Lucy Cogan, *Blake and the Failure of Prophecy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. Pp. 219. £99.99. ISBN 9783030676872.

In *Blake and the Failure of Prophecy*, Lucy Cogan builds on the insights of Ian Balfour, Christopher Bundock, and Christopher Rowland to explore how Blake utilised various conceptions of the prophetic mode throughout his career. For Cogan, Blake's reluctance to adhere to a fixed understanding of prophecy reflects a suppleness in his work, one which allowed him to navigate personal disappointment and historical change while retaining a belief in the power of his work to 'open… up other minds to the visionary dimension of life' (5). Utilising Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic theories – particularly his dialectical contrasting of a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' and a 'hermeneutics of belief' – Cogan shows that Blake's 'failure' to stabilise his role as prophet is central to his 'evolving mythopoetic ideology' (23). Blake's shifting use of prophecy throughout his life reflects Ricoeur's concession that no singular 'hermeneutic approach… can uncover *the* truth' (23), yet Blake's 'multiple interpretations' of the prophetic mode coinhere within a body of work which contain the 'glimpses of Eternity' which continue to fascinate, and frustrate, scholars two centuries later (202).

Charting a chronological course through Blake's oeuvre, Cogan's monograph begins by exploring how Blake's works between 1789 and 1793 stage the troubled translation of childhood 'vision' into a prophecy of 'action' able to bring about societal change. Contrasting the figures of Lyca in 'The Little Girl Lost', Thel from *The Book of Thel* (1789), and Oothoon from *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), Cogan connects a visionary view of the world with a burgeoning female sexuality in these works, ultimately exposing how both contemporary religious thought and gender constructions worked to deflect this prophetic impulse. Chapter three explores how Blake's 'continental prophecies' – from the unpublished *The French Revolution* (1791) to *Europe* (1794) – trace a movement from his initial belief in a form of prophecy which can "awaken the people to a world that is freed from historical injustice" (70) to an uncertainty about whether prophetic renewal is possible in the temporal world. Reading these works within the context of the mounting violence of the French Revolution and increasing repression in Britain (culminating in the "Gagging Acts" of 1795), Cogan explores how the failure of a new visionary world to emerge from violence impacted Blake's belief in prophecy as a mode able to initiate social change.

Chapter four explores the centrality of the figure of Urizen in Blake's *Urizen Books* in the mid-1790s. For Cogan, these works hark back to the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible, which chart the creation of the world to the establishment of Moses' moral law) in their portrayal of a material and moral certainty hostile to a transformative form of prophecy. However, while Blake's prophetic agency is at a low ebb in these works, their continual re-inscription of an original, Urizenic fall exposes the contradictions and violence inherent in any unchanging set of principles. Cogan also detects a hostility to prophecy in *The Four Zoas* (c.1796-1807), Blake's unfinished work which is the focus of chapter five. However, by tracing the development of this sprawling project, Cogan exposes it as a textual space in which prophecy emerges as connected to an external 'Divine Vision' (154) and opposed to the delusive "Female Will" (142) (in contrast with his earlier association between female sexuality and the prophetic impulse). Finally, chapter six explores how Blake's emerging reliance on a "Divine Vision" is refracted through both *Milton* (c.1804-1811) and *Jerusalem* (c.1804-1820). In *Milton*, Cogan explores how various dissolutions of the self in moments of *parousia* – in which the "prophet becomes one with a divine source of inspiration" (167) – replaces the notion of the prophet as a stable visionary conduit. While, in the *Jerusalem*, Cogan finds an increased bond between the prophetic "moment of universal liberation" and the "final, physical" act of "death" (194) as Blake entered his twilight years.

Ultimately, Cogan's nuanced readings of Blake's works through the lens of biblical prophecy allows us to trace moments of conflict and change throughout his oeuvre, while remaining alert to Blake's continuing understanding of his work as manifesting the "performative capacity of prophecy" (3). Historical detail, close reading of Blake's poetic and visual works, and biblical references blend in an insightful work which traces the contours of Blake's career, while retaining a holistic view of Blake's polymorphic visionary worlds.

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