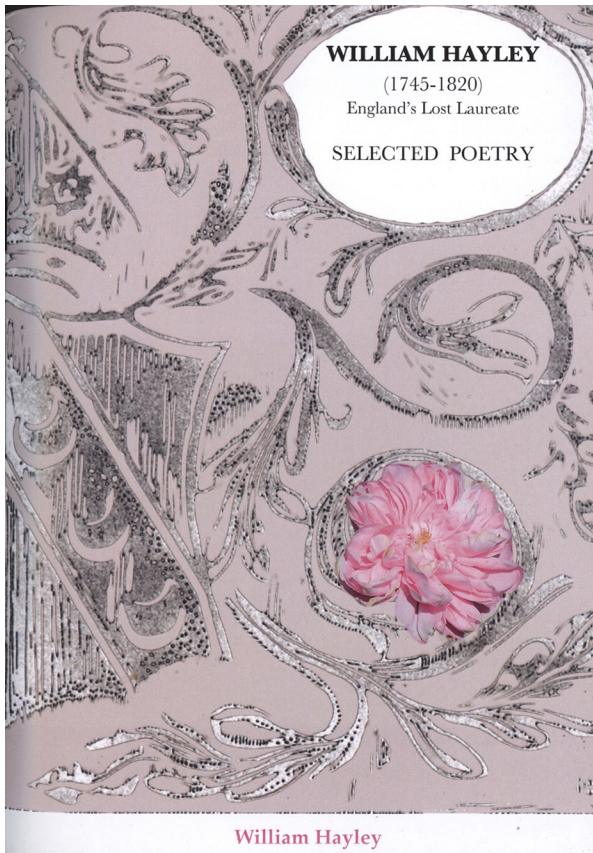


WILLIAM HAYLEY (1745-1820)  
Poet, Biographer, and Libertarian

A Reassessment



Diana Barsham Anthony Cane Tracey Carr Janet Carter  
Mark Crosby Wendy Ellison Lisa Gee Susan Matthews  
Suzanne E. May Vivienne Painting John Wyatt



WILLIAM HAYLEY  
(1745-1820)  
England's Lost Laureate  
SELECTED POETRY

William Hayley

### Rediscovering William Hayley: A Review Article

Paul Foster, ed., with Diana Barsham. *William Hayley (1745–1820) Poet, Biographer, and Libertarian: A Reassessment*. Chichester: University of Chichester, 2013. Otter Memorial Paper no. 32. 208 pp. £16.00, paperback.

Paul Foster, ed., with Diana Barsham. *William Hayley (1745–1820): Selected Poetry*. Chichester: University of Chichester, 2013. Otter Memorial Paper no. 33. 95 pp. £8.00, paperback.

Reviewed by Joseph Wittreich

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- 1 BOTH of these volumes—the first an anthology of provocative essays (hereafter referred to as *Essays*) and the second a selection of Hayley's mostly numbing poetry (hereafter referred to as *Selected Poetry*)—proceed from the understanding that Hayley has been lost to both the history of poetry and the annals of literary history. Individual essays reinforce the point, and from different perspectives reaffirm the overarching claim of both volumes: Hayley, for too long “a missing person,” is now ripe for “re-assessment” as “a writer equally at home in the centre or on the margins of the culture of his day” (Barsham and Foster, *Essays* 5, 7).
- 2 The poems themselves—notwithstanding their reported “elegance and lucidity of mind,” their “charm of manner” (Barsham and Foster, *Selected Poetry* 6)—constitute a weak appeal to would-be anthologists, and the botched printing of these volumes, even with their Baskerville font, is no magnet for prospective readers. On page 6 of *Selected Poetry*, lines 3-7 of the introduction are a repetition of the previous five lines; the same is true of page 47, where lines

188-94 from canto 3 of *The Triumphs of Temper* repeat lines 181-87. The second selection from *An Essay on Epic Poetry* is given a wrong caption, which should read “Epistle I, ll. 81-106,” and the accompanying text needs mending: a period is missing at what should be line 82, and a comma at what should be line 95; here there is a stray dash at what should be line 89, and there a stray period at what should be line 91. Selections (the first of them) from epistle 1 and from epistle 4 require similar emendations. Such mistakes, proliferating, do not inspire confidence in the textual authority of Hayley’s *Selected Poetry*. In the companion volume, printing problems appear in the form of irregular paragraph indentations and erratic spacing (*Essays* 28, 83, 94, 120, 127, 147), and sometimes entire lines of words, crammed together as if in a vise, are an impediment to reading (*Essays* 33, 42, 94, 176).

- 3 What really matter, however, are the welcome promptings from some of these essays, especially those by Diana Barsham, Mark Crosby, Janet Carter and John Wyatt, and Susan Matthews, that not only promise a reevaluation of Hayley but ensure its eventual accomplishment.<sup>1</sup> Even if the collective force of Hayley’s *Selected Poetry* is not likely to challenge Robert Southey’s judgment that “everything about that man is good except his poetry” (*Essays* 123), one of the poems—[“Swallows at Felpham”]—is enough to give readers pause, even seduce them into admiration:

Ye gentle birds, that stand aloof,  
And smooth your pinions on my roof,  
Preparing for departure hence,  
Ere winter’s angry threats commence;  
Like you, my soul would smooth her plume  
For longer flights beyond the tomb.

May God, by whom is seen and heard  
Departing man and wandering bird,  
In mercy mark us for his own,  
And guide us to the land unknown.

(*Selected Poetry* 87)

This poem was written in late summer of 1820. Hayley died that autumn, on 12 November. Another Felpham poem (not included in *Selected Poetry*), this one entitled “Felpham: An Epistle to Henrietta of Lavant” (1814), depicts scenes available only to the mental eye from a place where “hovering spirits make this scene their own” and where, providentially, these “inmates” of the poet’s mind keep

1. See also an earlier essay by Philip Cox, “Blake, Hayley and Milton: A Reassessment,” *English Studies* 75.5 (1994): 430-41, and later the parallel effort by Steven Goldsmith, *Blake’s Agitation: Criticism and the Emotions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), esp. 157-61.

Hayley “Blind to futurity.”<sup>2</sup> These poems of raw but controlled emotion suggest that the introspective, meditative Hayley of the nineteenth century is a marginally better poet than the other-directed, socially aspiring one of the previous century.

- 4 Through their thoughtful process of selection, Foster and Barsham allow us to revel in the generic diversity of Hayley’s poetry: songs and sonnets, odes, epitaphs, ballads, verse epistles, occasional poems, lyric poems and elegies, plus a mock epic. Experimentation, “the surest guide to truth,”<sup>3</sup> says Hayley, is not only the hallmark of these poems but also the abiding characteristic of the women’s writings his poems inspired and nurtured, as well as a driving force in the new epic tradition he hoped to establish. In *The Triumphs of Temper*, the poetry now echoes Milton (“And makes a Hell of Love’s extatic Heaven” [*Selected Poetry* 49]) and now Dante (“All ye who enter, every hope forego!” [*Selected Poetry* 42]), but never achieves the allure of either poet. Yet like both Dante and Milton, Hayley mingles the various genres, exalts epic, and lets the different arts stand in alliance.
- 5 Indeed, in this respect, Hayley is Blake’s harbinger, and so too in his understanding that poets must open themselves to irritations of the mind, yet remain (as he avers in *Epistle to a Friend*) “unvex’d by mental strife” and (as he urges in *An Essay on History*) still dare, “unaw’d before a tyrant’s throne[,] / To make the sanctity of Freedom known” (*Selected Poetry* 27, 35). Furthermore, as Crosby observes, the words “mental strife” become a “central conceit” describing Serena’s experience in *The Triumphs of Temper* (*Essays* 84), but they are also a deadening repetition there. Only after they are transfused and transmuted in the preface to Blake’s *Milton*, here as “Mental Fight,”<sup>4</sup> do these words become part of the unforgettable clamor of English literature. Nevertheless, Hayley’s phrase is a signature of his poetry, as is evident in *Epic Poetry* (23) as well as in *An Essay on Sculpture*.<sup>5</sup> When all is said and done, though, in Hayley’s poetry we never feel, as we are said to do in Milton’s, “imparadis’d in song” (*Epic Poetry* 65). Nor do we often feel the intensity of mental and spiritual strife.

2. Hayley, *Poems on Serious and Sacred Subjects* (Chichester, 1818) 17, 16 (hereafter referred to as *Poems*).

3. Hayley, *An Essay on Epic Poetry* (London, 1782) 298 (hereafter referred to as *Epic Poetry*).

4. See *Blake’s Poetry and Designs*, ed. Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008) 148 (*Milton* pl. i). All subsequent quotations of Blake’s writings are from this edition.

5. Hayley, *An Essay on Sculpture* (London, 1800) 11 (hereafter referred to as *Sculpture*).

- 6 What gave Hayley standing and earned him sympathy in his own time were not just his poems but the personal crises emanating from them: the illness and death of his first wife, Eliza; the catastrophic death of his young son, Thomas Alphonso Hayley; the madness of his beloved friend William Cowper; the collapse of his fame and fortune followed by a blistering barrage of criticism from the romantic poets. Especially important to him were the personal and cultural relationships on which he doted and that his own writings catalogued and helped sustain. Those relationships are legion: with Robert Lowth, John Howard, Edward Gibbon, William Mason, George Romney, Joseph Wright of Derby, John Flaxman, Richard Cumberland, Cowper, and Blake, as well as Elizabeth Carter, Charlotte Smith, Amelia Opie, Anna Seward, and Jane Austen, some of whom (especially among the women) exemplify what Barsham calls “Hayley’s transfusional poetics” (*Essays* 36). Many of these relationships are memorialized in Hayley’s poetry, others in portraits; those with Romney and Cowper, in Hayley biographies; and that with Blake by designs this poet invented and engraved for *Designs to a Series of Ballads* (1802), not to mention the three years the two men spent together at Felpham. Alongside Blake’s caustic recollections of Hayley are Hayley’s telling silences, as in “Felpham: An Epistle to Henrietta of Lavant,” a poem about a poets’ paradise, where Blake goes unmentioned among those (dead or living) who once inhabited the place and still converse with Hayley.
- 7 For the most part, Blake is as forgotten by Hayley<sup>6</sup> as Hayley will be forgotten by history except, as Vivienne Painting explains, for his “extraordinary decision . . . to refuse the honour of becoming Poet Laureate” (*Essays* 13)—a post for which he was nominated in 1785 but that was not offered to him until the death of Thomas Warton in 1790. Whatever immediate puff that offer may have given to his reputation, it was (as Crosby observes) soon deflated by the romantics, not only by Southey’s barb but just as bruisingly by Lord Byron’s “for ever feeble and for ever tame” (*Essays* 79). Later in the nineteenth century, Hayley’s reputation is further sullied (as Barsham reports) by Alexander Gilchrist’s dismissive treatment of him as someone more interested in his friends’ achievements than in his own (*Essays* 27). Nevertheless, despite this slighting criticism, Southey believed (interestingly but mistakenly) that, because of its popularity, Hayley’s poetry was ensured a place in any anthology representing the final two decades of the eighteenth century. It is also noteworthy (as Carter and Wyatt remember)

6. In a letter to Lady Hesketh dated 15 July 1802, Hayley does remember Blake, tellingly so, as possessing a “sensibility . . . *dangerously acute*,” as well as “perilous powers of . . . Imagination,” as quoted by Morchard Bishop, *Blake’s Hayley: The Life, Works, and Friendships of William Hayley* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1951) 278.

that, despite their sparring, Hayley lent “his staunch support” to Blake in time of trouble (*Essays* 113)—a gesture Blake may have remembered and reciprocated in the immediate aftermath of Hayley’s death.

- 8 The attitudes of Blake and Hayley toward one another were complex. Thus, however tempting it is to mark their differences, it is worth remembering, with Matthews, that both men welcomed political controversy and, if not ideologically mobile, were at times ideologically slippery; that whereas others would curtail debate, Blake and Hayley alike promoted it. Sometimes their views collided, but again, as Matthews notes, on such matters as Voltaire and epic poetry their views often “chimed” (*Essays* 178). Moreover, both are eminences in Dante studies: Hayley as Dante’s first English translator and, along with Chaucer, Thomas Wyatt, and Samuel Daniel, as one of the earliest employers of *terza rima* in English poetry,<sup>7</sup> and Blake as a Dante illustrator and interpreter of first importance.
- 9 What emerges from the collective force of these essays is that, as Barsham puts it, Milton is not only “a unifying force in Hayley’s friendship circle” (*Essays* 41), but a newly bur-nished icon of British romanticism. What should give Hayley increased stature in our time are his role as a combatant in the wars over epic poetry, then his achievements as both a literary historian and theorist and, of singular importance, his eminence as a Miltonist whose claim for Milton is that he recovered, revived, and revolutionized the tradition of epic poetry. We should also acknowledge that Hayley’s isolation and consequent neglect are as much the doing of Miltonists as of Blakeans and romanticists: witness John Leonard’s two-volume, 853-page reception history,<sup>8</sup> where Hayley is a deafening silence. This book is of special interest inasmuch as it establishes the topics and terms (however restrictively) of Milton criticism over the centuries and thus provides a means of gauging Hayley’s contributions to Milton’s reception.
- 10 What Barsham describes as Hayley’s “avant-garde gender politics” (*Essays* 28) must have been construed as an inconvenience within Leonard’s argument that locates the emergence of misogyny in Milton criticism in the last decades of the eighteenth century (Leonard 2: [650], 666-67), specifically in the publication of Samuel Johnson’s life of Milton (1779), against which Hayley’s life of Milton (1794, 1796)<sup>9</sup>

7. As Stuart Curran informs me.

8. John Leonard, *Faithful Labourers: A Reception History of Paradise Lost, 1667-1970*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

9. The censored version of Hayley’s *The Life of Milton* was appended to vol. 1 of the lavishly illustrated Boydell and Nicol edition, *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, 3 vols. (London, 1794-97). The unexpurgated edition, published by T. Cadell, first appeared in 1796, then again

levels a deflating blow. Unfurling the politics embedded in Johnson's complaint concerning Milton's Turkish contempt for women, Hayley posits that Johnson means "to prejudice" women against a poet who, "surpass[ing] his peers in delineating their charms, ... represents their mental united to their personal graces, and exhibits in perfection all the[ir] loveliness" (*The Life* 198; see also 197). Tellingly, Milton's muse is said to find her finest resemblance in the poet's "enchanted Eve" (*The Life* 229). Having already located the appearance of a misogynist tradition of Milton criticism in Thomas Newton's variorum edition of *Samson Agonistes*<sup>10</sup> as he assails William Warburton's claim "that Milton seems to have chosen the subject of this sublime drama for the sake of the satire on bad wives" (*The Life* 167), Hayley casts doubt on Leonard's claim that Johnson introduces misogyny to Milton criticism, even as Leonard prompts us into questioning his own motives in excluding Hayley from this (and other) aspects of Milton's reception history in which Hayley is so fully engaged. If Newton's variorum editions and Johnson's life would establish misogyny as a still-enduring topic in Milton criticism, Hayley quickly moves for its repeal as he rushes to reassure Hannah More, after her *Cœlebs* names Eve as Milton's hero in *Paradise Lost*, that woman is "Never inferior to man's lordly race" (*Poems* 52).

- 11 Three other matters addressed in Hayley's *The Life*, all of them cardinal concerns in Leonard's reception history, beg for studied attention. The first is Leonard's proposal that Thomas Newton shuts the doors of Milton criticism for nearly two and a half centuries on Copernicus, Galileo, and Sir Isaac Newton. Whatever Thomas Newton's role as doorkeeper may have been, Hayley thinks that this is a door opened to Milton by Grotius, who, firing Milton's interest in Galileo and perhaps implementing their meeting, may have made it possible for him to have "caught from Galileo, or his disciples, some ideas approaching towards the Newtonian philosophy" (*The Life* 37).<sup>11</sup> Hayley also thinks this was a door slammed shut by Dr. Johnson, who opposed "the innovators," among whom Johnson numbered Milton, for "think[ing] that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motions of the stars" rather than "to learn ... how to do good and avoid evil" (*The Life* 56,

in Dublin and Winterthur in 1797 and yet again in Basel and Strasbourg in 1799. The 1796 edition, hereafter referred to as *The Life*, is cited here.

10. See Thomas Newton, ed., *Paradise Regain'd .... To Which Is Added Samson Agonistes*, 2 vols. (London, 1752) 1: 197, 246-47, 260-61.

11. Hayley is here following Paolo Rolli in his contention that Milton must have captured, if not from Galileo then from some of his disciples, some tenets of the scientific system that Newton would develop; see Rolli, "Vita di Giovanni Milton," in *Del paradiso perduto poema inglese*, trans. Rolli (London, 1729), sig. b.

quoting Johnson). Johnson, it appears, shares the blame with Thomas Newton for hiding Milton's commitment to the new science—blame that Leonard places squarely on the shoulders of Newton. Correspondingly, Hayley should be recognized as one of many exceptions to Leonard's surmise that after Thomas Newton—indeed, because of him—Miltonists ceased aligning their poet with Isaac Newton and the new science. As it happens, Hayley repeatedly couples Milton and Newton as among the first of the world's toiling thinkers, specifically citing Newton as England's representative of "patient thought" (*Sculpture* 15, 176). Indeed, this pairing, often to Milton's advantage, is a distinctive feature of British romanticism.

- 12 Secondly, in *The Life*, Hayley participates in the advancement of what was emerging in the eighteenth century as a core concept of Milton criticism: Milton is, first and foremost, a biblical poet, with the Bible serving him as "the prime director of his genius" (219). Standing behind any consideration of Milton's use of the Bible are the counterclaims of Jonathan Richardson, Sr., that Milton "Ever was a Dissenter" and Thomas Newton that he was "generally truly orthodox"—that Milton transgresses the boundaries of scripture or stays within its confines.<sup>12</sup> More so than any other of Milton's eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century commentators, Hayley vastly complicates the topic of Milton and the Bible—indeed, modernizes it—by introducing the notion of rival hermeneutics as he praises the ingenuity with which Milton "adopted the most opposite interpretations of scripture, as they happened to suit his poetical purposes."<sup>13</sup> He then goes on to explain that what produce and sanction rival hermeneutics in the first place are contradictions within scripture such as we find both within and between the Pauline epistles.<sup>14</sup>
- 13 Third, in *Epic Poetry* better than in *The Life*, Hayley explains the accomplishment with which he later credits Milton as the person to whom we are most "indebted ... for having extended and ennobled the province of epic poetry" (*The Life* 208). In the abridged arguments of *The Life*, he posits that Milton "accomplished a revolution in poetry" as he "purified and extended the empire of the epic muse," so that by his "epic compositions ... alone" England is able to "rival ... antiquity in the highest province of literature" (see "Conjectures on the Origin of the *Paradise Lost*" [hereafter "Conjectures"] appended to *The Life*, 274, and then *The Life*

12. See Jonathan Richardson, Sr.'s life of Milton in *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost* (London, 1734), xxxix, and Thomas Newton, ed., *Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1750) 2: 62.

13. Hayley, *A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids*, 3 vols. (London, 1785) 2: 11.

14. Hayley, *Old Maids* 3: 135.

- 230). Part of the Miltonic revolution in epic poetry involves a new inclusiveness in which the different art forms, not just genres, become an aspect of the “mental magnificence” of the epic poem so brilliantly realized by Blake in both *Milton* and *Jerusalem* (see “Conjectures,” *The Life* 268-69).
- 14 Another feature of the Miltonic revolution, as Hayley understood early on, involves Milton’s narrative experimentation, his fracturing his narrative, most obviously when he splits books 7 and 10 into two books each as part of a conversion process by which *Paradise Lost* is transformed from a ten- into a twelve-book epic, with Milton thereby creating “a pause in the long narration” (*The Life* 179)<sup>15</sup>—what we might call still points. In *Epic Poetry*, these landing places for contemplation are behind Hayley’s description of such poems as “dome[s] of mental Pleasure wide expand[ing]” (106) and his envisioning of them as replacing a unity of action with one of design. Characterized by poems that curtail action, corralling it within mental theaters where the mind continually recoils upon itself, the epics of romanticism repeatedly exhibit action plots yielding to what Herbert Tucker calls “plotted epiphanies.”<sup>16</sup>
- 15 In *Epic Poetry*, Hayley had already fashioned a view of epic consonant with the idea that Milton presides over a third, religious phase of such poetry. He was also scornful of the idea, promoted by Warburton’s note added to the second edition of Thomas Newton’s variorum commentary on *Paradise Lost* (1750), that “the grand scene is closed, and all farther improvements of the epic at an end.”<sup>17</sup> Hayley snaps back in *Epic Poetry* that “few critical remarks contain more absurdity”; he gives bold outline to his own position: “*The Epic province not yet exhausted*” (120, [96]). Not only are women poets welcomed to the rank of epic writers in their role as humanizers of mankind, but they are seen, along with epic poets themselves, as avatars of heroism (*Epic Poetry* 76, 207, 229), as is Milton, who is described in Hayley’s *Life* as “his own biographer” and, astonishingly, as “a poet of the most powerful, and, perhaps, the most independent mind ... ever given to a mere mortal” (2, xvii).
15. Hayley here echoes a phrase from Elijah Fenton’s “Advertisement” (sometimes “Postscript”) to his “Life of Milton,” which appears ubiquitously throughout the eighteenth century, as, for example, in *Paradise Lost*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Apollo Press, 1776) 1: [25]. Eventually Hayley gives new weight to the idea that the modern epic displaces action with contemplation when, in *Epic Poetry*, he says that “Milton ... himself” is “proof that *human action* is not the largest sphere of the Epic Poem” (120).
16. Herbert F. Tucker, *Epic: Britain’s Heroic Muse, 1790–1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 111.
17. For Warburton’s words, which Leonard 1: 284 wrongly attributes to Newton and misdates as first appearing in 1754, see Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated*, 2 vols. (London, 1742) 1: 199, and Newton, ed., *Paradise Lost* (1750) 2: 127.
- 16 In ways that deflect attention from, and deny credit to, Hayley and Blake, Leonard would have us believe that Denis Saurat, in *Milton: Man and Thinker* (1925), nominated Milton as his own hero in *Paradise Lost* (Leonard 2: 434), but Saurat is simply taking his lead from Hayley’s *Life* and Blake’s *Milton*, Hayley urging that poets be cast as epic heroes and Blake then depicting Milton as his own hero as this poet casts off the Satan within. Hayley, it appears, is the first commentator (after John Dryden) to dwell on Milton’s international stature and to speculate that Milton is on his way to finding “in the western world, the amplest theatre of his glory” (*The Life* 203, 40). Hayley also has an imaginative stretch, allowing him to conceive Milton’s place in times to come as a poet of global importance or, as he puts it in “Conjectures,” as “the first poet of the world” (*The Life* 273). On the other hand, as the romantic period’s best knower of Milton, Blake has a critical range and acuity in excess of Hayley’s own that reach beyond Satan to God, Innocence, the fall before the Fall, and sex and the sexes, all topics to which Leonard devotes chapters (or portions of them), but with little or no attention to Blake and none whatsoever to Hayley.
- 17 In *Epic Poetry* Hayley, without knowing it, was imagining into being a whole parcel of epic poems, the produce of British romanticism, which, with Milton as the transformative figure, would make not action but the human mind the main region of their song. In this sense, Milton was his own hero and at the very least, Hayley thinks, should be credited with refining and simultaneously enlarging our notions of epic heroism: “Milton seems to have given a purer signification than we commonly give to the word hero, and to have thought it might be assigned to any person eminent and attractive enough to form a principal figure in a great picture,” as he writes in “Conjectures” (*The Life* 275-76). He concludes: Milton “appears to have relinquished common heroes, that he might not cherish the too common characteristic of man—a sanguinary spirit” (277). Importantly, for him the question is no longer who is Milton’s hero, but how does Milton portray heroism in his epics? For Hayley, the pressure is to democratize heroism in epic poetry in order to include not only women but poets themselves, with Arthur yielding to Adam and England to Eden and (in Blake, we should add) Jesus yielding to Milton and Albion to Jerusalem.
- 18 It was as theorists of epic, and historians of its traditions, and (in the case of Blake) as a practitioner of the epic trade, that Blake and Hayley found in one another a mental match. Whatever it had been, epic would now become an arena of strife—of “Mental Fight”—with Hayley having already crafted in his “Conjectures” a hedged critique of epic ideology as it arcs from Homer and Virgil to Milton and with Blake, then, doing the same, albeit more stridently, in

his preface to *Milton* (included in copies A and B only, c. 1811) and, then again, in his *On Homers Poetry* and *On Virgil* (c. 1822). Leonard will later confront the same issue, but with this difference. Hayley and Blake address the subject of epic warfare with Milton directly, frontally. Leonard addresses the same topic obliquely, with Milton as provocateur and Thomas Newton and especially Warburton as its mediators. With reference to Milton, Leonard also offers a less lofty and surely more starched opinion than either Hayley or Blake as he frets over the fact that some see in *Paradise Lost* a poem that demonizes “martial heroics”; he declares this to be “a dangerous line of argument, for Milton clearly loved the epic” (1: [266]). Milton’s love of epic is not in dispute, but his relationship to epic tradition is, with both Hayley and Blake discerning the complexity of that relationship (and through it perhaps the complexity of their own relationship both to it and to one another) and, simultaneously, comprehending that “critique” is an aspect of epic, a subversive element embedded within the tradition itself. All three poets share in Hayley’s hope, expressed in “Epistle to John Sargent” (1814), that they will eventually witness “peace emerging from a sea of blood” (*Poems* 40).

- 19 At the heart of Milton’s critique, as Hayley understands it in “Conjectures,” is the sense that Homer displays “too great a tendency to nourish that sanguinary madness in mankind, which has continually made the earth a theatre of carnage”; the heroes of antiquity have “desolated the world” with their massacres (*The Life* 276). Yet Hayley also remembers Agamemnon’s reproach to Achilles, “all thy pleasure is in strife and blood,” and thereupon remarks on the potentially subversive force of those words, inferring from them that Homer, “so famous as the describer of battles, detested the objects of his description” (277). And he continues that Milton, with his “purer religion,”<sup>18</sup> has “contracted” an even greater “abhorrence for the atrocious absurdity of ordinary war” (277). Already radiating from *Paradise Lost* is “the odious dinn of Warr” (6.408): “Heav’n the seat of bliss / Brooks not the works of violence and Warr” (6.273-74).<sup>19</sup> From *Paradise Regained* comes this further chastisement: “They err who count it glorious to subdue / By Conquest far and wide” and who have yet to learn that glory “by means far different [may] be attain’d, / Without . . . war, or violence; / By deeds of peace” (3.71-72, 89-91). Thus, Homer may allow his readers to think they increase in physical stature as they read him, but Milton (Hayley suggests in “Conjectures”) produces within his readers a dilation of the human spirit (*The Life* 278). Hayley never lets us

forget that Milton is a poet of “two poems on Paradise” (*The Life* 228; “Conjectures,” *The Life* 278), yet also a poet more interested in the recovery of paradise than in its loss.

- 20 It may (or may not) be a coincidence that in the immediate aftermath of the Felpham years, and using some of the same language, Blake mounts a sterner critique by turning aspects of the critique Hayley distills from Milton back upon Milton himself. Blake’s critique commences in the preface to *Milton*, where Milton is said to have been “curbed by the general malady & infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the Sword,” but then, in his afterlife, to have morphed into a spiritual warrior who, through “Mental Fight,” will now join with his countrymen in building “Jerusalem, / In England’s green & pleasant Land” (*Blake’s Poetry and Designs* 147-48, pl. i). Years later, in the aftermath of Hayley’s death apparently (1821-22), Blake will hone his critique, and train it on Homer and Virgil. The following sentence is etched in such a way that it can be read as a coda to *On Homers Poetry* and as an epigraph to *On Virgil*: “The Classics, it is the Classics! . . . that Desolate Europe with Wars” (*Blake’s Poetry and Designs* 348). Blake here echoes Hayley on the desolations of epic warfare. And again: “Rome & Greece swept Art into their maw & destroyd it.”<sup>20</sup> He then interjects, as if in response to Hayley’s caveat concerning Homer, “The Word of God . . . [is] the only light of antiquity that remains unperverted by War. Virgil in the Eneid Book VI. line 848 says Let others study Art; Rome has somewhat better to do, namely War & Dominion” (*Blake’s Poetry and Designs* 349). At least initially, Milton is not spared in Blake’s critique as he is in Hayley’s, but in *Milton* Blake’s hero, associated with the time when “Mathematic Proportion was subdued by Living Proportion” (pl. 5), is redeemed as a poet-prophet. He casts off the rags of classical epic and trades mathematical for living form as he eventually embraces the mantle of the biblical prophets and, as the eighth eye of God, accepts the Bible as the code of his art.
- 21 Hayley and Blake, as theorists of epic and critics of Milton, write on the same page but with different accents and in different registers. What Leonard’s reception history teaches us about each of them is that ignoring Hayley altogether is one side of the coin—and slighting Blake the other side of the same coin. In tandem, Hayley and Blake, at different times and places, have been enablers of one another’s reputation, Hayley as the theorist whose *Epic Poetry*, on the one hand, afforded Blake a template for a revolutionized, newly interiorized epic with fractured narrative lines and, on the other hand, exalted Milton as its model and as an exemplar,

18. The Milton of *Paradise Regained*, apparently; see Hayley, *The Life* 220.

19. Quotations of Milton’s poetry are from *The Complete Poetry of John Milton*, ed. John T. Shawcross, rev. ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971).

20. As Cox observes, Hayley sometimes conflates the poetical and the political with insights “very close to Blake’s own thinking,” but is “rarely given credit” for doing so (“Blake, Hayley and Milton” 432).



too, of biblical poetics. Correspondingly, Hayley was a literary historian and critic excavating the republican Milton of Richardson, the very Milton whom Thomas Newton and Johnson would eviscerate. According to Richardson, "'tis Certain he [Milton] was a Republican" and that such "Principles," evident early on, "were well known to continue ... even in *Paradise Lost*"; that no "History of *Paradise Lost*" can ever be written without due attention to Milton's other writings on "the Controversies of the Times."<sup>21</sup> *No history*, and that goes for reception history as well.

- 22 What we may learn from looking at the Blake and Hayley relationship anew is that, if in life Hayley illustrated the Blakean adage expressed in *Milton* 4.26, "Corporeal Friends are Spiritual Enemies," in the aftermath of his death a forgiving Blake, also believing, as he says in *Jerusalem* 91.1, "It is easier to forgive an Enemy than to forgive a Friend," may have found in their erstwhile friendship grounds for accommodation. Perhaps Hayley was right in stressing Milton's dissociation from, not identity with, the classical epic tradition—Milton's biblical rather than his classical roots. Perhaps Blake had even admitted as much by withdrawing his chastising preface from copies C and D of *Milton*. Thus rediscovering Hayley, Blake jumps to the head of the line of those who would initiate a reassessment of Hayley. Whatever the case, there is no better place to resume Hayley's rehabilitation than *An Essay on Epic Poetry*, then his scattered asides on Milton, especially in his "Conjectures on the Origin of the *Paradise Lost*," and, finally, the (unexpurgated) *Life of Milton*. It is just another irony of literary history that we find Blake at the portal of this enterprise—"rediscovering William Hayley"—holding the lantern and leading the way.

21. Richardson's life in *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost*, xviii, xxi, cvi, cvii.