WILLIAM BLAKE IN CONTEXT

William Blake, poet and artist, is a figure often understood to have ‘created his own system’. Combining close readings and detailed analysis of a range of Blake’s work, from lyrical songs to later myth, from writing to visual art, this collection of thirty-eight lively and authoritative essays examines what Blake had in common with his contemporaries, the writers who influenced him, and those he influenced in turn. Chapters from an international team of leading scholars also attend to his wider contexts: material, formal, cultural, and historical, to enrich our understanding of, and engagement with, Blake’s work. Accessibly written, incisive, and informed by original research, William Blake in Context enables readers to appreciate Blake anew, from both within and outside of his own idiom.

Sarah Haggarty is Lecturer in the Faculty of English and Fellow of Queens’ College, at the University of Cambridge. She has published three previous books about Blake: Blake’s Gifts: Poetry and the Politics of Exchange (Cambridge, 2010); William Blake: Songs of Innocence and of Experience (1794) (with Jon Mee, 2013); and Blake and Conflict (with Jon Mee, 2009).
WILLIAM BLAKE IN CONTEXT

Edited by
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I am grateful to Linda Bree at CUP for commissioning this book, to her successor, Bethany Thomas, for managing the final stages of the project, and to their editorial assistants, Isobel Cowper-Coles and Tim Mason, for their support. I am also grateful to Jan Baiton, Mathi Mareesan, and Sarah Starkey for shepherding the book through production. The contributors to this book have been an absolute pleasure to work with: I am particularly thankful for their expertise, for their saying ‘yes’ to begin with, and for their patience and good humour during the long-drawn-out progress to print. Several collectors have been most generous in allowing us to reproduce Blake’s or associated artwork gratis. I am also delighted to be able to use Dennis Creffield’s remarkable Improvisation on the Life Cast of William Blake (5) on the book’s cover: many thanks to the collector, to Mr Creffield’s family, and to Philip Dodd for making this possible.

Finally, some notice of late arrivals and departures: Beatrice and Imogen, Fazlul and Kate – my love to you all.
Abbreviations

Unless indicated otherwise, all textual references are to Erdman’s edition, listed below (E). In accordance with Erdman’s practice, when citing Blake’s writing we tend to reference plate and line numbers (e.g. 22: 5), although sometimes plate (pl.) or line (l.) numbers alone suffice. For the heavily revised manuscript VALA / The Four Zoas, we reference ‘Night’ (N), page (p.), and line (l.) numbers. In all cases, we adopt the conventional ‘E’ to signify page numbers in Erdman’s edition. Erdman’s text is also available to view and search online: erdman.blakearchive.org

The William Blake Archive, again listed below (WBA), offers unparalleled access to images of Blake’s works, referred to within its electronic editions as ‘objects’ (obj.). There is a yet greater range of Blake’s art available in Butlin’s two-volume Paintings and Drawings; references here are to numbered catalogue entries in the first, Text, volume (Butlin) – note that Vol. 11, Images, is organised differently.

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List of Abbreviations

