

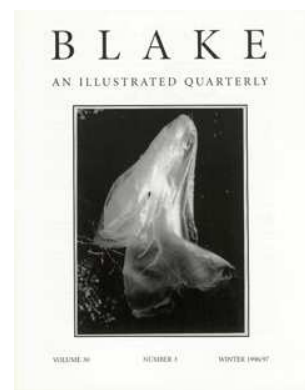
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Jerusalem and the Origins of Patriarchy

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"O Albion why wilt thou Create a Female Will?" Los wails in *Jerusalem* 30:31.¹ The term "Female Will" here makes its first appearance in Blake's poetry, though for years critics have used it retroactively to explicate prior works, because it ties together so many of the sinister actions of the women characters of the earlier poetry.² Critics who elaborate on Blake's notion of the Female Will usually make the case that Blake does not intend a criticism of actual women by the term, but rather of nature and Natural Religion, or else that his criticism is not of woman's empowerment but of the perverse exercise of that power. On the other hand, feminist readings like those of Susan Fox and Anne K. Mellor have pointed out that Blake seems uneasy about any display of willfulness on the part of the female, and that he almost invariably portrays such situations negatively, while simultaneously idealizing female self-sacrifice as embodied in characters like Ahania and Oothoon.³ *Jerusalem* is no exception to this latter rule.

¹ David V. Erdman and Harold Bloom, eds., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (New York: Doubleday, 1988) 176. Subsequent references to this text will be designated by *E* followed by the page number. Plate and line numbers will accompany the page numbers where appropriate.

² Lengthy critical works on *Jerusalem* are few, probably due to the difficulty of the poem, which presumes a thorough familiarity with Blake's earlier poetry. Most studies remain at the level of establishing the epic's coherence and making it scrutable. Such works include Morton D. Paley's *The Continuing City* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983); Minna Doskow's *William Blake's Jerusalem* (East Brunswick, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1982); Joseph Wicksteed's *William Blake's Jerusalem* (London: Trianon Press, 1953), a work that has been criticized for its eccentric and erroneous interpretations, and Joanna Witke's *William Blake's Epic: Imagination Unbound* (London: Croom Helm, 1986). Works dealing with gender in *Jerusalem* include Thomas D. Frosch's *The Awakening of Albion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), discussed in the text, and Brenda Webster's *Blake's Prophetic Psychology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983). Webster contends: "The chief psychological problem posed by the poem is how to reconcile the father, Albion, with the son, Los. The difficulty is their mutual suspicion and hatred, which are linked for their desire for exclusive possession of the mother, Jerusalem." As the argument of this chapter indicates, I agree with Webster that the poem's central struggle is that of son against patriarch and patriarchy, but disagree with her implication that Blake is unconscious of his poem's theme.

³ Susan Fox, "The Female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry," *Critical Inquiry* 3 (1977): 508-13, and Anne K. Mellor in "Blake's Portrayal of Women," *Blake* 16 (1982-83): 148-55, advance the basic propositions involving Blake's sexism around which subsequent debate has revolved. Alicia Ostriker in "Desire Gratified and Ungratified: William Blake and Sexuality," *Blake* 16 (1982-83): 156-65, concurs with Fox and Mellor that in Blake's ideal universe "to be female is to be de-

There is more to the above statement of Los than the sexism that might immediately meet the eye, however. Los clearly implies that the evil Female Will is the creation of Albion, the fallen patriarch of British civilization, and not something brought about by woman herself. Los later reiterates, "O Albion why didst thou a Female Will Create?" (56:43, *E* 206). A close scrutiny of *Jerusalem* reveals, I believe, that Blake offers a perceptive critique of masculine gender-roles without a similar rethinking of the role of the female.

Jerusalem criticizes male power as it is embodied in the structures of a society specifically identified by the poet as *patriarchal*. This term has for Blake many of the same pejorative connotations as it does for contemporary feminist discourse: in both instances, "patriarchal" connotes an oppressive masculinist system that perpetuates itself through the definition and control of *property*.

The word "patriarch" and other terms derived from it appear but a single time in Blake's work prior to *Jerusalem*, an incidental reference in *The Four Zoas* to "a throne & a pavement / Of precious stones surrounded by twenty four venerable patriarchs" (123:35, *E* 393). In *Jerusalem*, however, Blake uses the terms eight times, each time in a highly significant context. It first appears in the prose section "To the Jews" that precedes chapter 2 (27, *E* 171): "Was Britain the Primitive Seat of the Patriarchal Religion?" Blake here

pendent" (162) and notes that "In *Milton* and *Jerusalem* . . . female figures are either powerful or good; never both" (162-63). Other works which deal with Blake's sexual politics include Webster, *Blake's Prophetic Psychology* (see above) and her article, "Blake, Women and Sexuality" in Donald Ault, Mark Bracher and Dan Miller, eds., *Critical Paths: Blake and the Argument of Method* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987): 204-24; Margaret Storch, *Sons and Adversaries: Women in Blake and D.H. Lawrence* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991); and Diana Hume George, *Blake and Freud* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980). Webster, Storch and George constitute a wing of Blake criticism that is both Freudian and at times feminist as well, but George, ostensibly using the same Freudian paradigms and often looking at the same poems as Storch and Webster, comes to an almost opposite judgment of Blake. Both Webster and George see Blake's views as similar to those of Freudian radicals like Norman O. Brown, but whereas George champions Brown's and Blake's revolutionary sexual ethos, Webster finds such strategies dangerous and regressive, and Storch, after Webster, has a similar view. David Punter, "Blake, Trauma and the Female," *New Literary History* 15 (1984): 475-90, suggests that the trauma of Oothoon in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* is really the projected displacement of the trauma felt by Blake and males in general at a time when gender roles were in flux. Nelson Hilton in "An Original Story" in *Unnam'd Forms: Blake and Textuality*, Hilton and Thomas Vogler, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) 69-104, provides one of the most interesting recent defenses of Blake and *Visions*, making the argument that Blake's eye (his text) saw more than his heart knew—a familiar poststructuralist strategy, but Hilton's knowledge of the background material on Mary Wollstonecraft (see n15) helps him fashion a convincing case.

means Patriarchal Religion to be taken in a double sense: as referring both to the eternal truths of the Judeo-Christian culture and to the degenerated Natural Religion which is the actual practice of that same culture. It becomes clear that Blake identifies the patriarchal element in that heritage with its fallen or erroneous aspect when he links patriarchy to Druidism a few lines later: "Your Ancestors derived their origin from Abraham, Heber, Shem, and Noah, who were Druids: as the Druid Temples (which are the Patriarchal Pillars & Oak Groves) over the whole Earth witness to this day" (E 171). Druidism is the prehistoric form of Natural Religion; in one quatrain of the poem that follows the prose on plate 27, Blake addresses the "Spectre of Albion":

Is this thy soft Family-Love
Thy cruel Patriarchal pride
Planting thy Family alone
Destroying all the World beside.

(27:76-80, E 173)

The criticism of patriarchy enters *Jerusalem* proper further on in chapter 2, when the twelve sons of Albion corroborate their father's fall by "Rearing their Druid Patriarchal rocky Temples around his limbs" (46:14, E 196). Later, Jerusalem hears the Divine Voice asking "Wilt thou make Rome thy Patriarch Druid" (61:50, E 212). Jerusalem subsequently laments the death of her beloved "Along the Valley of Destruction, among these Druid Temples./ Which overspread all the Earth in patriarchal pomp & cruel pride" (79:66-67, E 235). Urthona, the Eternal form of Los, characterizes himself as acting "Against the Patriarchal pomp and cruelty, labouring incessant" (83:4, E 241). Finally, in the apocalyptic burst of song that concludes the work, the poet exultantly asks "Where is the Tree of Good & Evil that rooted beneath the cruel heel / of Albions Spectre the Patriarch Druid!" (98:47-48, E 258). The return of humankind to the unfallen state is clearly linked to the abolition of patriarchy.

Blake does not stop at mere condemnation of patriarchy; *Jerusalem* contains the poet's most sophisticated analysis of institutionalized masculinism. The critique of conventional masculine roles and authority figures is a consistent theme in Blake's poetry from early on. Helen Bruder, in "The Sins of the Fathers: Patriarchal Criticism and *The Book Of Thel*,"⁴ finds Blake already engaged in a critique of patriarchy in *The Book of Thel*, one of the first illuminated books, in which she describes the poet as "exclaiming against the patriarchal fetishizing of the hymen as an oppressive curb to an erotics of mutual delight" (156). She likewise finds the poet preaching against phallocentrism in the creation of a "young woman (Thel) who is so unimpressed by . . . displays of

the phallus" (156). The anti-phallocentrism, the attack on conventional (that is, Urizenic) masculinity, and the repudiation of repression and virginity are indeed constant preoccupations of Blake's writing and art. But Bruder is in error to say that the presentation of these themes in themselves constitutes "a neglected feminist dimension to Blake's long-acknowledged radicalism" (147). A critique of masculinity is not per se a critique of gender, and an insistence on woman's sexual freedom is not necessarily a feminist position when that erotic freedom is, as it is so often in Blake's myth, the only new freedom that the poet will allow his female characters.⁵ *Jerusalem* is perhaps the most dramatic example of the true character of Blake's sexual politics: never has the poet's condemnation of traditional masculine authority in the form of patriarchy been more overt and forceful, yet Blake's solution to the problem in no way presumes an increase in female empowerment.

The critique of patriarchy advanced by Blake in his final epic is, however, in many ways strikingly similar to the argument of feminist historian Gerda Lerner in her contem-

⁵ Nor am I convinced by Bruder's attempts to establish a counter-tradition of Blake criticism that vindicates the poet's radical feminism. The authors she cites, like Bruder herself, make a case for Blake as an opponent of phallocentrism and a champion of woman's sexual freedom, but not a case for the poet as an advocate of genuine female empowerment. Vernon E. Lattin, in "Blake's Thel and Oothoon: Sexual Awakening in the Eighteenth Century" in *The Literary Criterion* 16 (1981): 11-24, notes the way "Blake speaks very clearly about the centrality of woman's sexual awakening as the way of vision" (12) and finds Oothoon, unlike Thel, gaining liberation "by confronting her desire" (22); Lattin doesn't consider the extent to which female sexual license benefits male power structures. K. D. Everest, in "Thel's Dilemma" in *Essays in Criticism* 37 (1987): 193-208, similarly describes the way "nominal virtue in Thel is gradually subverted by an insurgent sexuality of superb energy and abandonment" (206). Catherine L. McClenahan, in "No Face Like the Human Divine?: Women and Gender in Pickering Manuscript," in G. A. Rosso and Daniel P. Watkins, eds., *Spirits of Fire: English Romantic Writers and Contemporary Historical Methods* (London: Associated University Presses, 1990) 189-208, demonstrates how Blake shares Wollstonecraft's critique of sexual modesty, but fails to note that the rationality that Blake so dislikes is the fundamental principle of Wollstonecraftian feminism. Another of McClenahan's arguments, that Blake learned subversive techniques and voices from marginalized woman writers, sounds suspiciously like the exploitative appropriation of feminine characteristics that Alan Richardson has termed a "colonization" of the feminine and found to be typical of male romantic writers as a group (see n17). David G. Reide, in "The Symbolism of the Loins in Blake's *Jerusalem*," in *Studies in English Literature* 21 (1981): 547-64, convincingly shows how the poem rates Blake's contempt for "mere genital sexuality" (549), and Elizabeth Langland in "Blake's Feminist Revision of Literary Tradition in 'The Sick Rose'" in Donald Ault, Mark Bracher and Dan Miller, eds., *Critical Paths: Blake and the Argument of Method* (Durham, NC and London: Duke Univ. Press, 1987) 225-43, demonstrates how that poem's ironic language exposes the speaker's violation of the rose by phallic psychological projections; as noted in the text however, anti-phallocentrism does not automatically constitute feminism.

⁴ Helen Bruder, in *Historicizing Blake*, Steve Clark and David Worrall, eds. (New York: St. Martin's, 1994) 147-59.

porary study, *The Creation of Patriarchy*.⁶ Lerner maintains that the control by males of women's sexual behavior and reproductive capacity is the very cornerstone of our civilization. She contends that this appropriation occurred prior to the institution of private property, and in fact was the very foundation of private property (in Western history, Lerner locates this event during the period of the early Sumerian and Mesopotamian civilizations, 2200-1800 B.C.). Later, male subjugation of woman's sexuality resulted in class structure, and finally in slavery, the ultimate commodification of the human (well underway by the time of the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, 1752 B.C.). According to Lerner, men in the earliest societies were divided into classes relative to the amount of "wealth"—potentially fertile women—over whom they had hegemony. In this same historical period, men divided all women into two groups, one "respectable" or "honorable," meaning under the protection of a male, and the other "not respectable," meaning unattached to a male. The two kinds of women were frequently distinguished by the presence or absence of a veil, the wearing of which denoted the "good" woman and also marked this "honorable" woman as an article of property, which accounts for her protected status. Male-dominated society moved toward an increasingly abstract and increasingly masculine idea of God, culminating finally in the invisible-but-male Hebrew deity, who ordains that the expression of woman's sexuality for other than reproductive purposes is sinful (Lerner places the beginning of the writing of the Book of Genesis in the tenth century B.C., but believes the stories within it to be parts of an oral myth several centuries older).

Lerner's theory is frankly, admittedly, speculative. Her work has drawn criticism for what has been deemed a too-willful projection of contemporary feminist polemic onto a body of inconclusive (and inadequately researched) empirical evidence.⁷ However damaging such criticism may

be to Lerner's credibility as a historian, it in no way lessens the value of her work as an instrument for the interpretation of *Jerusalem*, for Blake's poem, avowedly mythic and even anti-empirical in its construction of history, is openly polemical. Blake's epics retain an engagement with literal history by virtue of the poet's implicit belief that utopian fantasy, by the suggestion of unrealized human possibilities, can provoke real change in the social/political world (in this respect, the poet's strategy remains unchanged since the *Songs of Innocence*).

Lerner traces the development of patriarchy in a historical sequence. Blake in *Jerusalem* displays a remarkable anticipation of the initial stages of Lerner's model. Blake, like Lerner, locates the beginning of "fallen" history in the patriarchal suppression and control of women's sexual behavior. He develops a notion implicit in Lerner's model into a cardinal point of his myth: the destructive dualisms of Western thought, which the poet has been bent on exposing ever since *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, are in *Jerusalem* revealed to be rooted in the primal separation of women into two camps, "good" (chaste) women and whores. The division of females into good women and bad women provoked the development of the moral code that Blake hates, with its radical separation of good and evil, heaven and hell, holy and profane, pure and defiled. In *Jerusalem*, the initial moment of this separation is depicted in Albion's separation of the "good" woman Vala, who is actually sinister, from the "bad" Jerusalem, whose only sins are her sexual openness and her capacity for self-sacrifice. The veil of Vala is perhaps the poem's central trope; it becomes in Blake's hands the symbol of everything that separates humankind from its salvation. In the end, Jerusalem and Vala are re-joined as a "whole" woman, Britannia.

The latter stages of Lerner's model, however, diverge from and even oppose Blake's vision. In *Jerusalem*, Blake would replace the patriarchy with a (male) brotherhood bonded by a covenant. The covenant of brothers is indeed a part of Lerner's structure, but for her it represents not the overthrow of patriarchy, but its ultimate consolidation. Blake's ideal brotherhood, in which women are shared among the brothers, contains all the qualities to which Lerner objects. Further, Blake doesn't appropriate female procreancy outright, but in *Jerusalem*, as in his earlier poetry, he denigrates "merely" natural and biological creation and seeks to subsume it under a "higher" creativity, that of artistic inspiration, a quality which is portrayed as decisively masculine, because it involves the (for Blake) quintessentially masculine ability to organize a "female" and passive perceptual world.

Lerner's sequential model of patriarchal history has as its culmination the production of a type of metaphorical construct that in her view has fundamentally distorted all Western thought. She describes this body of tropes as configuring "the symbolic devaluing of women in relation to the divine" (10). For Blake in *Jerusalem*, this hierarchical rela-

⁶ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 8-10. The pages indicated present a summary of Lerner's argument and indicate chapters in which points are elaborated further.

⁷ Scholar Sarah B. Pomeroy, writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, 20 April 1986, voices the common concerns of Lerner's critics when she complains of Lerner's "subordination of principles of historical investigation to feminist politics." She objects to Lerner's construction of "a grandiose paradigm demonstrating the continually deteriorating position of women." Pomeroy takes Lerner to task for grouping "societies as different as the Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Amonites, Hebrews and Greeks as though they existed on a historical continuum and evolved from one another," and she complains that Lerner is led into some crucial misunderstandings because of her dependence on works in translation and secondary sources. In a review in *History: Reviews of New Books* (Jan.-Feb. 1987 [66-67]), however, it is precisely Lerner's "intellectual boldness, her bluntness and penchant for polemic" that Bernard Essen praises. Calling her work "vastly ambitious and admirable, even heroic," Essen goes on to laud Lerner for "her flair for theorizing and generalizing, sometimes outrageously," which would serve equally well as a description of Blake at his best.

tionship is not considered a metaphor, but rather the principle by which the poet's mythic universe is organized; it is ultimately the one element in the Blakean cosmos that seems *not* to be trope, but a categorical imperative. The devaluing of the feminine is everywhere implicit in Blake's construction of the relationship of masculine self to female Emanation, and *Jerusalem* concludes with a vision of a post-apocalyptic world in which this hierarchy of self and Emanation is still firmly in place. Blake's vision is anti-patriarchal while still being hierarchically masculinist. In contemporary terms, Blake has made gender-as-a-social-construction identical with gender-as-essence. This is precisely the sort of transformation of a metaphor into a fundamental principle of existence which Blake in other situations recognizes immediately as Natural Religion.

Having struck a tone critical of Blake, let me rush momentarily to his defense. It would be disingenuous to take Blake to task for not meeting the standards of a later era in his treatment of gender, or to suggest that he was in some way worse on the issue than most other writers of the time (in fact, I am going to imply the opposite). To single Blake out for special personal condemnation would indeed undermine any sort of feminist argument predicated upon a belief in the socially-constructed nature of attitudes about gender. The purpose of this essay then, is not to establish Blake's sexism (that has been done by Fox, Mellor and others) or even to criticize it, so much as to demonstrate what a crucial role the notion of gender-hierarchy plays in the form and functioning of Blake's visionary cosmos. If it proves impossible in this analysis to suppress an occasional note of late-twentieth-century dismay, it is only because the poet *does* reject so many of the attitudes of his era that encounters with his sexist formulations, even after repeated readings, are always slightly startling. The fact that gender seems to be an exception to a general rule perhaps tells us less about Blake than about his and our culture.

However, if gender inequality is accepted as an organizing principle in *Jerusalem*, I believe the poem can be rescrutinized to yield up new insights. Blake's sexism is no less intricately imaged than the other parts of his myth, and his depiction of female characters, while by contemporary standards perhaps less progressive than other parts of his artistic world, is no less powerful. Indeed, I will imply below that, as with Picasso in our own era, these female portraits represent some of the most intensely rendered of Blake's "Visionary Forms Dramatic" precisely because of the anxiety they inspire in the poet.

I

The patriarch whose fall and redemption are the subject of *Jerusalem* is Albion, Blake's Universal Man. His fall was also described in *The Four Zoas*, but there the Zoas themselves (the components of Albion's unfallen self) took center stage. In *Jerusalem*, the Zoas are relatively minor play-

ers, and the focus is on Albion himself, his sons and daughters, and Jerusalem, "the Emanation of the Giant Albion," as the poem's title informs us. The first half of *Jerusalem* deals with Albion's fall into "Eternal Death." One of the most important models for the story of Albion's fall is the Book of Job, which Blake in fact illustrated near the end of his life. Like Albion, Job is a patriarch who loses his family and then has it restored to him. S. Foster Damon, in his book on the Job engravings, maintains that Blake's images interpret the Job story as an internal, psychological drama: Job doesn't lose his children to physical catastrophe, rather he loses their affection and respect due to his self-righteous morality.⁸ *Jerusalem* operates on a similarly psychological level: when Albion's Spectre and Emanation come to the Divine Humanity saying "We alone are escaped" (43:29, E 191), a direct reference to Job 1:15, they are not fleeing a massacre (as in the Bible story), but rather from Albion's own darkened psyche and the fallen world it generates around itself, "Albions darkning [r]ocks" (43:28, E 191). For Blake, as always, psychology constitutes geography.

Jerusalem begins with the fall of Albion already in progress. The Divine Vision calls out:

return Albion! return!
Thy brethren call thee, and thy fathers, and thy sons,
Thy nurses, and thy mothers, thy sisters and thy
daughters
Weep at thy souls disease, and the Divine Vision is
darkend:

(4:10-13, E 146)

Albion, like Job, has lost his family and been afflicted with disease. The problem, ironically, is patriarchy: in seeking to hold and protect his family, Albion has in fact lost them spiritually, because of his tyrannical possessiveness. Albion's specific error is to hide his Emanation from the Divine Humanity—that is, to restrict her sexual favors to him alone, the act which Lerner theorized was the crucial first move in the creation of patriarchy (the Emanation in this poem has characteristics of both a wife and a daughter). With this event, jealousy comes into the world: "So spoke Albion in jealous fears, hiding his Emanation" (4:33, E 147).

So *Jerusalem* begins *in medias res*, as does a classical epic. The fall of Albion will be recapitulated throughout the poem. In asserting patriarchal control, Albion has lost control; his sons, the products of patriarchy, now control England while Albion lies helpless in a dream of Eternal Death. The illustration at the bottom of plate 9 shows the fallen Albion prostrate on the ground.⁹ As Erdman notes, however, Albion's

⁸ S. Foster Damon, *Blake's Job* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1966) 3. This has become the generally accepted interpretation of the Job engravings. The Job series is also linked to *Jerusalem* by the "Druid" trilithons (Blakean symbols of Natural Religion) that appear in both sets of illustrations.

⁹ The reference is to Copy D, as reproduced in David V. Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974) 288. All

eyes are open, leading us to believe that his stupor is self-willed. The next plate depicts the fallen rule of Albion's sons, who are characterized by Morton Paley as "the objects of [Albion's] aggression disguised as justice"¹⁰:

And this is the manner of the Sons of Albion in their strength
They take the Two Contraries which are call'd Qualities, with which
Every Substance is clothed, they name them Good & Evil
From them they make an Abstract, which is a Negation

(10:7-10, E 152-53)

The separation of the "good" from the "evil" woman (in Lerner's terms, the veiled is opposed to the unveiled woman; in Blake's terms, Vala—her name, of course, punning on "veil"—is separated from Jerusalem) has led to a moral code of good and evil that becomes increasingly abstract, and which characterizes everything regarding the body as sinful. Vala and Jerusalem, body and spirit, are properly dynamic contraries; the Sons have separated them into negating opposites. These historical developments find their culmination in a god who is male and totally abstract/transcendent. The transformation of the patriarch into an abstract father-god means that patriarchy can live on even though the patriarch himself (or an overtly patriarchal religion) may appear to be dead, like the paralyzed Albion. Patriarchy continues to operate, reproducing itself with mechanical persistence: this is one significance of the turning of the "Starry Wheels," the activity of Albion's Sons. The Twelve Sons form themselves into "Three Immense Wheels" (18:8, E 163), because they are "Jealous of Jerusalems children" (18:6, E 163), and covetous of their heritage as Albion's lawful sons by Vala.

The Sons want Jerusalem to be cast out because, in the words of Harold Bloom, "if she is reunited to man, their reign ends" (E 934):

Cast! Cast ye Jerusalem forth! The Shadow of delusions!
The Harlot daughter! Mother of pity and dishonourable forgiveness
Our Father Albions sin and shame!

(18:11-13, E 163)

The Sons complain that their father has destroyed the patriarchal family by his indiscretions with Jerusalem. With

plate numbers refer to the *Illuminated Blake* reproduction. In other copies, Blake changed the order of some of the plates in chapter 2. The order in the reproduction in *Illuminated Blake* corresponds to the order in *William Blake*.

¹⁰ Morton D. Paley, *The Continuing City* 221.

their cry for punishment, they think they are redressing their father's crimes; in fact, they are repeating them, because it was Albion who first declared Jerusalem sinful. In this ironic way, the sins of the fathers are visited on the children, and patriarchy replicates itself through the cycle of guilt and repression. The Sons pledge allegiance to:

Babylon the City of Vala, the Goddess Virgin-Mother.
She is our Mother! Nature! Jerusalem is our Harlot-Sister
Return'd with Children of pollution, to defile our House,
With Sin and Shame.

(18:29-32, E 163)

Vala and Jerusalem were originally one, in the form of Britannia. In casting Jerusalem out, the Sons are only furthering the initial act of Albion, who separated the two and covered Vala with the veil of patriarchal property.

This issue of property underlies Albion's plight:

His Children exil'd from his breast pass to and fro before him
His birds are silent on his hills, flocks die beneath his branches
His tents are fall'n! his trumpets, and the sweet sound of his harp
Are silent on his clouded hills, that belch forth storms & fire.
His milk of Cows, & honey of Bees, & fruit of golden harvest,
Is gather'd in the scorching heat, & in the driving rain:

(19:1-6, E 163-64)

Albion's loss is here, as in Blake's Job illustrations, both internal and external. Albion's wealth is at once the true riches of the realized spirit and senses, and the material, projected forms in which the patriarch tries unsuccessfully to capture and hold those riches. The act of projection is in itself a loss: in creating wealth, Albion in fact loses it. His loss becomes a loss of riches as well as family (Albion's children are similarly both the disowned parts of himself and the real children whom he alienates by that act of disowning). Blake here anticipates Lerner's view that all wealth comes not from labor, as in Marx, but from male control of woman's sexuality, the act which for Lerner is the very origin of private property. The same imagery of loss of wealth pervades Albion's own description of his situation:

Shame divides Families. Shame hath divided Albion in sunder!
First fled my Sons, & then my Daughters, then my Wild Animations
My Cattle next, last ev'n the Dog of my Gate. the Forests fled
The Corn-fields, & the breathing Gardens outside separated

(21:6-9, E 166)

Albion's complaint, earlier in the same lament, that "The disease of Shame covers me from head to feet: I have no hope / Every boil on my body is a separate & deadly Sin" (21:3-4, *E* 166), again links him to Job, who was likewise afflicted with boils. The boils of Blake's Albion/Job are really an inner "disease of Shame"; the loss of his children is not their physical death but the loss of their love and respect, and the loss of wealth and property is not only a material loss but, as noted above, the loss of the full realization of the spirit and of the senses in all their abundance. These losses come to pass as a result of Albion's desire to control the sexuality and fertility of woman. Albion now has control over woman, but has lost the capacity for sexual joy because sin and guilt are the vehicle of that control. He mourns "Vala! O that thou wert pure! / That the deep wound of Sin might be clos'd up with the Needle" (21:12-13, *E* 166), but it was he himself who made the vagina sinful when he made it the source of wealth. Albion eventually comes to look back nostalgically on a time when "Albion covered the whole Earth" (24:44, *E* 170) because woman's sexuality had not been divided and apportioned.

As Paley points out, Albion in Jerusalem "takes on many of the characteristics assigned to Urizen-figures in Blake's earlier works."¹¹ A plea by Jerusalem makes it clear that Albion has both Urizen's sense of sin and his capacity for reductive over-analysis:

Then spoke Jerusalem O Albion! my Father Albion
Why wilt thou number every little fibre of my Soul
Spreading them out before the Sun like stalks of flax
to dry?
The Infant Joy is beautiful, but its anatomy
Horrible ghast & deadly!

(22:19-23, *E* 167)

Blake has actually made two significant switches here: not only has Albion been described in Urizenic terms, but Jerusalem speaks the same words with which Tharmas accuses Enion in *The Four Zoas* 4:29-33 (*E* 302). There, the (male) Tharmas complained of Enion's (female) jealousy. Blake's transfer of the speech to the female Jerusalem makes clear the paranoia behind Tharmas's declaration in the earlier poem: his need to dominate, rather than woman's jealousy, is the ultimate source of sexual guilt.

As with Urizen in *The Four Zoas*, the masculine triumph of Albion is actually a triumph of Vala. Albion pleads:

But come O Vala with knife & cup: drain my blood
To the last drop! then hide me in thy Scarlet Tabernacle
For I see Luvah whom I slew. I behold him in my Spectre

(22:29-31, *E* 167-68)

¹¹ Paley 198.

He has accepted the veil of Vala, which he himself imposed, as a final reality, and he is afflicted with an unbearable sense of guilt because his institution of sin has "slain" humankind's passionate life. Albion can think of no remedy but to elevate Vala into a virgin-goddess and to offer himself as a human sacrifice. In terms of Lerner's historical model, Albion here is at the stage where patriarchy institutionalizes and encourages the worship of the mother-goddess; Babylon was such a civilization. Whereas Lerner sees the religion of the goddess as having both positive and negative aspects (the goddess is a powerful female, but her power is restricted to sexuality and fertility), Blake can see any goddess-worship only as a form of Natural Religion, demanding human sacrifice.

In order to replace this constant blood-sacrifice, Albion takes Vala's veil and uses it as a "Veil of Moral Virtue, woven for Cruel Laws" (23:22, *E* 168). This corresponds to a stage in Lerner's model where the religion of the goddess is suppressed and supplanted by the moral religion of the abstract and invisible father-god. This has the advantage for Albion of changing his position from that of accused to that of accuser: "every Act a Crime, and Albion the punisher & judge" (28:4, *E* 174). He can now condemn his offspring instead of vice versa: the patriarch has resumed his position of authority. The Cities of England make a last effort to redeem him, asking

What is a Wife & what is a Harlot? What is a Church?
& What
Is a Theatre? Are they Two & not One? can they Exist
Separate?
Are not Religion & Politics the Same Thing? Brotherhood
is Religion
O Demonstrations of Reason Dividing Families in
Cruelty & Pride!

(57:8-11, *E* 207)

The separation of "Wife" from "Harlot," in *Jerusalem* and in Lerner's model, is the source, the first separation from which other divisions spring. The patriarchal family is broken by this same chain of separations, but however broken, divided, "dysfunctional" in the current parlance, the patriarchal family still perpetuates itself through the mechanistic power of guilt. Albion, his fall complete, sinks down to the Rock of Ages, where he remains until the apocalypse.

II

Jerusalem and Vala represent Blake's most sophisticated development of positive and negative female figures, yet a problem inherent in this dichotomy from its first appearance in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* remains: to use Paley's words, "Blake's ranging of female figures along the lines of the Jerusalem-principle and the Vala-principle

threatens to become congruent with the old cultural bifurcation" that Blake ostensibly wants to protest.¹² Almost all the women in the poem are subsumed as "surrogates" (Paley's term) of Jerusalem or Vala. As surrogates of Jerusalem, Paley lists Erin, Dinah, Rosamund, Oothoon and Mary, each of whom represents "an aspect of redemption through female love."¹³ Vala's camp includes Rahab and Tirzah, familiar from the earlier poetry, and the malevolent Daughters of Albion, chief among them Cambel and Gwendolen (the one important female figure not connected to either Jerusalem or Vala is Enitharmon, about whom more later). In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake was intent upon questioning the validity of oppositional thinking altogether ("Excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps" [8:26, E 36]). The opposition of the two groups of women is a similarly false dualism, created by the deluded Albion. However, Blake's presentation of the inversion of the dualism as an apocalyptic revelation—Jerusalem, the bad woman is really good; the chaste Vala is really evil—has the effect of making the opposition seem authoritative, with only the specific terms of the dichotomy brought into question.

In dividing Jerusalem from Vala, Albion invents sin and accuses Jerusalem of its commission:

Jerusalem! dissembler Jerusalem! I look into thy bosom:
I discover thy secret places: Cordella! I behold
Thee whom I thought pure as the heavens in innocence & fear:

(21:18-20, E 166)

The echoes of Lear and Cordelia are appropriate (one of the Daughters of Albion is named Ragan as well): Lear was another mistaken patriarch involved in the division of property and the desire to possess *all* of his daughters' love. Vala is the real dissembler and hider of secrets; her secret is that the patriarchal division of women into virgins and whores is a deception. Albion accedes to the demands of Vala and his sons and daughters and casts Jerusalem out. Los later encounters her as he wanders the night streets of London, the domain of the impoverished (45:39-43, E 195). This is Jerusalem's appropriate place, because in casting out Jerusalem, Albion created private property and social classes (as in Lerner's theory), dividing rich and poor.

Jerusalem here links the division of women into two camps with the division of humanity into impoverished and wealthy classes. Vala wears the veil which is an ancient signifier of both the married woman and the priestess or nun (often spoken of as being married to the deity).¹⁴ The

veil denotes that the woman is property, an item of wealth, but as such she is also under the protection of patriarchal power in either its secular or ecclesiastical form, and therefore enjoys certain privileges. The unveiled woman has no protector, no connection with wealth and consequently no status. Jerusalem therefore dwells among the wretched, where the Daughters of Los are building Golgonooza in the midst of the squalor of the fallen city of London:

Terrible their distress & their sorrow cannot be utterd
And another Daughter of Los sat at the Spinning Wheel
Endless their labour, with bitter food, void of sleep,
Tho hungry they labour: they rouze themselves anxious
Hour after hour labouring at the whirling Wheel
Many Wheels & as many lovely Daughters sit weeping

(59:28-33, E 209)

The Daughters weave to re-form the ancient work of Vala, who wove the veil of fallen nature. The spinning wheels they turn indicate the source of their suffering in the Starry Wheels of patriarchal Deism turned by Albion's Sons. Never before, except perhaps in "London," has Blake so clearly based his portrayal on real scenes of the exploitation of women in the London of his day. The Divine Voice searches for Jerusalem and finds her

closed in the Dungeons of Babylon
Her Form was held by Beulahs Daughters, but all
within unseen
She sat at the Mills, her hair unbound her feet naked
Cut with the flints: her tears run down, her reason
grows like
The Wheel of Hand, incessant turning day & night
without rest

(60:39-43, E 210)

This is the fate of women without a "veil," without the protection of a male.

Jerusalem dwells here because the oppressed necessarily know the reality of the spirit, the spirit being all they have because their physical life is bondage. Yet the suffering can become so intense that even the consolations of the spirit are lost: "Insane she raves upon the winds hoarse, inarticulate" (60:44, E 210). In despair, Jerusalem questions the existence of God, the "Human Imagination" (60:57, E 211). To comfort her, the Divine Voice tells her Blake's revisionist version of the story of Joseph and Mary, in which Mary

the nun is a kind of permanent hymen, which signifies the control and protection of the woman's sexuality by patriarchal institutions. "Once the veil is torn, the loins lose their all-obsessing importance," Riede goes on to say (557), describing Blake's apocalypse as a deliverance from the tyranny of genitality. In *Jerusalem*, Blake establishes the connection between this fallen genitality and the obsession with material wealth.

¹² Paley 194.

¹³ Paley 185.

¹⁴ David G. Riede, "The Symbolism of the Loins in Blake's *Jerusalem*" (see n5) links the veil to the physical hymen "and . . . its simultaneous meaning as the cover of mystery" (553). The veil of the wife or

has been impregnated not by God but simply by a man other than her husband. Joseph at first throws her out as a harlot, but he hears the Divine Voice in a dream and realizes he must forgive Mary and take her back. Jerusalem realizes her essential humanity is still unsullied within her and takes heart: "Every Harlot was once a Virgin: every Criminal an Infant Love!" (61:52, *E* 212).

Blake has affirmed woman's right to a sexual freedom commensurate with that of man; but more importantly, Joseph has not only forgiven Mary, but renounced as well the fundamental privilege of all patriarchy: he has accepted as his own offspring the impending child of his wife by another man. Mary's song of freedom is a chant of female sexuality unleashed:

Then Mary burst forth into a Song! she flowed like a
River of
Many Streams in the arms of Joseph & gave forth her
tears of joy
Like many waters, and Emanating into gardens & pal-
aces upon
Euphrates & to forests & floods & animals wild & tame
from
Gihon to Hiddekel, & to corn fields & villages & in-
habitants

(61:28-32, *E* 212)

Blake's symbolism corroborates Lerner's view that patriarchal society is founded upon the control of female sexuality: the rushing torrent of Mary's freed libido in effect reclaims all the institutions and products of the society built upon the repression of that sexual force.

However, Blake, as much as any patriarch, *identifies* woman with sexuality, and treats the liberation of that sexuality as woman's total liberation. Blake envisions a good woman as either an ardent lover or nurturing mother. It is in the form of maternity that Mary offers consolation to Jerusalem: "Jerusalem recieved / The Infant into her hands in the Visions of Jehovah" (61:47-48, *E* 212). The long lament which is Jerusalem's last major speech in the poem makes clear her longing for the unfallen state which she experienced as a kind of universal maternity:

The Fifty-two Counties of England are hardend
against me
As if I was not their Mother, they despise me & cast
me out
London coverd the whole Earth. England encompassd
the Nations:
And all the Nations of the Earth were seen in the Cit-
ies of Albion:
My pillars reachd from sea to sea: London beheld me
come
From my east & from my west; he blessed me and gave
His children to my breasts, his sons & daughters to my
knees

(79:20-26, *E* 234-35)

In this state, the roles of lover and mother were appar-
ently conjoined:

the Lamb of God met me there.
There we walked as in our secret chamber among our
little ones
They looked upon our loves with joy: they beheld our
secret joys:
With holy raptures of adoration

(79:41-44, *E* 235)

Jerusalem in the illustration on plate 46 is depicted as just such an ideal conjunction of lover and mother. There Vala covers herself with the veil of mystery, and would cover the naked beauty of Jerusalem, who stands apart surrounded by three children.

Unlike Jerusalem, Vala is interested in power. Just as Blake does not imagine a good woman as other than a mother or lover, he likewise seems unable to see a willful female as other than evil. There are no women in Jerusalem who are strong-willed yet positive with which to balance the negativity of Vala and her surrogates. Blake does, however, integrate the malevolence of Vala with his analysis of the evils of patriarchy. Immediately after he separates Vala from Jerusalem, Vala is described as "spreading her scarlet Veil over Albion" (21:50, *E* 167). She is smart enough to see that the veil that disempowers also empowers; she can turn the patriarchal creation of sin against its author. Vala condemns Albion with his own invention, using the same words Enion spoke to Tharmas in *The Four Zoas*: "I have looked into the secret Soul of him I loved / And in the dark recesses found Sin & can never return" (22:14-15, *E* 167).

Vala celebrates her power in the aggregate form of the Daughters of Albion:

She cries: The Human is but a Worm, & thou O Male:
Thou art
Thyself Female, a Male: a breeder of Seed: a Son & Hus-
band: &
Lo.
The Human Divine is Womans Shadow, a Vapor in
the summers heat
Go assume Papal dignity thou Spectre, thou Male Har-
lot!
Arthur
Divide into the Kings of Europe in times remote O
Woman-born
And Woman-nourishd & Woman-educated &
Woman-scorn'd!

(64:12-17, *E* 215)

On one level, this speech is an apt and even feminist mockery of the pretensions of patriarchy ("Papal dignity;" "Arthur;" "the Kings of Europe") to some sort of divinely ordained masculine authority. Vala reminds Los that the edifice of his civilization is built upon the control of female sexuality. However, in the context of the entire poem,

we can see that the poet shares the patriarch's terror of being "feminized" by passive (i.e. "womanly") dependence on a woman for nurture and sexual gratification ("a Son & a Husband").

For instance, anxiety about the sexual power of woman predominates in Blake's depiction of the sacrificial altar of Natural Religion:

they sit naked upon the Stone of trial.
the Knife of flint passes over his howling Victim: his
blood
Gushes & stains the fair side of the fair Daugh[te]rs of
Albion.

They pour cold water on his brain in front, to cause.
Lids to grow over his eyes in veils of tears: and caverns
To freeze over his nostrils, while they feed his tongue
from cups
And dishes of painted clay. Glowing with beauty &
cruelty:
They obscure the sun & the moon; no eye can look
upon them.

(66:19-21, 30-34, E 218)

This is the agony of Albion tormented by woman as depicted in plate 26, where Vala, Rahab and Tirzah wind his umbilical cord (or his bowels) into a ball. Woman is indicted as the agent of Natural Religion; her rejection of man causes the fall of the senses. In scenes like this, the indictment of the patriarchy recedes and woman seems to act as an independent agent of the fall.

Blake further condemns the female as the cause of war; the Daughters of Albion are

Ashamed to give Love openly to the piteous & merci-
ful Man
Counting him an imbecile mockery: but the Warrior
They adore: & his revenge cherish with the blood of
the Innocent

(67:19-21, E 220)

The Warriors then sing a song of homage:

I am drunk with unsatiated love
I must rush again to War: for the Virgin has frownd &
refusd
Sometimes I curse & sometimes bless thy fascinating
beauty

(68:62-64, E 222)

Certainly woman throughout history has been dangled before men as a prize of war, but Blake makes her the willful initiator of the conflict. Gwendolen, the Emanation of Hyle, confesses to as much a bit later: "I have mockd those who refused cruelty & I have admired / The cruel Warrior" (81:1-2, E 238).

The entire drama of the Daughters of Albion triumphant takes place after Albion has collapsed onto the Rock of Ages. Blake seems to imply that with the patriarch unconscious, Vala, or the Female Will, runs amok. Still, the poet does juxtapose this nightmarish portrayal of female power against the sufferings of Jerusalem in the Dungeons of Babylon, and holding the two in balance, one could argue that Blake has in sum presented a myth that symbolizes the contention of Mary Wollstonecraft and other female writers of the era: while real women are exploited, men engage in the violent and tormented pursuit of ideal female beauty and the glittering wealth produced by woman's enslavement.¹⁵ Blake's remedy for this situation, however, is a problematic one:

they refuse liberty to the male; & not like Beulah
Where every Female delights to give her maiden to
her husband
The Female searches sea & land for gratification to
the Male Genius:

(69:14-17, E 223)

This passage is the culmination in Blake's poetry of a long series of declarations, beginning with Oothoon's famous speech in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (7:23-29, E 50) in which the female tolerance of male promiscuity is posited as a condition of the paradisaic state. Oothoon at least claims a corresponding sexual freedom for herself, but in subsequent poems (see, for example, Milton 33:1-9 [E 132]), where the Divine Voice reproaches the Daughters of Beulah for cutting off his sexual pleasures with jealousy) promiscuity is depicted as an exclusively masculine prerogative.

Blake's sexual paradise, Beulah, is a lower state than Eden, but still an ostensible improvement over our fallen world of Generation. In the latter world, Blake expresses an alternative to fallen reality through the actions of the character Los.

III

Los is for Blake the anti-patriarch, the character whose actions are meant to undo the negative heritage of patriarchy. In order to redeem Albion, Los must persuade him to put aside his patriarchal pride; to become a member of a brotherhood of (male) equals, as in the message of the Divine Vision: "I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and a friend" (4:18, E 146). Because "Los was the friend of Albion who most lov'd him" (35:12, E 181), Los calls the cities of

¹⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: Norton, 1988). Wollstonecraft succinctly refutes the canard that the beauty of women gives them a power over individual men that compensates for their powerlessness in society, commenting: "I do not wish women to have power over men, but over themselves" (62). Nelson Hilton in "An Original Story," 69-78 (see n3), provides a thorough summary of the circumstantial case that indicates Blake and Wollstonecraft might have known each other personally. Other female writers of the

England to help him restore Albion: "Brotherhood is Religion," (57:10, *E* 207), the Cities declare. In the poem's apocalyptic climax, Albion sees Los and Jesus become the same person, saying to Jesus, "I see thee in the likeness & similitude of Los my Friend" (96:22, *E* 256), and Jesus declares, "nor can Man exist but by Brotherhood" (96:28, *E* 256).¹⁶

In Gerda Lerner's model of history, however, brotherhood did not overthrow patriarchy; it refined and sustained it.¹⁷ In the Western tradition, this historical development is represented by the covenant made by God with Israel in Genesis and Exodus. Lerner argues that "The decisive change in the relationship of man to God occurs in the story of the covenant, and it is defined in such a way as to marginalize women."¹⁸ Women are definitively excluded from the access to God shared by members of this brotherhood.

Blake never uses the word "covenant" before *Jerusalem*, yet there it appears six times, including four occasions on plate 98, the poem's apocalyptic conclusion. The poet declares:

And I heard Jehovah speak
Terrific from his Holy Place & saw the Words of the
Mutual Covenant Divine

In the Forgiveness of Sins according to the Covenant
of Jehovah. They Cry
Where is the Covenant of Priam, the Moral Virtues of
the Heathen

(98:40-41, 45-46, *E* 258)

For Blake this new covenant fulfills the true covenant of

period who shared Wollstonecraft's condemnation of the cult of beauty were Mary Anne Radcliffe, *The Female Advocate* (New York: G. Olms, 1980); Mary Hays, *An Appeal to the Men of Great Britain on Behalf of Women* (New York: Garland, 1974), and even the later and much more conservative Priscilla Wakefield in *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (London: Darton, 1817). Blake shares these writers' disdain for the cult of female beauty, but not their parallel exaltation of woman's rational powers.

¹⁶ The most extensive recent discussion of Blake's notion of brotherhood is in Michael Ferber's *The Social Vision of William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) 69-88. Ferber notes that "The prime source of Blake's ideas about brotherhood, as about so much else, is the New Testament" (69) so that "Spiritual brotherhood is a state where none are inferior or superior and all equally share in the benevolence and joy, a state of unity founded on, and symbolized by, the Eternal Man who walks among us, Jesus the Imagination or Albion the collective man himself" (84). However, Ferber notes that Blake was deeply interested in liberty and fraternity but "had almost nothing to say . . . about equality" (68), an idea whose implications for the female become clear when Ferber remarks that the Christian fraternity upon which Blake modeled his own idea of brotherhood "is a fraternity in the literal sense: the only full participants are male" (86), and that, though "Blake's fraternity seems not to exclude women," still "Blake was content to deploy the traditional symbols and analogies, which bore indelibly the stamp of the patriarchal society where they were established" (87).

¹⁷ Lerner 180-99.

¹⁸ Lerner 188.

the Bible, but cancels the covenant of morality, which he regards as heathen. The emphasis of the new covenant on the forgiveness of sins is consonant with traditional Christianity. Nowhere does Blake imply that this new covenant includes women.

Lerner notes that the key ritual by which the Judaic covenant was reaffirmed, circumcision, by its very nature excludes women. She maintains that it marks the male as the older of procreative power, countering the goddess-religions in which priests were either castrated or else forced to give the fruit of their sexual couplings to the goddess.¹⁹ "Circumcision" is another word that never appears in Blake's earlier poetry; in *Jerusalem*, as Edward J. Rose points out, it appears nine times, always as a positive symbol.²⁰ As Rose also notes, Blake goes to great lengths in the poem "to contrast circumcision with Virginity" (16), portraying the latter negatively: the Eternals cry out, "Establishment of Truth depends on destruction of Falshood continually / On Circumcision: not on Viginity, O Reasoners of Albion" (55:65-66, *E* 205). Virginity for Blake relates to the religion of the goddess in its castrating mode; its modern incarnation is the cult of female modesty and chastity. The same "female" religion is condemned when Los's Spectre and Emanation, observing Albion's fall, see "the Sexual Religion in its embryon Uncircumcision" (44:11, *E* 193). In the apocalypse, the Divine Vision is seen "Circumscribing & Circumcising the excrementitious / Husk & Covering into Vacuum evaporating revealing the lineaments of Man" (98:18-19, *E* 257).

It is not surprising that the female in *Jerusalem* is frequently portrayed as the barrier to this new brotherhood that Los would create: Vala attempts to delude Albion that she is the true Jerusalem, declaring that "the Divine appearance is Brotherhood, but I am Love / Elevate into the Region of Brotherhood with my red fires" (29:52 - 30:1, *E* 176). Albion shrinks from the revelation Los would show him, "Rending the fibres of Brotherhood & in Feminine Allegories / Inclosing Los" (44:18-19, *E* 193). In the poem's ultimate crisis, Los posits the impossibility of male brotherhood without the submission of woman: "How then can I ever again be united as Man with Man / While thou my Emanation refusest my Fibres of dominion" (88:12-13, *E* 246). Implicit here and elsewhere is the notion that the ideal brotherhood would involve the sharing of women, a development that might at first appear to abolish woman's status as property but actually compounds it. Jerusalem, Blake's ideal female, yearns for the ancient times when she was shared in this manner:

Italy saw me, in sublime astonishment: France was
wholly mine:
As my garden & as my secret bath; Spain was my heav-

¹⁹ Lerner 191-92.

²⁰ Edward J. Rose, "Circumcision Symbolism in Blake's *Jerusalem*," *Studies in Romanticism* 8 (1968) 16-25.

enly couch:
I slept in his golden hills: the Lamb of God met me
there.

(79:39-41, E 235)

Jerusalem maintains that *she* was the owner of these places, but in fact her act of ownership was to yield herself up to one and all as a lover. Blake here means this woman-sharing to be pure metaphor, but it is a metaphor founded on the derogation of the feminine in relation to the masculine, in contrast to the democratic, egalitarian metaphor of sharing brothers that characterizes the ideal relations of males to other males in the poem.

IV

On plate 86 of *Jerusalem*, Los struggles with Enitharmon in what Harold Bloom calls "Los's own crisis with his Emanation" (E 944). The crisis is in fact the crisis of Blake's entire mythic structure; a crisis provoked by the contradictions inherent in the concept of gender on which the poet has based his visionary universe.

There are hints throughout the first three chapters of the epic that Blake is directing the poem toward a revelation about the sexes. There are in *Jerusalem* more usages of the word "sex" and its derivatives than in all of Blake's earlier writings combined. The word is sometimes employed in a sense subtly different than contemporary usage: in these instances, sex and the sexual are pejorative terms, as when Los's Spectre and Emanation perceive "the Sexual Religion in its embryon Uncircumcision" (44:11, E 193), or when the "Spectrous Uncircumcised Vegetation" of the Ulro forms "a Sexual Machine: an Virgin Form" (39:24-25, E 186-87) or when Los denounces Vala as "The Sexual Death living on accusation of Sin & Judgment" (64:22, E 215). When Blake speaks of the sexual here, he in fact means the *anti*-sexual (Milton O. Percival points out that the fall into sex is for Blake a fall into chastity²¹). The Sexual Religion is the patriarchal religion of chastity and the repression of sex; that is why it appears in the form of an aged virgin. Blake calls the anti-sexual "Sexual" because he believes that the sexual personality as we know it is the product of repression. The sexual "Garment," or persona, is for Blake put off in the act of sex, in which the two participants momentarily become one. Hence, by engaging in unrepressed sex, we become less "Sexual"; this is why Los can say of Beulah, the realm of sexual consummation, "Humanity knows not of Sex: wherefore are Sexes in Beulah?" (44:33, E 193).

This unrepressed sex is for Blake necessarily polymorphous, not centered upon genitality. Los therefore denounces "Sexual Organization," which is a false organization of the body around genitality: "O worm of sixty win-

ters said Los / Consider Sexual Organization & hide thee in the dust" (30:57-58, E 177). Sexual organization is overcome in embraces which are properly "Cominglings: from the Head even to the Feet; / And not a pompous High Priest entering by a Secret Place" (69:43-44, E 223). Blake's oft-quoted denunciation of the phallic here links the phallic to the patriarchal "Sexual" Religion in which the male hierophant presides over a mystery which is really the hidden and subjugated sexuality of woman.

At first, the Blakean "Sex" may sound like the contemporary "gender": a culturally-defined set of differences, often arbitrary and unjust. However, Blake also seems to believe that beneath this false, culturally-constituted set of differences there is a real and essential system of difference. Blake, as much as the patriarchy he condemns, fears the collapse of sexual difference, an event that he believes will throw humanity into the chaos of Ulro—the hell-realm that Blake associates with hermaphroditism. The separation of male and female becomes part of the eternal artistic labor of Los, with whom Blake is more closely identified in *Jerusalem* than ever before. In order that "Rational Philosophy" and "Mathematic Demonstration" might be removed from the realm of abstraction where they possess the power of religious mystery, Los splits them into gendered forms:

And Los fixes them on his Anvil, incessant his blows:
He fixes them with strong blows. placing the stones
& timbers.
To Create a World of Generation from the World of
Death:
Dividing the Masculine & Feminine: for the
comingling
Of Albions & Luvahs Spectres was Hermaphroditic.
(58: 16-20, E 207)

It is highly significant that Los here is depicted as a "divider." Almost everywhere else in the poem, it is Albion who divides and Los who seeks to unify.²² The maintenance of male and female identities is essential to the world of Generation; sexual ambiguity hints not of a higher world but of a fall into the "hermaphroditic" hell of Ulro.

Jerusalem uses the hermaphroditism trope extensively, and Blake links hermaphroditism directly to the anti-sexual "Sexual" of the Sexual Religion (I will presently deal with the difference between Blakean "hermaphroditism" and "androgyny"):

Albions Emanation which he had hidden in Jealousy
Appeared now in the frowning Chaos prolific upon

²² There is only one other instance where division is used in a positive sense associated with Los: on 91:52, E 252, where Los alters his Spectre "Till he had completely divided him into a separate space." This separation of the Spectre is analogous to the necessary separation of the two genders in Blake's myth, each to its own "separate space."

²¹ Milton O. Percival, *William Blake's Circle of Destiny*, 117.

the Chaos
Reflecting back to Albion in Sexual Reasoning Her-
maphroditic

(29:26-28, E 175)

Albion, like Satan in *Milton*, has become "feminized" by his jealous failure to project his Emanation, which he then internalizes. Without the crucial difference produced by gender, Blake's system collapses into "frowning Chaos prolific upon the Chaos." It is therefore appropriate to see anxiety about gender underlying Los's tirades against the Female Will:

What may Man be? who can tell! but what may Woman
be?
To have power over Man from Cradle to corruptible
Grave.
There is a Throne in every Man, it is the Throne of
God
This woman has claim'd as her own & Man is no more!
Albion is the Tabernacle of Vala & her Temple
And not the Tabernacle & Temple of the Most High
O Albion why wilt thou Create a Female Will?

(30:25-31, E 176)

The female survives, hidden beneath the orthodox surface of modern patriarchal religion, which through repression makes female sexuality seem even more mysterious and secret than the ancient religions of the goddess. A bit later, the same Female Will is indicted for the latest development of Natural Religion, an anti-sexual, mechanistic Deism: "Is this the Female Will O ye lovely Daughters of Albion. To / Converse concerning Weight & Distance in the Wilds of Newton & Locke" (30:39-40, E 177).

Blake can only see any degree of female willfulness as a negative, "hermaphroditic" mingling of genders. However, he does seem to see the apparent contradiction between his ostensibly egalitarian beliefs and a visionary universe that derives its structure from a dualistic hierarchy of gender, in which one gender is central and primary and the other "emanated" and secondary. He briefly makes an attempt at a resolution of this contradiction near the end of chapter 3, in his exploration of the "Eternal States" of the Blakean universe, Ulro, Generation, Beulah and Eden/Eternity, previously charted in detail (and in terms of gender) in *Milton*. The poet mentions that Albion's Sons and Daughters "intermarry in Beulah / For all are Men in Eternity" (71:14-15, E 225). In this otherwise insignificant passage, Blake states outright something that his imagery has long implied: Eden/Eternity, the ultimate fulfillment of the human, is an entirely masculine realm. For the first time, Blake tells us the fate of women in paradise: they may enter, but only as males, leaving all female traits behind in the lower realms. This declaration does seem to indicate that Blake sees the need for some form of female equality in a redeemed, fully human universe. The problems, however,

are fairly obvious: anything feminine or female is implicitly an indicator of the fallen state. Blake possibly has in mind a strategy that Alan Richardson has identified as characteristic of male romantic writers: the attempt to "colonize" the feminine by appropriating traditionally female characteristics as a part of a new "higher" masculine self.²³

One can understand, then, the reluctance of Enitharmon to accept Los's "proposition" at the climax of *Jerusalem*. The most human of Blake's females, and the one most identified with Catherine Blake, Enitharmon has been strangely absent from the poem since her separation from the body of Los in 17:49-55 (E 162). For the second time in the poem, Enitharmon divides away from Los, implying an even deeper rift between male and female: "Two Wills they had; Two Intellects: & not as in times of old" (86:61, E 245). A state which in fact sounds like a condition of equality is lamented by the poet.

Los and Enitharmon begin a game of sexual hide and seek that recalls "The Mental Traveller." Finally, Los speaks his love:

O lovely Enitharmon: I behold thy graceful forms
Moving beside me till intoxicated with the woven labyrinth
Of beauty & perfection my wild fibres shoot in veins
Of blood thro all my nervous limbs. soon overgrown
in roots
I shall be closed from thy sight. sieze therefore in thy
hand
The small fibres as they shoot around me draw out in
pity
And let them run on the winds of thy bosom: I will
fix them
With pulsations. we will divide them into Sons &
Daughters
To live in thy Bosoms translucence as in an eternal
morning

(87:3-11, E 246)

Los is asking Enitharmon to help him control the "fibres" of sexual desire, to convert sexual energy into the "Sons & Daughters" of creative work. This is the offer that Enitharmon accepted at the climax of *The Four Zoas*; to

²³ Alan Richardson, "Romanticism and the Colonization of The Feminine" in Anne K. Mellor, ed., *Romanticism and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) 13-26. It can be demonstrated that Blake has indeed employed Richardson's "colonization" strategy in earlier poems: in *Milton*, for instance, Blake maps a metaphysics that in a traditional fashion defines time as masculine (Los) and space as female (Enitharmon). However, Los declares in 22:17 (E 117) that "both Time & Space obey my will" indicating that in Blake's apocalypse, male time subsumes female space. Again in *Milton*, masculine Time is the redeemer; he is "the mercy of Eternity," (24:72, E 121), while the female's place is vital but subordinate: "And between every two Moments stands a Daughter of Beulah / To feed the Sleepers on their Couches with maternal care." (28:48-49, E 126). The redeeming quality of female space comes into being only as a consequence of the creation of Moments of Time by Los.

assist Los in the creation of redemptive "counterparts" to the minute particulars of the fallen world. This time Enitharmon has a different answer:

No! I will sieze thy Fibres & weave
Them: not as thou wilt but as I will, for I will Create
A round Womb beneath my bosom lest I also be
overwoven
With Love; be thou assured I never will be thy slave
Let Mans delight be love; but Womans delight be Pride
In Eden our loves were the same here they are opposite
I have Loves of my own

(87:12-18, E 246)

Blake allows Enitharmon's voice considerable autonomy, and she speaks well, perhaps even better than the poet realizes. For the first time, one of Blake's women speaks not merely willfully but in a manner akin to a modern feminist polemic; indeed, in a manner akin to Mary Wollstonecraft: "be thou assured I never will be thy slave." When Enitharmon vows to "Create a round Womb" from the fibres of Los, she means that she would "naturalize" the sexual energies to deal with the needs of this world, not Los's ideal world of art. She subsequently gives a rationale for this: "In Eden our loves were the same here they are opposite." She concisely informs Los that the needs of men and women in an unjust world may be quite different. The prior statement of Enitharmon, "Let Mans delight be love; but Womans delight be Pride," echoes Gwendolen's earlier statement of 81:6. Blake begins to sound like the Restoration authors (whom he disliked intensely) who never tired of accusing woman of pride; he never suggests that pride might be woman's understandable response to a situation in which the female's only path to power is through beauty.

Enitharmon is meant to seem perverse in rejecting Los, but she sounds altogether reasonable. Her best arguments are saved for last:

thou hidest Vala
From her these fibres shoot to shut me in a Grave.
You are Albions Victim, he has set his Daughter in your
path

(87:22-24, E 246)

Enitharmon's analysis is superior to that of Los, who thinks he opposes Vala, but in fact practices a covert Natural Religion in the form of sexism. Los is not the foe of patriarchy, but rather, as "Albions victim," he has fallen into its trap: he thinks he will overturn patriarchy by replacing traditional legalistic authority with an authority linked to a principle of masculinity; in fact, this will only perpetuate the abuses of patriarchy in a new guise.

Los attempts to plead his case:

Man cannot unite with Man but by their Emanations

Which stand both Male & Female at the Gates of each
Humanity
How then can I ever again be united as Man with Man
While thou my Emanation refuseth my Fibres of
dominion.
When Souls mingle & join thro all the Fibres of Brotherhood
Can there be any secret joy on Earth greater than this?
(88:10-15, E 246)

Line 11 is key to the argument of those who maintain that Blake in *Jerusalem* is advocating androgyny; I will have more to say about it when I discuss Blake's concept of androgyny. That one very ambiguous line aside, Los is offering Enitharmon a bad bargain. She must receive his "Fibres of dominion," acknowledge his dominance, so that he can join with other men in "Fibres of Brotherhood"—in other words, Lerner's all-male society of the covenant, with women shared out among the brothers.

Enitharmon's response is redolent of Blake's *Europe*: as in that earlier work, the world is portrayed as a female hell, with woman as a demiurge, "This is Womans World" (88:16, E 247). The triumph of the Female Will brings about the final manifestation of Vala as "A terrible indefinite Hermaphroditic form" (89:3, E 248), the ultimate consolidation of the monstrous hermaphrodites of Blake's myth: the Covering Cherub. The Cherub amalgamates Rahab-Tirzah, the Whore of Babylon, and all of the "female-males" and "male-females" who block entry into paradise.

On the heels of this revelation, Blake makes a direct attempt to resolve the contradictions in his sexual myth. This he would do by putting forth a concept of gender as a fallen state, ultimately to be replaced by an androgyny that is to be distinguished from this fallen hermaphroditism. The fall is first described: "The Feminine separates from the Masculine & both from Man, / Ceasing to be His Emanations, Life to Themselves assuming!" (90:1-2, E 249). If "Man" is read as humanity, the statement might be read as a very contemporary formulation of the problem of gender as a reductive division of all that is human into a binary set of characteristics. Blake finds the source of this problem in the appropriation of what he calls "Universal Characteristics" by individuals:

For Los said: When the Individual appropriates Universality
He divides into Male & Female: & when the Male & Female,
Appropriate Individuality, they become an Eternal Death.
Hermaphroditic worshippers of a God of cruelty & law!
(90:52-55, E 250)

This doctrine of Universal Characteristics is an extension of the of States as presented in *Milton*: individuals pass through States, but must avoid total identification with any

single State. To identify with a State is to freeze ourselves into a fixed, immutable Selfhood and to lose touch with our total humanity. Gender is one of these States; to over-identify with a single gender ironically makes us "hermaphroditic": we end up internalizing the sexual Other rather than finding it outside our selves. However, I believe that the "androgyny" that Blake would set against this negative hermaphroditism can be demonstrated to be nothing more than the personification of the familiar androcentric voice of Western literature, that voice which feminist critics have repeatedly accused of representing a masculinist agenda in the guise of an ungended universalism.

Earlier, Los declared "Man cannot unite with Man but by their Emanations / Which stand both Male & Female at the Gates of each Humanity" (88:10-11, *E* 246). Thomas D. Frosch, a champion of Blake as a proponent of androgyny, interprets the lines:

This is a difficult passage and line 11 is capable of supporting contradictory interpretations. Each man might have four gates, for instance, as paradise does, and his emanations might be both "both Male & Female," or themselves androgynous. As I understand the lines, however, the suggestion seems to be that each Edenic Humanity emanates what we might consider to be two sexual persons, a male and a female, at its points of communication with other human forms, as if each Edenic being, then, appeared to others a radically unified couple.²⁴

The difficulty that Frosch has in describing Blake's concept of androgyny is typical of critical attempts to define this elusive proposition.²⁵ Frosch is probably close to the truth in describing the individual in the awakened Edenic Humanity as a "radically unified couple," but it is a couple in which the male has (in Los's words) "dominion" over and in fact *subsumes* the female. At the climax of *Milton*, Ololon is in fact incorporated into Blake-Los-Milton. The subsumption of the female by the male in Blake's poetry has been remarked upon by Alicia Ostriker, while the same motif in Blake's visual art has been noted by Anne K. Mellor.²⁶ The closing plates of *Jerusalem* show this same strategy at work, and Alan Richardson's principle of the

"colonization" of the feminine by male romantic writers again seems to be an entirely appropriate characterization of Blake's narrative.

Los at the climax of the poem never directly resolves his crisis with Enitharmon; instead he turns to confront the Spectre. Spectre and Emanation have been linked since the beginning of the poem; they were the two survivors who escaped Albion's fall in chapter 2, and plate 44 shows them flying side by side into the arms of Los. The effect of this connection is to link the female with that which is most negative in the (male) psyche: fear, anger, vanity, phallocentrism. Los subdues his Spectre in the famous "It is easier to forgive an Enemy than to forgive a Friend" (91:1, *E* 251) speech that occupies the whole of plate 91. Los's victory comes from the renunciation of personal vanity, "In unpitying ruin driving down the pyramids of pride" (91:43, *E* 252). Through the abdication of pride, "Los altered his Spectre" (91:50, *E* 252), and he triumphs over Spectre and Emanation simultaneously.

There is no corresponding scene in which Los deals with the challenge of Enitharmon. After his contest with the Spectre, she reappears, already defeated and lamenting: "The Poets Song draws to its period & Enitharmon is no more" (92:8, *E* 252). The female will be subsumed in the masculine identity of the awakened Albion. Los informs her that "Sexes must vanish & cease / To be, when Albion arises from his dread repose O lovely Enitharmon" (92:13-14, *E* 252), but what he really means is that *woman* (traditionally designated as "the sex") will vanish; there is no indication that Los's masculine characteristics will disappear or in any way be transformed. In Blake's myth, woman resists the end of sexual division because it means a loss of power for her. Since in Blake's redeemed universe the mending of sexual division means the subsumption and containment of the female by the male, it is easy to see why woman would resist.

The last element of woman to vanish is her maternity. Enitharmon wails to her sons Rintrah and Palamabron, "The Mothers love of obedience is forgotten & you seek a Love / Of the pride of dominion" (93:4-5, *E* 253). Enitharmon's comments again seem a disturbingly accurate critique of Blake's own project. The poet will overturn the traditional patriarchal control of woman's sexuality by subsuming that sexuality into a masculine creativity that is "higher" than mere "natural" procreativity. Los, the new patriarch, reassures his Sons: "Fear not my Sons this Waking Death. he is become One with me / Behold him here! We shall not Die! we shall be united in Jesus" (93:18-19, *E* 253).

The rest of the poem deals with the awakening of Albion. Britannia, the reunified form of Jerusalem and Vala, lies across his prone body and attempts to rouse him. She moans in contrition, "In dreams of Chastity & Moral Law I have Murdered Albion! Ah! / . . . behold ye the Jealous Wife" (94:23-26, *E* 254). It is this wail of female self-abnegation

²⁴ Thomas D. Frosch, *The Awakening of Albion*, 174.

²⁵ Camille Paglia in *Sexual Personae* (New York: Viking Press, 1991) 291-92, comments that in *A Blake Dictionary*, S. Foster Damon "makes a distinction between hermaphrodite and androgyne that makes no sense whatever to me. Damon and Percival believe that the sexes are equal in the androgyne but that the female dominates in the hermaphrodite," and she adds a bit later, "The words hermaphrodite and androgyne should be synonymous." In point of fact, any figure in the poetry that seems at all androgynous is labelled hermaphroditic and condemned. The beings described as androgynous, in the positive sense invoked by Damon and Percival, are figured as masculine.

²⁶ Ostriker (see n3) 163; Mellor, "Blake's Portrayal of Women," 151. The two articles, taking similar critical stances toward Blake's sexual politics, appeared in the same issue of *Blake*.

that wakes Albion, at which point

England who is Brittannia enterd Albions bosom re-
joicing,
Rejoicing in his indignation! adoring his wrathful re-
buke.
She who adores not your frowns will only loathe your
smiles

(95:22-24, E 255)

This, alas, is the apotheosis of Blakean woman. Brittannia is subsumed by the male: her entry into "Albion's bosom rejoicing," as depicted on plates 96 and 99,²⁷ implies an incorporation into the male body. Brittannia does not reappear in the poem.

The depiction of a postapocalyptic world in the remainder of *Jerusalem* bears out the earlier pronouncement that in Eden/Eternity "all are Men." The poet hears the "Vision of Albion" speak; the Vision of Albion is, as Blake's faculty of "Vision" has always been since the *Songs of Innocence*, an irreducibly masculine ability to organize perception. The Vision of Albion is identified with "The Universal Father" (97:6, E 256): patriarchy is not wiped out; rather, authority has been apportioned "universally" among the male members of a brotherhood; it is the final stage in Lerner's developmental model of patriarchal history.

There is, however, a hint of the persistence of the female at the poem's conclusion:

All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth &
Stone. all
Human Forms identified, living going forth & return-
ing wearied
Into the Planetary lives of Years Months Days & Hours
reposing
And then Awakening into his Bosom in the Life of Im-
mortality.

And I Heard the Name of their Emanations they are
named Jerusalem

(99:1-5, E 258-59)

It seems fitting that, in the very last line of the epic that the poet intended to be his greatest statement, Blake's proliferating myth should come to rest upon its central contradiction, a contradiction that remains unresolved: a system that wishes to unify and equalize all persons is founded upon the principle of the dominance of a masculine subject over an emanated and secondary female object.

²⁷ Mellor, "Blake's Portrayal of Women," 151-52, sees subsumption at work in Plate 99 in the masculine characteristics of the body of Jerusalem. I see the Jerusalem-figure as female, and attribute its masculine musculature to Blake's problematic draftsmanship and his too-assiduous copying of Michelangelo, but I see a clearer suggestion of subsumption in the way that Albion/Jehovah/Urizen gathers Jerusalem in, coupled with her disappearance from the poetry.

R E V I E W

Veils, Infinity, a Roof, and "One thought" in Contemporary Art

A Note on Four Exhibitions

BY D. W. DÖRRBECKER

At the brink of the new millennium, Blake still hasn't found that large readership in the German-speaking countries which Henry Crabb Robinson had expected to grow so rapidly when drafting the essay he contributed to the *Vaterländisches Museum* in 1811. Therefore, it comes as a surprise to find that over the past few years Blake's works have inspired a series of exhibitions by contemporary artists in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland which may warrant a brief report.

Supposedly, only few of the visitors who came to see Verena Immenhauser's installation "Beneath the Veil of Vala" at the Berner Galerie in 1988 were fully aware of the Swiss artist's understanding of the symbol of Vala's veil/vale and its complex meaning in the poetry and art of William Blake. And yet, anybody ready to engage with the aesthetic experience offered by that installation must have felt the urge to question the relationship between the veil and the veiled, center and circumference, form and formlessness, the cycle of natural growth and decay (reigning in Vala's vale) and the ideas of stability and of eternity (governing a realm that lies beyond it). Employing soft transparent wrapping foils, Immenhauser created an environment inside the small gallery space which at first sight seemed devoid both of calculated form and all specific content. However, the movements of the visitors quite literally breathed life into the room which was filled with draped "veils" (illus. 1) hanging from the ceiling and hiding the measured dimensions of the walls. The softly whispering and ever-changing folds of the thin and shining plastic veils remained entirely abstract in shape, but functioned as an appropriate representation of Vala's veil of nature. Their rippling-rustling texture lured the sense of touch and the ear, while their utter refusal of all representational concreteness, the complete lack of linear (and optical) solidity, and their shimmering, silvery reflections, irritated and fascinated the eye.

In a sense, this finely tuned metaphor of Vala's art of seduction seemed related to Marcel Duchamp's famous "spider-web" installation for the Surrealist exhibition at 451 Madison Avenue in 1942. But it also anticipated such "physical sculptures" as the "Bodycheck" contributed by Flatz to the documenta IX in 1992, or the labyrinth of measured time made from hundreds of clocks, hanging folding rules,