John Milton is a hero in Book I of *Milton* and Ololon (his three wives plus three daughters) in Book II, while in the case of *The Pilgrim's Progress* the hero is Christian in the First Part and in the Second Part Christiana his wife and her children; in the two works the plots develop around male characters in the first half, whereas in the second half around female characters¹⁰. Most Blake scholars agree that the concept of the *topos* of Beulah was adopted from Bunyan of which the source is Isaiah 62:4 and the original meaning is "married" in Hebrew. The etymological meaning of the word is truly realized when an apocalyptic and overtly sexual union of Ololon and Milton is made at the *coda* of Book II and when Christiana's four children and her companion Mercie get married in the Second Part. It should also be noted that word/poetry or word/book is one of the thematic issues in each work: "what

moved Milton" (2:16) to descend from Eternity through Ulro, the world of death, to Blake's cottage garden is the Bard's "prophetic song" (2:22) while Christian is motivated to become a pilgrim by reading "the Book" (*PP*, 8) at the outset of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Among the common features between the two, however, what concerns more deeply the interrelations between them and what contributes to their genesis and structure is that they are cast in the form of allegorical dream vision which dates back to the Middle Ages.

The Pilgrim's Progress is perhaps the last considerable work in English that all readers would agree to call an allegory. In his verse "Apology" prefixed to the First Part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan justifies his method of "call [ing] for one thing to set forth another" (*PP*, 6) with reference to the Bible's own use of parables, dark sayings, "Types, Shadows and Metaphors" (*PP*, 4). No reader could doubt the content and intent of *The Pilgrim's Progress* from the extensively explicit title of Nathaniel Ponder's 1678 edition; the work is about allegorical actions during "his dangerous journey" and about "safe arrival at the desired country", set in the framework of "Dream" ("Under the similitude of a Dream"). At the beginning of *The Pilgrim's Progress*:

As I walk'd through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was Denn; and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept, I dreamed a Dream. I dreamed, and behold, I saw a Man clothed with Rags, standing in certain place, with his face from his own House, a Book in his hand, and great burden upon his Back. I looked, and saw him open the Book, and Read therein; and, as he read, he wept and trembled: and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, *What shall I do?*

Bunyan's Den in the wilderness, like Dante's dark wood midway through life, localizes the indeterminate plight of a man thrown into the dream world. The dreamer brings with him the whole burden of personal problems which conscience has made acute. Some critics on Bunyan hold

that since *The Pilgrim's Progress* arises out of the total withdrawal of what Lukács called the "God-given security"¹¹ upon which the allegory of the Middle Ages was firmly based, "the allegory [of *The Pilgrim's Progress*] is not consistently maintained and realism is always breaking in."¹² But it seems that it is here that *The Pilgrim's Progress* could be taken as an example of post-allegorical allegory. The post-modernist argument is that allegory is always double reading. It exists, as V. Cunningham suggests¹³, in the juxtaposition and superimposition of different senses, readings, and stories. And while an equality of the separate senses is sought for, allegory never wholly gets rid of the divisiveness that comes from the dividedness of attention it invokes; it is an invitation to the reader to keep two levels of reference continually in mind. And in this bifurcation of the reader's attention, the conceptual life of allegory resembles the physically endorsed textual doubleness that the use of marginal glosses imposes. The marginal glosses of *The Pilgrim's Progress* are, as in S.T. Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner*, a commentary to and an interpretation of the text and constantly refer the reader to the Bible or other preceding texts. Self-reflexiveness implicit in "The Author's Apology for his Book" or "The Conclusion" to the First Part alerts us to the reflection on the relations between text and reading.

The imprisonment in Doubting Castle is possibly the most unforgettable episode in the First Part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and yet it suggests that the promises are always potentially missable or unreliable and that they might simply be absent when you most want them to be present. Even though Christian and Hopeful come near the Celestial City, they "could not, as yet, with open face behold it, but through an *Instrument* made for that purpose" (PP,156); the pilgrims try to gaze at the Gate through the shepherds' "Perspective Glass" (PP,122) but their hands shake so much that they cannot "look steadily through the Glass" (PP,123). All these episodes would show the un-

steadiness of vision. Even at the end of the journey, the River of Death has a terrible way of testing the pilgrim's faith. The final destinations of By-ends and his fellows are uncertain: "Now whether they fell into the Pit, by looking over the brink thereof, or whether they went down to dig, or whether they was (*sic*) smothered in the bottom, by the damps they commonly arise, of these things I am not certain" (*PP*,108). And the First Part ends not with Christian's entry to Heaven, but with Ignorance's damnation at the very gates of the Celestial City, leaving us between hope and fear like Christian in the Interpreter's House. The "Conclusion" to the First Part is not conclusive enough, hence the Second Part was written; and by accepting silence the ending of the Second Part seems to refuse to have any closure. The plot structure of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is teleologically laid out with the hero struggling to attain certain goals during the course of the pilgrimage from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, but the end or telos is thus repeatedly overturned by the intricate processes and sub-plots that have accumulated around the central theme of the hero's moral growth.

It is often pointed out that Blake's last great prophetic books owe their germination to the central experiences of Felpham. Evidence that the genesis of *Milton* lies in his poetic experiences in Felpham is the letter Blake writes from Felpham to Butts (25 April 1803) where he makes it clear that *Milton* could be taken as a specimen of allegorical dream vision:

But none can know the Spiritual Acts of my three years Slumber on the banks of the Ocean unless he has seen them in the Spirit or unless he should read My long Poem descriptive of those Acts for I have in these three years composed an immense number of verses of One Grand Theme Similar to Homers Iliad or Miltons Paradise Lost...

His account that he has in the previous "three years composed an immense number of verses" descriptive of his "Spiritual Acts" during those years fits *Milton* better than *The Four Zoas* or *Jerusalem*. As is

clear in "dreams of soft deluding slumber" (*The Four Zoas* III:42), "slumber" is closely associated with or almost equivalent of "dream" and the persistent connection of "travel/traveller motif" with "dream" is found throughout Blakean *oeuvres* and it is unmistakably obvious in, for example, "Epilogue" to *The Key of the Gates*. It should be remembered that a dream-framework is what Blake uses for *Europe* where in the first Preludium plate the pictorial allusion to Bunyan's Christian appears or for *The Four Zoas* which closes with "End of The Dream". It would now be fair to conclude that *Milton*, "My long Poem", is the product of "the Spiritual Acts of [his] three years' Slumber [i.e. dream] on the banks of the Ocean". Blake who seems to identify himself with Bunyan's Christian during the Felpham period must be seeing himself in Bunyan who is the narrator/dreamer/author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. More noteworthy is that Blake like Bunyan appears in the poem as one of the personages through whom Milton's error is revealed as well as the author; the incursion of the poet into the poem, not merely as the reteller of a story but as the person who experiences the whole substance of the poem is, as A. C. Spearing has remarked¹⁰, most characteristic of the genre.

The illustrations to the First Part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* themselves will bear witness to this. The composition of the frontispiece (Fig.1)¹⁵ is spatially divided into three horizontal bands. The persona of the author, narrator and dreamer occupies the middle band. Below him, in the lowest band, to the right of the plate, a lion lies asleep. Within the visionary realm depicted in the arc of the rainbow above, moving from left to right are figures representative of the incidents in the dreamer's dream. They are indistinctly drawn, but they are separate portrayals of Christian. Two points should be noted here; first, the light streaming from the Celestial City which is Christian's goal irradiates and caps the form of the dreamer. Secondly, the central figure Christian, standing in the arbour of Beulah and the sleeping narrator

are alike in that both of them put on the same blue robe and the one is sleeping in a place under an arbour while the other is standing in the arbour of Beulah; the latter represents the risen counterpart of the former. In this way the figure whom we take as the originator of the vision is incorporated in the vision.

None of the designs to *Milton*, on the other hand, depicts a sleeping narrator, but in at least three plates (17,32,40)¹⁶ Blake himself is pictured. Plate 32 which is placed in the pivotal position between Books I and II, for example, is a full-page design of Blake/author's reception of Milton's falling star on the tarsus of his left foot; he is flinging his body back in self-annihilation. This is the moment of the prophetic vision's entering Blake's tarsus; it is at this particular visionary moment that Blake falls into a sleep or into a dream. At the lower left of plate 17 Milton's comet or "falling star" is about to enter the tarsus of Blake's left foot, having descended "perpendicular" (15:48) through Beulah. At the lower right stands a woman beside the altar, turning away as the star falls. Presumably she is the poet's "sweet Shadow of Delight" (42:28), Catherine his wife. In plate 40 (Fig.2) is depicted one of the incidents in the dream where Blake greets Ololon, Milton's emanation ("a Virgin of twelve years";36:17) who has descended into his cottage garden in Felpham, following Milton her husband along "Miltons Track" (Fig.3). In this way Blake like Bunyan enters the poem (the verbal and visual texts) and partakes in the action.

What is more interesting is that in another letter to Butts of 6 July 1803 Blake calls *Milton* "a Sublime Allegory"¹⁷ or "the Grandest Poem", defining "Allegory" as "address'd to the Intellectual powers, while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding." If *A Vision of the Last Judgment* is read more closely in terms of the distinction between "Allegory" and "Vision", it would become clear that Blake conceives of two kinds of allegory. First, allegory based upon the disrelations between representation and substance, is denigrated as a

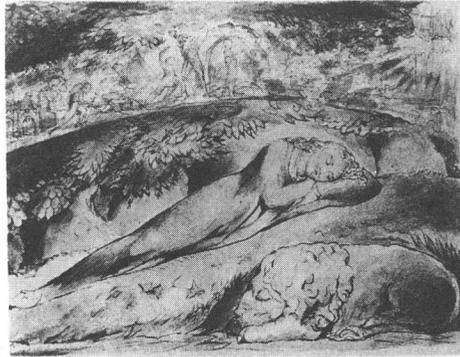


Fig.1 Frontispiece to *The Pilgrim's Progress*

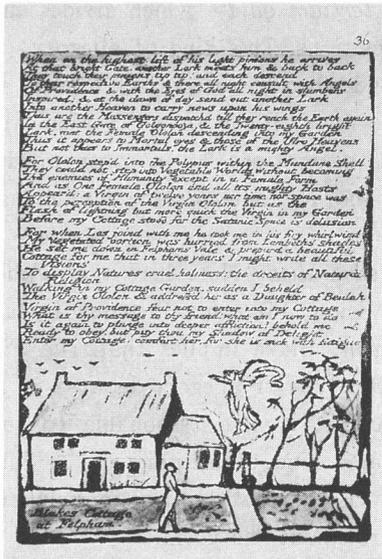


Fig.2 Milton, plate 40

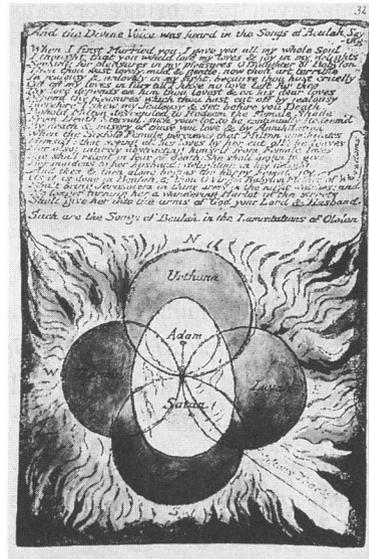


Fig.3 Milton, plate 36. ("Milton's Track")

fallen mode. When he writes in *Europe* that "an eternal life awaits the worms of sixty winters in an allegorical abode where Existence hath never come" (38-39), he pours scorn upon religious systems that enslave humanity with an unfulfilled promise of eternal life. As a technique based upon the *absence* of what it promises to come, allegory becomes a tool for political, religious and imaginative repressions. The allegorizing mode absorbs the sublime energy of individuals and distances them from a perception of the infinite.

Secondly, however, allegory is a mode of writing that makes up for the distance¹⁸⁾ or heals the gap, between Eternity and the Vegetable world, Inspiration and Memory. Just as the oak's "Eternal Image" renews "by its seed", so Blake's kind of allegory includes both allegory in the traditional sense of the word and "Vision" and is redefined as a name given to a bridge or gate — a *tertium quid* — which divides and unites, disrupts and organizes the oppositions. This kind of allegory, it seems to me, is what Blake has in mind when he categorizes *Milton* as "the Most Sublime Poetry" for the poem is, Blake says, "a Memento in time to come, & to speak to future generations"¹⁹⁾; in other words, its meaning is not manifest and must be dug out by "the Intellectual Powers"²⁰⁾.

Now it seems clear that when he says that "Note here that Fable or Allegory is seldom without some Vision. Pilgrim's Progress is full of it" in *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, Blake implies that *The Pilgrim's Progress* is the second or Blakean type of allegory because it is loaded with visions ("full of it"). And it is also reasonable to say that Blake meant *Milton* to be the same kind of allegory or "a Sublime Allegory" because he believes the visions that he saw in Felpham (and in Lambeth) are disseminated throughout the poem.

Just as the pilgrimage from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City is repeatedly endangered, leaving the travellers' end ambiguous, so Milton's cosmic journey is full of obstacles and it is quite uncertain

whether he has achieved his goal; the notion of indeterminacy is clearly indicated in the uncertain ending or refusal of closure, in which in spite of the apocalyptic and sexual union of Milton and Ololon, Albion is unable to rise: he tries to get up from his couch in the night of Beulah (39:32) but he falls again with dreadful groans (39:51); the awakening of Albion in *Milton* is incomplete.

Double-reading, or the commentarial and interpretative aspect of allegory in *Milton* is, in a curious way, observed in "A Bard's prophetic song" (2:22). When the Druidic Bard's song is read closely with a view to discovering the attitude of Blake towards the cause of the confusion of Los's world, two mutually exclusive versions become immediately apparent: the one is that when Palamabron hands over his "harrow of the Almighty" to Satan and he himself "served/The mills of Satan" (8:4-5), the horses of the harrow become angry and the servants of the mills become drunk with wine and begin dancing wildly, with the result that Los's universe is utterly confused. Contrary to this "masculine version" of the story, the other or the "feminine version" is told by Leutha, Satan's wife, who declares herself to be "the author of this sin" (11:35): Satan's desire to assume Palamabron's work is virtually caused by her act of enclosing Satan within "feminine delusions" (11:26) and suppressing his "masculine perceptions" (2:5). The two versions of the story about the fall of Los's world subvert each other; put differently, the "feminine version" is a subversive comment or gloss on its "masculine version". The two versions may correspond to the two Books into which the poem is divided and further to the two different causes of Milton's descent to earth: in Book I or "masculine" book, he begins his return to the sea of time and space voluntarily when he has heard the Bard's song; whereas in Book II or "feminine" book, Milton, or to be more precise, a portion of Milton (for Milton has been split into three), is said to have been driven out of heaven by his wife Ololon (34:3-4;37:1-2). Book II, one is tempted to say, is a text

about Book I, or a metatext.

Corresponding to the "masculine" and "feminine" versions of the motive of Milton's descent are two apparently opposing reasons why Christian embarks upon his pilgrimage: Christian sets out on pilgrimage voluntarily on reading the Bible in the First or "masculine" Part; whereas in the Second or "feminine" Part, Christiana is convinced that she is guilty of having driven Christian her husband out of the City: "I have sinned away your Father, and he is gone" (PP,178); "Lord have mercy upon me a Sinner" (PP,178). And in a parallel way the first and second halves are a commentary on each other, for Christiana (Second Part) is said to have "her key" to open "What Christian left lock'd up and went his way" (PP,171). This will imply that the Second Part ultimately serves the heuristic purpose of revealing the whole meaning of the work.

III

Medieval dream-poems are characterized by the motif of the other worldly journey. *Milton* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* are no exception and the motif is intimately though complexly bound up with their major theme²⁰. The concept of life as a pilgrimage goes back far into the Middle Ages, if not further. That Blake is intrigued by the concept is best exemplified in *Jerusalem* plate 99 where human beings are travellers or pilgrims "going forth and returning" between Eternity and this world. In *Milton* Milton's life is compared to that of a pilgrim as in "his (Milton's) bright pilgrimage of sixty years" (15:52). It is important to note that references to the travel/traveller motif permeate his epistles during the Felpham period, in particular, his letter of 22 November 1802 to Thomas Butts, where Blake says:

And now let me finish with assuring you that, *Tho' I have been very unhappy*, I am so no longer. I am again Emerged into the light of day; I still & shall to Eternity Embrace Christianity and Adore him

who is the Express image of God; but *I have travel'd thro' Perils & Darkness not unlike a Champion. I have Conquer'd, and shall still Go on Conquering. Nothing can withstand the fury of my Course among the Stars of God & in the Abysses of the Accuser.* (italics mine)

Like "a Champion" which immediately reminds us of *Seven Champions of Christendom* (1616), one of the possible sources of *The Pilgrim's Progress*²², Blake says, he has travelled through "Perils & Darkness" (cf. *PP*, 18). His journey ("my Course among the Stars of God & in the Abysses of the Accuser") may parallel Milton's cosmic flight from Eternity through Ulro or hell to Felpham, and "Tho' I have been very unhappy" exactly corresponds to the description of Milton's mental state just before he falls on the earth as a star: "Unhappy though in heaven" (2:18).

Milton is closely associated with "a journey", which is in evidence at the beginning of the poem: "Muses.../Record the journey of immortal Milton through your realms/Of terror & mild moony lustre" (2:1-3). Milton, taking off "the robe of the promise" (14:13) and realizing his errors ("I in my selfhood am that Satan", 14:30), cries, "What do I here before the Judgment?" (14:28). These words roughly parallel those of Christian, who has decided to become "a pilgrim"²³ when he has been made painfully aware of his sinfulness by reading the Bible: "*What shall I do* [to be saved]?" (*PP*, 8; Acts 2:37). Milton and Ololon, like Dante or Boethius, are guided by "the seven Angels of the Presence" (15:3) and Jesus on their journey, while Christian and Christiana have Hopeful, Greatheart and others as their companions on their pilgrimage to the Celestial City. It is also notable that Beulah is a place for rest and refreshment for the "weary" travellers/pilgrims in *Milton* (31:1) and in *The Pilgrim's Progress* it is also a *locus amoenus* for the pilgrims who are "weary with Travelling" (*PP*, 264).

As Jackson I. Cope has observed²⁴, in the pilgrimage tradition "the object of quest is place": the destination of Milton's and Ololon's

journey is the sacred place Beulah "upon the Borders of Heaven" (*PP*, 155) which might be analogous in function and structure to a "gate" to Eternity where they are united, while Christian's and Christiana's goal is "the Celestial Gate", an entrance to the heavenly Jerusalem where they will perhaps get together. Moreover, "the idea of conversion as a journey"²⁵ fits Milton as well as Christian, for Milton's journey is that of conversion or regeneration, by which he changes from being "the Elect" (23:56) by "cast[ing] off rational demonstration by faith in the Saviour" (41:3). While Christian's pilgrimage is a journey full of danger, adventure and curiosity, Milton's journey is internalized; it becomes a journey into the self, and the antagonist is no longer exterior temptation but "Selfhood". Plate 18 of *Milton* deals with the issue, where as Milton, having descended from Eternity, struggles with Urizen, his right foot cuts apart the two syllables of the "Selfhood"; nothing better illustrates the deep purpose of Milton's descent into the eternal death for his descent is, first and foremost, for "self annihilation" (14:12) and for splitting the "Selfhood".

As soon as Christian decides to become a pilgrim, he feels he is "alienated" from his friends and neighbours in the City of Destruction and further when they come to Vanity Fair, he and Faithful are treated as "Pilgrims and Strangers" (*PP*, 90) who speak a different language ("the Language of Canaan", *PP*, 90) from that of the merchants of Vanity Fair. It should be marked that the words "pilgrims and strangers" are often coupled in the Bible and stem from the same Hebrew word *ger*²⁶. "Milton's human shadow" (17:18), on the other hand, journeys over the mundane shell, passing by Midian, to "Satan's seat" (17:29) and then joins Los and his wife Enitharmon, "the watchers of the Ulro" (20:50). But Los and Enitharmon cannot understand the real meaning of Milton's descent and treat him as the merchants of Vanity Fair did as if he were a stranger, saying "Surely to unloose my bond/ Is this man come. Satan shall be unloosed upon Albion" (17:32-33).

Furthermore, when Milton is met at the gate of Golgonooza by two sons of Los, Rintrah and Palamabron, they ask, "Whence is this shadow terrible?" (22:31); the implication here is that Milton presents himself as a stranger or sojourner, that is, a *ger*.

In spite of the interesting similarities between *Milton* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which have the pilgrimage/journey motif as their common denominator, here is a major difference; in contrast to Christian who is a traveller "to Eternity" (17:30), Milton is one of the "travellers from Eternity" (17:29). I would, therefore, like to call Milton's journey "an inverted pilgrimage"; "Miltons Track", it must be noted, runs diametrically counter to Christian's "*way to the Celestial City*".

The most convincing *pictorial* example of such a Blakean inversion of Bunyan is probably "the robe" Milton puts off before his return to earth. (Harold Bloom has observed that if there is a single central image in *Milton* it is "the garment".)²⁷ Milton's travel starts with putting off "the robe of promise" (14:13) in Eternity at the beginning of the poem and ends in Felpham's vale with putting on "a garment dipped in blood, / Written within & without in woven letters" (42:12-13). When the Druidic Bard finishes his "terrible Song" there arises "murmuring in the Heavens of Albion" (14:4). The Bard, terrified, takes refuge in Milton's bosom and then Milton rises up and takes "off the robe of promise & ungirded himself from the oath of God" (14:13). He declares, "I will go down to self annihilation and eternal death" (14:22). Milton's "conversion" (which is *Milton's* immediate subject) thus begins when he throws off "the robe of promise", a symbol of authority and decides to plunge into the eternal death, and the poem ends with his "initiation" into Eternity when, naked, he is united with Ololon at Blake's cottage garden and wears "A garment of war" (42:15). The subject of plate 16 (Fig.4) is Milton's "conversion"; Milton, inspired by the Bard's prophetic song, is shown as he holds "the robe of prom-

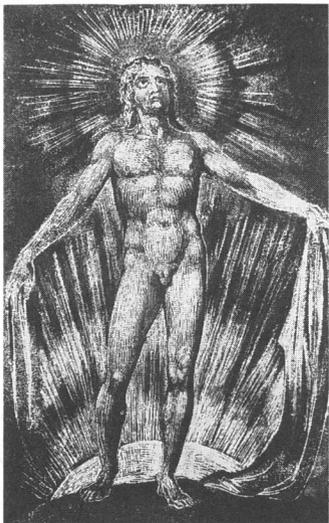


Fig.4 *Milton*, plate 16.

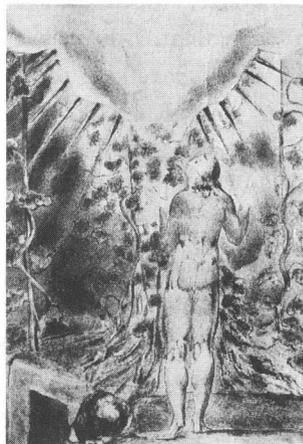


Fig.5 *The Pilgrim's Progress*, plate 14



Fig.6 *The Pilgrim's Progress*, plate 15

ise" in his left hand and in his right "the oath of God" and is about to stride forward. Rays of the fiery nimbus round his head mingle with the rays from a setting sun.

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, on the other hand, Christian's "burden loosed from off his shoulders" (PP,381) when he comes to a place upon which stands a cross, and then "three Shining Ones" come to him. The first says, "Thy sins be forgiven." The second strips him of his rags, and clothes him with "change of Raiment" (PP,38) or "Broidered Coat" (PP,49). The third sets a mark on his forehead, and gives him a roll with a seal upon it. These actions symbolize Christian's "conversion" and "initiation". Plate 14 of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Fig.5) depicts the shedding of the old man to become a new man in terms of the loosening of Christian's burden, while plate 15 (Fig.6) deals with the ritual donning of white raiment of the new. Looking at plate 15 whose subject is "initiation" we see the three Shining Ones aligned close up in the foreground in the order described by Bunyan. The first carries a book and the middle angel, responsible for clothing Christian in a "change of Raiment", holds the top and bottom of the "Rags" he/she²⁸ is said to have stripped him of in either hand. Christian stands dressed in his new garment. What is most significant and perhaps interesting is that the middle angel stands in almost the same posture as Milton in plate 16, and Milton's nimbus around the head is paralleled by the second Shining One's halo; the rainbow coloration of plate 14 of *The Pilgrim's Progress* tinges the angel's wings, coat and halo, just as Milton's back is tinged with the rays rising from the globe of a setting sun.

If we consider the striking similarities between the two figures in terms of Blake's "language of images" ("images regarded as language"), it would become obvious that *Milton's* plate 16 ("conversion") is a reverse of *The Pilgrim's Progress's* plate 15 ("initiation"). If so, then, the costume of the elect Milton puts off in Eternity could be construed as equivalent to or identical with the "Rags", the symbol of Christian's

spiritual poverty on this earth. This is, to be sure, a characteristic Blakean critique and inversion of the central and pivotal episode of Bunyan's work; put another way, this is an interpretation of the interpretation of Bunyan because the illustrations to *The Pilgrim's Progress* are nothing but Blakean pictorial interpretation of Bunyan. (It is worth noting that Bunyan's plates 14 and 15 are placed in the middle of the whole 28 illustrations. This may suggest that Blake takes *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a story of forgiveness rather than the militant myth of the Christian Warrior doing battle against Satan's forces.) Although Milton and Christian are both a member of "the Elect" (*Milton* 23:56) or "the elect"²⁰, the implications of the word are so essentially contrasted to each other.

A more complex example of the same technique is the lively scene of Milton's rejection of the invitation to come to the Promised Land, Canaan. While the "River" (*PP*, 156) Christian crosses before he gets to the Celestial City is a spiritual Jordan, the river from which Urizen takes water for the baptism of Milton is "the river Jordan" (19:8), and the land beyond the river is "a female place" called Canaan (10:6-11). Although Christian desperately tries to cross the river to reach the land, the Milton of Blake's poem, in striking contrast to him, firmly dismisses the temptation by Rahab and Tirzah to entice him over the Jordan to Canaan to become the warring "King / of Canaan and reign in Hazor where the Twelve Tribes meet" (20:5-6), for he knows that it is the land ruled by Rahad and Tirzah, females symbolizing eighteenth-century natural religion and for Blake, Canaanite perversion of prophetic religion. Milton's strong aversion to it perhaps comes from his keen awareness of the "feature of a female space" which "shrinks the organs / Of life till they become finite, & itself seems infinite" (10:6-7). Here it might be fair to say that the original concept of *ger* implying "Israel's relation to God's favour" has been inverted by Blake.

The final instance concerns itself with the way Ignorance is treated in *The Pilgrim's Progress*: when he has managed to come up to the Celestial Gate at the end of the First Part, he finds that he has lost the "certificate" he must produce to the King and is cast down, his hands and feet bound, to Hell by the two Shining Ones. But Bunyan's strict Calvinism³⁰ seems to be rejected by Blake (23:47)³⁰. There is no predestination for Blake; even the three classes of the soul—the Elect, the Redeemed, and the Reprobate—are not, indeed, predetermined but can be chosen by the individual will. Blake is quite contrary to Bunyan in that he provides us in his cosmography with the "Gates" which are "open behind Satan's Seat to the city of Golgonooza, / Which is the spiritual fourfold London" (20:39-40), whereas in Bunyan there is a way to Hell (where Ignorance falls) even from the Celestial Gate: "I saw that there was a way to Hell, even from the Gates of Heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction" (*PP*, 163).

It would be reasonable to conclude that there are more similarities and common features between *Milton* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* than have previously been recognized—they are connected by "genre linked motifs or topics"³². This will suggest that an intertextual association and fusion takes place in Blake's imagination between the two works; Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* is one of the significant pretexts of Blake's *Milton*. But their several contexts are opposed as we have seen above, the result being the subversion of the Bunyanesque contexts in *Milton*.

Notes

- * This study was in part supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japanese Ministry of Education (grant no. 63510258).
- 1) *A Vision of the Last Judgment*. All the references to Blake's poetry and prose are taken from the revised edition of *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David Erdman, commentary by

- Harold Bloom (Garden City, NY: Anchor P,1982) and will be inserted parenthetically in the text.
- 2) *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. Roger Sharrock (Oxford: Clarendon P,1960) 6. All the references are to the edition, and will be included in the text hereafter as *PP* followed by a page number.
 - 3) Florence Sandler, "Iconoclastic Enterprise: Blake's Critique of Milton's Religion", *Blake Studies* 5(Fall 1972):13-57; Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., *Angel of Apocalypse: Blake's Idea of Milton* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P,1975); David Riede, "Blake's *Milton*: on Membership in the Church", *Re-membering Milton*, eds. Mary Nyquist and Margaret W. Ferguson (London: Methuen, 1987) 257-277.
 - 4) Geoffrey Keynes, "The Pilgrim's Progress", *Blake Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1971):163-175; James T. Wills, "An Additional Drawing for Blake's Bunyan Series, *Blake Newsletter* 23(Winter 1972-73):63-67; John B. Pierce, "Bunyan at the Gates of Paradise", *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* 23 (Spring 1990) :198-200; Christopher Heppner, "Under the Hill: Tyndale or Bunyan?", *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* 23 (Spring 1990) :200-201.
 - 5) See Gerda S. Norvig, *Images of Wonder, Images of Truth; Blake's Illustrations to The Pilgrim's Progress*. Diss. Brandeis U, 1978.
 - 6) To Thomas Butts, 25 April 1803. References are to *The Letters of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1980).
 - 7) *Letters*, 59. To Thomas Butts, 6 July 1803.
 - 8) The fundamental reevaluation of Bunyan, who was underestimated for his "degraded style" or "bad taste" by Edmund Burke or David Hume, was anticipated by William Cowper, George Whitefield and John Wesley (the last two are named in *Milton*). And *The Pilgrim's Progress* came to be taken as a "work of original and uncommon genius" and the Romantic insight culminated in S.T. Coleridge's marginalia in which Bunyan is perceived as an inspired genius, liberated from the constraints of, rather than indebted to, his religious tradition: "the Bunyan of Parnassus had the better of the Bunyan of the Conventicle". See N. H. Keeble, "Of him thousands daily Sing and talk': Bunyan and his Reputation", *John Bunyan: Conventicle and Parnassus*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1988) 248,252; *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1765, quoted in *The Pilgrim's Progress: A Casebook*, ed. Roger Sharrock (London: Macmillan, 1976) 51. In a broader context E.P. Thompson has written well of the centrality of Bunyan's allegory to dissenting culture during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968) 28-58.
 - 9) *Letters*, 31, 55. To Thomas Butts, 11 September 1801; 25 April 1803.
 - 10) Sharrock comments like this: "But predominantly and avowedly femi-

- nine world of the Second Part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* still awaits adequate attention". Introduction, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987) 8.
- 11) Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974) 27.
 - 12) Roger Sharrock, Introduction, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan, 18.
 - 13) Valentine Cunningham, "Bunyan and Allegory", ed. Keeble, 216-240. For this and other features of allegory, see Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979); Edwin Honig, *Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory* (London: UP of New England, 1982); Jon Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of An Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1987).
 - 14) A.C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976) 5-6.
 - 15) Plate references are to *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake. Plates*, ed. Martin Butlin (New Haven: Yale UP, 1981).
 - 16) David V. Erdman, ed. *The Illuminated Blake* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1974). Plate references are to the edition.
 - 17) Cf. Joseph A. Wittreich, Jr., "'Sublime Allegory': Blake's Epic Manifest And The Milton Tradition", *Blake Studies* 4 (Spring 1972): 15-44; Leslie Tannenbaum, *Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies: The Great Code of Art* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1982) 86-123. For the assumed predominance of symbol over allegory in English Romantic poets, esp. in Coleridge and the rediscovery of an allegorical tradition in Rousseau, see Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality" in *Blindness and Insight* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983) 187-228.
 - 18) Joel Fineman, "The Structure of Allegorical Desire" in *Allegory and Representation*, ed. Stephen J. Greenblatt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1981) 29.
 - 19) *Letters*, 57. To Thomas Butts, 6 July 1803.
 - 20) Maureen Quilligan, 31.
 - 21) As for a pilgrimage or spiritual adventure in medieval dream poems, see Spearing, 6-8; Kathryn L. Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form* (California: Stanford UP, 1988) 46-47; Donald R. Howard, *Writers & Pilgrims: Medieval Pilgrimage Narratives and their Posterity* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1980).
 - 22) H. Golder, "Bunyan's Valley of the Shadow", *MP* 27 (1929): 55-72; Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987) 302.
 - 23) The real pilgrimage of *The Pilgrim's Progress* may be that of the

- reader. James Turner notes, "The only real space traversed by pilgrims is the verbal; the only pilgrim's progress which really exists in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a progress-into-text whose greatest memorial... is Bunyan's book itself: 'This book will make a traveller of thee'". "Bunyan's Sense of Place", in *The Pilgrim's Progress: Critical and Historical Views*, ed. Vincent Newey (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1980) 107.
- 24) Jackson I. Cope, "The Progresses of Bunyan and Symon Patrick", *ELH* 55 (Fall 1988) : 600; Paul Peihler, *The Visionary Landscape: A Study in Medieval Allegory* (London: Edward Arnold, 1971) 59-83.
 - 25) Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People: John Bunyan and his Church* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1988) 197-230; Ronald Paulson, "Life as Pilgrimage and as Theater", ed. Leopold Damrosch, Jr., *Modern Essays on Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 181-200.
 - 26) "A pilgrim" is, for *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "one who journeys to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion", while "a pilgrimage" is "a pilgrim's journey". According to *The Dictionary of the Bible*, "a pilgrim" is "a sojourner" or a "stranger", deriving in the original from the Hebrew *ger*; the word is applied to "every one who comes travelling and settling in a strange place for a shorter or longer period" and is also employed "to express Israel's relation to God's favour". See *Interpreter's Bible* 814; 397-99; *New Bible Dictionary* 940-41; T.J.Meek, "The Translation of *Ger* in the Hexateuch and its Bearing on the Documentary Hypothesis", *JBL* XLIX (1930) : 72-60; M. Guttman, "The Term "Foreigner" Historically Considered", *UCA* III (1926):1-20.
 - 27) Harold Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse* (Ithaca : Cornell UP, 1963) 358.
 - 28) Bunyan refers to the three Shining Ones as men, but Blake seems to render them female.
 - 29) Roger Sharrock, Introduction, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan, 20.
 - 30) Vincent Newey, "Bunyan and the Confines of the Mind", ed. Newey, 43; U. Milo Kaufmann, "Spiritual Discerning : Bunyan and the Mysteries of the Divine Will", ed. Keeble, 171.
 - 31) See, for example, Michael Ferber, *The Social Vision of William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985) 68.
 - 32) Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature : An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1982) 112.