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NEWSLETTER

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BETSY BOWDEN's research interests extend from obscene puns in medieval Latin, published in Medievalia et Humanistica, to the world's first Ph. D. dissertation on the words and music of Bob Dylan. She now teaches mostly folklore in the English Department at Pennsylvania State University.

WAYNE GLAUSSE R, Assistant Professor of English at the College of William and Mary, works in nineteenth-century British and American literature.

ROBERT STERNBACH teaches English at Boston University. He is currently working on a study of the development of Coleridge's poetry.

LESLE I TANNENBAUM is an Assistant Professor of English at Ohio State University. He is author of articles on Blake, Byron and Mary Shelley. His book, The Great Code of Art: Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies, will be published by Princeton University Press.

CONTRIBUTORS
THE ARTISTIC AND INTERPRETIVE CONTEXT OF BLAKE'S "CANTERBURY PILGRIMS"

BETSY BOWDEN

I

n the past decade, three critics have discussed the painting itself of "Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," along with Blake's commentary on it in the Descriptive Catalogue to his 1809 Exhibition. But Blake, though timeless as ever, was working not in a vacuum but in a historical context of commentary on and illustrations to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

A look at the artistic tradition Blake could have known will show that he fit the Canterbury pilgrims into his own cosmology with only slight changes from earlier artists' representations. Although he tells in words the Blakean meanings of many of the pilgrims, he portrays only two of them as unmistakable symbols or types: he renders the Wife of Bath as Whore of Babylon; and he shows the Parson as the Good Old Man, like the one dying in his illustrations to Robert Blair's Grave. Otherwise, to picture the pilgrims as "physiognomies or lineaments of universal human life," Blake principally does what artists before him had done: he goes straight to Chaucer's poem.

Because Chaucer's General Prologue pictures the pilgrims so minutely, artist-to-artist influences are hard to pin down. The Merchant sports a tall hat and forked beard in the fifteenth-century Ellesmere manuscript, in the woodcut of Thynne's 1532 edition, in the engraving of Urry's 1721 edition, in Blake's painting. Blake must have seen one of these prototypes? No--"A Marchant was ther with a forked berd . . . . And on his hed a Flaundrish bever hat." And neither can Blake's portrait of Chaucer indicate a source, despite its similarity to earlier portraits. Chaucer's image had been passed on as if through a four-century Xerox machine, thanks mostly to a life portrait in the margin of his pupil Thomas Hoccleve's De Regimine Principum, now Harl. MS 4866. Blake could have examined this manuscript itself in the British Museum at Montagu House, or worked from one of the scores of paintings and engravings that evolved from it.

Clearly, however, Blake goes beyond any of his sources. He portrays the pilgrims all together on horseback, as no one before him had; and he positions them to show particular relationships in his own Blakean cosmos. Even a glance at his picture (illus. 1) suggests Blake's interest in binary symmetry and the pairing of characters. For example, the Parson and Pardoner stand in defiant contrast, face to face, like Good and Evil, with the cruciform Host midway between. The Wife of Bath and Prioress also form a symmetrical pair, though not such a direct contrast, as they ride midway in back and front halves of the procession. Blake also pairs the Knight and Squire who head the procession and the Poet and Philosopher who end it. The picture is balanced artistically, both in structure and in details. And the Descriptive Catalogue suggests how such visual symmetry often indicates Blake's spiritual interpretation of each pilgrim. But, how often? Can a boundary be drawn between Blake's visual unity as an artist and his symbolic unity as a poet-philosopher?
To interpret Blake's interpretation, I will look at precisely how he has changed each pilgrim away from artistic tradition and, in several cases, away from the details of Chaucer's poem. Blake's Descriptive Catalogue commentary, too, differs in small but significant ways from previous Chaucer criticism. His does seem to share one problem with the other, though: a continual use of vague, abstract terms like "grand" and "first-rate" and "powerful," non-descriptive non-individualized words applied to general classes of mankind by the man who said, "To Generalize is to be an Idiot." Blake, I will suggest, is purposely teasing the reader with the inaccuracy and ambiguity inherent in such abstract language, and thus forcing his audience to look instead at the picture.

To analyze the picture, to generalize will sometimes be necessary. I will discuss in general earlier literary interpretations of Canterbury Tales, and in general the group portraits of Canterbury pilgrims which Blake could have seen in London or Felpham before 1809. Then I will discuss in particular each figure in Blake's procession and its relationship to Blake's text, to Chaucer's poem, to earlier artists' portrayals of that character, and to other figures in the procession. (I will mention only in passing the picture's background—the rising sun, Gothic arches, and so on—as to keep bounds on this article.) And I will suggest, also, how Blake uses the binary symmetry of the picture to convey a spiritual meaning like that he illuminates elsewhere. In Canterbury Pilgrims, the types of mankind do not stand in static one-to-one binary relationships. Within the frozen time and space of this picture, a constant cell-like bisection and re-bisection of types goes on, such that a given figure may be the spectre of one character, the complementary completing half of another, and the contrary of a third.

No literary critic before Blake had seen the pilgrims in complicated binary relationships. But what at first seems very Blakean about his Descriptive Catalogue commentary—that the pilgrims represent external types that exist in all ages—was a standard interpretation in the eighteenth century. The earliest and most eloquent expression came from John Dryden. Blake says:

"Chaucer follow'd Nature every where; but was never so bold to go beyond her. . . . He has taken into the Compass of his Canterbury Tales the various Manners and Humours (as we now call them) of the whole English Nation, in his Age. Not a single Character has escap'd him. All his Pilgrims are severally distinguish'd from each other; and not only in their Inclinations, but in their very Physiognomies and Persons. . . . Some of his Persons are Vicious, and some Vertuous; some are unlearn'd, or (as Chaucer calls them) Lewd, and some are Learn'd. Even the Ribaldry of the Low Characters is different: The Reeve, the Miller, and the Cook, are several Men, and distinguish'd from each other, as much as the mincing Lady Prioress, and the broad-speaking gap-tooth'd Wife of Bath . . . . We have our Fore-fathers and Great Grand-dames all before us, as they were in Chaucer's Days; their general Characters are still remaining in Mankind, and even in England, though they are call'd by other Names than those of Monake, and Prynge, and Chanons, and Lady Abbesses, and Nuns: For Mankind is ever the same, and nothing lost out of Nature, though every thing is alter'd.

Dryden's essay would have suggested to Blake not only the constancy of the types of mankind but also several binary contrasts among Chaucer's pilgrims: vice and virtue, lewd and learned, Wife of Bath and Prioress.

Other eighteenth-century commentators also saw the Canterbury pilgrims as enduring types of mankind. As a sampling, George Ogle in 1739 paraphrases Dryden at great length, suggesting an Examination of the various Tempers and Manners of Mankind, as We find them more expressly delineated in the ampler Designs of the Tales these Persons are made to relate. . . . I shall venture . . . to rank our Chaucer with . . . the best Drawers of Characters. 6

Sir John Hawkins in 1776 says that Chaucer
has feigned an assemblage of persons of different ranks, the most various and artful that can be imagined, and with an amazing propriety has made each of them the type of a peculiar character.  

In 1789, Philip Neve says of the General Prologue, Nor is it wonderful that a mind, possessing much native humour, and enriched by long experience and extensive information, should exhibit characters such as are there to be found, with striking resemblance to nature and living manners.  

Blake further declares that "Visions of these eternal principles or characters of human life appear to poets, in all ages" (E 527). Neither Dryden nor these minor writers specifically suggests, as does Blake, that "nature and living manners" extend backward as well as forward in time. In the eighteenth century, only Blake compares Chaucer's characters to Antique Statues and Grecian gods and the Cherubim of Phoenixia (E 527). But Blake's twist is not dramatically original. Chaucer himself, like many medieval writers, thought in terms of typology—of classical parallels to Christian ideas, of Old Testament parallels to New Testament scenes, of symbolic similarities that transcend historical rationality. For instance, Chaucer calls the Franklin "Epicures owen sone" (v. 338), and adds "Seint Julian he was in his contree" (v. 342). To associations generated by mention of the supposedly luxury-loving pagan philosopher and of the patron saint of hospitality. Blake adds that the Franklin is "the genius of eating and drinking, the Bacchus" (E 527).

In his Descriptive Catalogue pages, then, Blake combines Dryden's precedent with the common medieval literary technique of regarding one character or incident as the type of another. To these ideas Blake adds his own style of moralizing, particularly familiar from All Religion are One and from plate 11 of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: "Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast" (E 37). Blake vehemently believes that the pilgrims represent "eternal attributes, or divine names, which . . . ought to be the servants, and not the masters of man, or of society" (E 527). These moralizing passages tell what Blake and Chaucer did not do. Another negative tangent takes up the last third of the commentary (E 529-31), as Blake venomously sets out to "shew the stupidity of this class of men" (E 529)—of Cromek and Stothard, mostly, who stole his idea for the painting. Blake attacks them to again exclaim what he and Chaucer did not do.

Blake's anger at Robert Cromek and Thomas Stothard seems justified, historically. Blake was the first artist to conceive of painting the pilgrims all together on horseback, and Blake showed Cromek the sketch of his idea, and Stothard's painting of the pilgrimage was first to be finished. That painting cannot be considered a prototype for Blake's, either chronologically or emotionally. But an earlier picture of Stothard's, from the days of the two men's friendship, does have its place in the tradition of Chaucerian illustration that Blake could have known.

In 1782-83, Edinburgh printer John Bell put out 109 pocket-sized volumes of British Poets, including fourteen volumes of Chaucer. An engraved portrait of Chaucer prefaces the first volume; each of the first thirteen volumes features as frontispiece a scene from a Tale or a poem; the fourteenth frontispiece shows the "Pilgrimage to Canterbury," in which the Wife of Bath, Monk, Friar, and Squire ride straight toward the observer (illus. 2). Thomas Stothard designed all these frontispieces, and the young Blake engraved the thirteenth one, "Sampson yhad experience" (illus. 3).

In Stothard's "Pilgrimage to Canterbury" (illus. 2), which Blake must have seen, the Wife flirts blatantly with all three men. Stothard toned down his conception of the Wife during the next quarter century, for in his painting she flirts only with the two clergymen, and keeps her hands to herself. Blake, in contrast, ignores Chaucer's hints at such a grouping. His Wife/Whore of Bath/Babylon lifts her chalice, laughs, and spreads her legs toward the observer of the picture, with a sideways glance toward the back of the Parson, the one man she cannot seduce.

Stothard's conceptions of these four characters—a particular detail being the Wife's pointed hat—seem derived from the engravings in Urry's 1721 edition of Chaucer. Before discussing that key edition in the artistic tradition, let me describe the other instances of group pictures of Canterbury pilgrims: in Royal MS 18 D 2, in Caxton's fifteenth-century Chaucer edition, and in a drawing by J. H. Mortimer. There is no certainty, as there is for Bell's and Urry's editions, that Blake saw these three works. The first two are not important because the pilgrims in them are not individualized; but the Mortimer drawing, if Blake saw it, might well have influenced his conception.

In a fifteenth-century manuscript of John Lydgate's Siege of Thebes, a sequel to his master Chaucer's work wherein Lydgate tells a tale on the return trip from Canterbury, a half-page illustration shows Lydgate and five other pilgrims. The riders talk and gesture; one smacks his horse as it reaches for a mouthful of grass. The walls, cathedral, and hills of Canterbury fill the background.

Could Blake have examined this Lydgate manuscript, had he wished to do research outside his imagination before painting the pilgrimage? Yes. As Royal MS 18 D 2, it came to the British Museum

in 1757, when George II handed over to the new institution the entire royal library. Stothard and Blake could have examined this and other manuscripts—including Harl. MS 4866, with Chaucer's oft-copied life portrait, which had come as part of the original bequests by which the British Museum was founded. Authorized by Act of Parliament in 1753, the British Museum opened to the public on 15 January 1759, at Montagu House, Bloomsbury. Until 1808, for most people, visiting the Museum meant applying several weeks in advance, returning to pick up a ticket for a certain time, and again returning to be ushered through in a group. Then the policy was changed to allow immediate admission to "any person of decent appearance." But all along, artists had preferential treatment. In 1808, for example, the general public could tour the collections only four days a week; Fridays were reserved for artists.13

A later picture of the pilgrims shows them around a table, not on horseback. William Caxton produced the first printed edition of *Canterbury Tales*. His second edition, in 1483(?), includes twenty-four illustrations: twenty-three pilgrims, each beside his Tale, plus a group portrait at the frontispiece. The two were made to do duty twice over, a common custom with early printers. Thus the 'poor parson' and the 'doctor of physic,' the 'summour' and the 'Franklin,' are represented by the same cuts; while the large illustration depicting the pilgrims sitting at supper at a round table does duty in some later publications for the Assembly of the Gods.14 Caxton's edition, never numerous, was rare by Blake's time. Only one full copy survives today, at St. John's College, Oxford.15

Another group picture is Mortimer's. Some time before his death in 1779, for a projected edition of the *Tales*, J. H. Mortimer made eight drawings not of the pilgrims but of characters in the tales—January and May, the Three Gamblers and Time, and so on. The ninth in the series might well have inspired Blake, for its subject is "Departure of the Canterbury Pilgrims" (illus. 4). On 12 February 1787, J. R. Smith published the drawings, engraved by J. K. Sherwin, E. Williams, William Sharp, and Jacob Hogg. They were reproduced in that belies Chaucer's description of him, in a scene can be identified as exact miniatures. The Miller leads the procession, as in Stothard's later painting—"A bagpipe wele coude he blowe and soune, / And therewithall he brought us out of toune" (vv. 567-68). Then follow the Squire, the robed Knight, the Squire's Yeoman, the Parson, the Monk, the rail-thin Clerk, and probably the Nun's Priest. Side by side, set apart from the others, ride the Prioress and the Wife of Bath. Behind them, inexplicably but unmistakably, gallops Sir Thopas, his lance half-lowered to charge. The rest of the figures are too small to identify, even compared with the medallions.

That charmingly absurd insertion of Sir Thopas among the pilgrims can symbolize the total irresponsibility with which John Urry put together this 1721 edition. He includes all spurious works ever attributed to Chaucer, and alters for the worse all real ones. Urry apparently had the editing task thrust upon him and went at it without enthusiasm, for he himself apologizes for the badness of the text: "Thou wilt, may be, not thank me for what I have done, and complain of me for having left so much undone. . . if thou art not yet an Editor, I beg truce of thee till thou art one, before thou censurest my Endeavours." This apology is quoted by Timothy Thomas, who helped finish the edition after Urry's sudden death in 1714/15. Thomas specifies one major task left undone: Urry had set out to regularize Chaucer's grammar and meter after an idiosyncratic scheme of his own, and had intended to bracket his frequent interpolations, but never did. Thomas says in this same Preface that Urry was "perswaded that Chaucer made [his verses] exact Metre, and therefore he proposed in this Edition to restore him (to use his own Expression) to his feet again."

"The strange licence, in which Mr. Urry appears to have indulged himself . . . has made the text of Chaucer in his Edition by far the worst that was
ever published," says Thomas Tyrwhitt, Chaucer's next editor (I, xiii). Modern scholars agree that Urry's text is "quite the worst ever issued" (Spurgeon, I, cxxi). But at least three threads tie it to Blake: he certainly used the book, at least in Hayley's library; Blake the artist might have appreciated the illustrator's exact delineation and character-by-character discrimination, though not his romanticized drawing style; and Blake [the, as it were, starving artist] might have appreciated this edition's easy availability and low price in second-hand bookstalls, especially after Tyrwhitt's 1775 edition superseded its text.

We have no records from second-hand bookstalls, of course. But Urry's edition is still plentiful today, even in American libraries. Back in 1721, the publishers issued such a numerous first edition that twelve years later Urry's executor was complaining that he still had copies "upon hand." Urry's estate, and therefore the proceeds of the edition, had been divided three ways, among that executor, and a bookseller, and the college of Christ Church, Oxford. "The College authorities had adopted a simple and effective method of disposing of theirs, which was to oblige all scholars upon entrance to buy a copy. The picture of the young fox-hunting squires of Christ Church being forced willy-nilly to carry off their Chaucer folios is a delightful one; and it may perhaps account for the number of copies of Urry's Chaucer to be found in the old country houses of England" (Spurgeon, I, cxx-cxxi).

Did Blake own or use a copy of Urry's elaborately illustrated edition, while he painted the "Canterbury Pilgrims"? Kiralis rejects the possibility, largely on the grounds that Blake would not have owned a corrupt text (p. 169). But Blake was not a well-to-do, modern, conscientious literary scholar. And Blake's use of Urry's text would help explain one of the Descriptive Catalogue's minor mysteries: where does Blake find his Chaucer quotations? They match up with no known edition of Chaucer. As a later editor, Speght, in his preface credits the information about the Tabard, which Blake credits to Thynne, in his preface credits Thynne's son Francis with proposing that this 1602 edition include a glossary, and for helping prepare it. The information about the Tabard, which Blake credits to Thynne, is printed in Speght's glossary with no mention of father or son Thynne. The same information is quoted and credited to Speght by Thynne, 1532: syt on an horse . . . portray . . . lowly, and servysable. Stowe, 1561: sit on an horse . . . portraie . . . lowlie and servysable. Speght, 1602: sitte on a horse . . . pourtraie . . . lowly, and servysable.

Kiralis shows in detail (pp. 169-74) that Blake's quotations in the Descriptive Catalogue come from no known edition of Chaucer. As a sampling, compare a few phrases from the Squire's description:

Thynne, 1532: syt on an horse . . . portray . . . lowly and servysable
Stowe, 1561: sit on an horse . . . portraie . . . lowlie and servysable
Speght, 1602: sitte on a horse . . . pourtraie . . . lowly, and servysable

Urry, 1721: sit an hors . . . portraie . . . lowly, and servysable
Tyrwhitt, 1775: sitte on hors . . . pourtraie . . . lowly, and servysable
Blake, 1809: sit a horse . . . pourtray . . . and meek, and serviceable

Meek? Clearly Blake feels no responsibility to reproduce exactly whichever text of Chaucer he is quoting from (as, in his Job illustrations, he quotes from no known edition of the Bible). Kiralis settles on Tyrwhitt's as Blake's most likely text. He disagrees with Nurmi and Bentley that Blake probably owned Speght. I would propose in turn that Urry's corrupt but illustrated and presumably inexpensive text is just as likely. Blake then even has a motive for reworking the text: knowing he has before him the sense but not the exact words of Chaucer, he feels free to delineate that sense more clearly.

Judging from these phrases about the Squire chosen at random, though, Blake seems not to care about Chaucer's exact sense so much as about making the words tell his own Blakean meaning. Why substitute "and meek" for "lowly"? So the reader will not confuse social rank with personality, presumably. But why "meek"? Why not "humble" or another term that fits the meter? "Meek" suggests a lamb. A lamb suggests the Christ of Revelation. The Squire is the son of the Knight. So . . . meek as a lamb, Lamb of God. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost--the first three characters in Blake's procession. The Knight's sullen black dog, present neither in poem nor tradition, as the repressive Holy Spirit of institutionalized Christianity. The front half of the procession as repressed Heaven; the back half as the Hell of energy, both creative and destructive. Thus the last three characters must be the Unholy Trinity of unrepressed energy--Chaucer as Poet, Clerk as Philosopher . . . and that shifty-eyed Reeve? Rich, by mismanaging the estate of his adolescent lord? A Haldeman, rather than a Hitler, of destructive energy? How can he fit into the symbolism? Intuitive leaps to interpretation have their limits, unfortunately. Despite what Blake would have preferred, let me amass some cold hard facts as ballast, before jumping to conclusions.


The Pardoner, from the Ellesmere manuscript (late fifteenth century). Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, Ca. Actual size, 52mm x 65mm.
The bulk of the artistic tradition that Blake could have known can be traced within the textual history of Chaucer's works. In all but one instance, each artist who undertook individual portraits of the pilgrims had illustrated the *Canterbury Tales* by picturing each pilgrim next to either his verses in the General Prologue or his Tale. That one exception is a series of pilgrim portraits by James Jefferson, who was born in 1751, at age 23 won a Royal Academy gold medal for one of his drawings styled after Mortimer and Barry, and died of a cold at age 33. He executed "A series of 24 sepias and wash drawings [ea. 14-1/2" x 11"] illustrating Chaucer's Pilgrims" (Spurgeon, I, 458-59). Since Jefferson did eleven public exhibitions in London, 1773-83, Blake might perhaps have examined these portraits a quarter century before he began his own.22

Besides these unpublished and now-lost drawings, and besides Caxton's edition whose woodcuts were re-used to illustrate Thynne's edition, three printed editions and the Ellesmere manuscript make up the whole rest of the artistic tradition that Blake might have known as he painted "Canterbury Pilgrims." Thus, a brief orientation in "Chauceriana."

Of the sixty-six manuscripts of *Canterbury Tales* now extant, only two picture the pilgrims: Cambridge MS Gg 4 27,23 and the Ellesmere. Then, William Caxton in about 1477 first put Chaucer into print. His second edition (1483) adds works other than the *Tales*, and the first set of woodblock prints. His same woodblocks, noticeably worn, are re-used for the next major edition of Chaucer, William Thynne's in 1532. In 1561, John Stowe's new edition is illustrated with a different set of woodblocks. Thomas Speght in 1598 produced the last edition of Chaucer to be set in black-letter type, its only illustrations a half-page engraving of a knight and a full-page frontispiece, the "first engraved portrait of Chaucer.24" framed by his arms and "Progenie." Over a century passed; the next edition was Urry's in 1721, and finally Tyrwhitt's in 1775, without illustrations except in those fancy few that included plates by Mortimer.

Spurgeon gives a brief chatty account (I, cxv-cxviii) and Hammond a factual survey (pp. 114-30 and 202-11) of these pre-Victorian editions. Each major editor's work was rearranged, re-edited, reprinted, plagiarized—"but such details are not vital to the history of illustration. The following four items, all but the last now available in facsimile, constitute nearly the whole artistic tradition of *Canterbury* pilgrims before Blake: Ellesmere manuscript (late fifteenth century), Thynne's edition (1532), Stowe's edition (1561), and Urry's edition (1721).

In London, the two sixteenth-century editions were presumably obtainable, had Blake wished to examine their illustrations. He certainly examined Urry's. And, only a few years before Blake began his painting, the Ellesmere itself had arrived in London. The Duke of Bridgewater owned the manuscript then. In 1802, supervised by Rev. Henry John Todd, the work traveled from Ashridge House to Bridgewater House, London, for rebinding. It stayed in London with the Duke and his heirs until the Huntington Library bought it in 1917.25 The equestrian portrait of Chaucer was first reproduced in 1809,26 the pilgrims years later. But it seems safe to assume that the Duke would permit artists, besides the one in 1809, to examine his famous manuscript, and that Blake might have done so.

The Ellesmere positions each pilgrim to his Tale—all twenty-three tale-telling pilgrims, including Chaucer. Thynne's 1532 edition uses fifteen woodcuts to portray twenty of those pilgrims, excluding Chaucer. Stowe in 1561 follows a different plan, placing each pilgrim beside his description in the General Prologue. Thus he eliminates Chaucer and the Canon's Yeoman (who tell tales but do not appear in the General Prologue) and adds Squire's Yeoman, Haberdasher, and Plowman (who tell no tales) for a total of twenty-two pilgrims from nineteen woodblocks.

The artist for Urry's edition—perhaps George Vertue, whose name is on Chaucer's portrait—has engraved twenty-six half-page medallions of the pilgrims, including Chaucer (illus. 6). Urry prints all twenty-three Tales, plus the spurious Plowman's Tale; and he assigns the spurious "Coke's Tale of Gamelyn" to the Squire's Yeoman.27 The twenty-sixth medallion shows a knight in armor, jousting, somewhat resembling the one engraved illustration to Speght's 1598 edition. "N.B. The following [sic] cut should have been placed before the Rhime of Sir Thopaz," explains its caption, from its final resting-place on the Contents page.

Urry's artist tends to portray each pilgrim in realistic detail, usually in accord with Chaucer's text. But all, even the slovenly Cook, are consistently pleasant-faced, prettified, inoffensive. The two sixteenth-century editions, using more awkward woodblocks, discriminate less among characters. For instance, Stowe makes a woodcut do double duty as Doctor of Physick and Parson. Such haphazard indistinguishability would presumably have displeased Blake, who in picture and commentary and cosmology makes the two types quite different.

Blake, however, would probably have appreciated all but a few of the Ellesmere portraits, which were executed by three or four different artists. Each of the more spirited Ellesmere portraits exactly illustrates the vivid details in Chaucer's description of him, and thereby conveys the character traits Chaucer saw. For instance, all five portrayed Pardoner do have long, stringy, blond hair, as Chaucer describes. But only the Ellesmere Pardoner (illus. 7) wears also a "vernicle . . . sewed upon his cappe" (v. 686), so that its face eerily echoes

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his. And only the Ellesmere Pardoner and Blake's carry the "cros of laton ful of stones" (v. 701), which Blake uses as artistic focal point and symbol of religious repression, poised over the horse's arched straining neck in the center of the front-rank cluster of clergy. But, there is no proof that Blake ever examined the Ellesmere. And I see no details in the "Canterbury Pilgrims" that must have come from the Ellesmere or from anyplace else but the combination of Chaucer's poem and Urry's illustrations and Blake's imagination.

Nevertheless, a comparison of each of Blake's pilgrims with all four prototypes will help define what of each characterization is idiosyncratic to Blake and what of it has occurred to other artists interpreting the same Chaucerian passage. To start, the Squire leads the procession on the rearing steed with which Blake and the Urry and Ellesmere artists all interpret "We coude he sitte on hors" (v. 94). All three artists also reproduce the curlylocks and wide-sleeved flowered tunic that Chaucer describes. Blake adds the round baby face, the fuzz of a mustache, and the plumed hat.

The two woodcut Squires wear plumes also, however, and wear plenty of gewgaws besides. They are, in a word, fops. Thynne's Squire particularly seems a caricature, resembling perhaps Tweedledum, or the Duchess in drag (illus. 8). Thus, when Blake in the Descriptive Catalogue snaps, "Was this a fop?" (E 529), he is attacking not only Cromek's prospectus to Stothard's rival painting, but also an interpretation long established in picture and in word.

To deny the Squire's foppishness, Blake quotes the same lines that could just as validly have proven that the Squire is a mindless, subservient clotheshorse (he can sing, dance, joust, and he "carf before his fader at the table," v. 100). And Blake conveniently ignores other lines, such as Chaucer's satiric jabs at the Squire as a "hoo't" lover. He replaces Chaucer's picturable details with verbal abstractions: "greater perfection," "first rate," "true grandeur," "unaffected simplicity" (E 524). A reader familiar with Chaucerian interpretation of the time would wonder at Blake's abstracted one-sided praise for Chaucer's ironically portrayed complex character, and would thereby look to the picture to see what Blake means.

There, he would notice symmetrical pairs—Knight and Squire at the front of the procession, Chaucer and Clerk at the rear—and the facial similarity of Squire and Clerk. But the Clerk's inappropriately chubby face is framed in long straight hair and square hat, while the Squire's curly locks are topped by awkwardly perched plumes that echo the shapes of birds, particularly of those two nuzzling beak-to-beak on the Tabard archway. And just above them, above the Gothic spires and the Wife's elaborate headdress, swoops a bird that Erdman would see as "an ironic negation of its own hopeful potential, not simply an evil force"—illuminated Blake (Anchor Doubleday, 1974), pp. 19-20. This bird also visually evokes the dove of the Holy Spirit in the standard medieval representation of Christ's baptism, as in Blake's rendering of that scene in his later series: down through opening clouds plunges just such a bird, along with rays of light (like those above the Squire's head here) and God's booming voice of approval. God is pleased with his beloved son, who has now ceased to follow his own inspiration and has submitted to his Father's authority. I would suggest that the Biblical scene evoked by Blake's Squire, as visually linked by background details, would be a spiritually ambivalent one for Blake: a moment of second-hand enlightenment.

And Blake offers the reader no easy resolution to this visual ambivalence: in the Catalogue he describes the Squire only with abstractions and then with the term "Apollo" (E 527), the beautiful unconquerable sun-god who is shown being overthrown in Blake's fourth illustration to Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (ca. 1808). Modern mythologists regard Apollo and Christ as two variants of the dying-and-resurrected fertility deity; Blake here interprets Chaucer to suggest a similar connection.

Neither the appearance nor the description of the Squire makes him a negative force, nor a purely positive one. His role as obedient son to a repressive Trinity becomes clearer in comparison to the other figures in the procession—though never so clear as to lack the ambiguity inherent in all but a few of these "eternal principles or characters of human life" (E 527). The discrepancy between visually suggested spiritual ambivalence and abstract verbal praise becomes greater in regard to the Squire's father, the Knight.

Chaucer carefully describes the Knight's appearance and "arrate":

His hors was good, but he ne was nat gaie. Of fustian he wered a gipon, Alle besmotred with his habergeon (vv. 74-76)

From the glossary in any edition available to him, Blake could have learned that Chaucer's Knight wore a short doublet of cotton cloth, and a partial coat of mail. No previous illustrator had exactly followed Chaucer either, though. Mortimer's elegantly attired Knight wears no chain mail (illus. 4). The Ellesmere Knight's robe, long droopy shoes, high-piled turban, and rich but practical tuck are so similar to those on Urry's Knight that it seems possible that Urry's artist in 1721 worked from the Ellesmere. If either robed Knight wears chain mail, it remains hidden under his gipon. But Blake was not the first to give the Knight armor plating. The two woodcut Knights, as well as the only illustration to Speght's 1598 edition, all go contrary to Chaucer's insistence that "he ne was nat gaie." All three sixteenth-century Knights and their horses wear full armor plating and helmets with flamboyant plumage, as does the unprecedented Sir Thopas in Urry's edition. Rather than Chaucer's Knight in particular, these artists rendered the popular notion of a knight. But compared to Blake's armored figures elsewhere—the Ghost of a Flea, the soldiers around the Whore of Babylon in the Bible series, the Satanic "Fire" in Gates of Paradise, the Warrior in The Grave, and so on—Blake's Knight with his segmented armor plating seems not merely unperturbed, but also sinister.
Also, like Mortimer's Knight, he wears many layers of clothing: a chain-mail headpiece (which resembles, for instance, the scaley Rintra of *Europe*, pl. 5), a necklace and medallion (with cross and equestrian figure), a uselessly swishing cape, a sash with another medallion, a chain-mail jacket, a gathered shirt, and plate-armor trousers. By outfitting his Knight so elaborately, Blake goes contrary to Chaucer's description, to the one prototype he saw for sure (Urry's), and to his own commentary—"without ostentation," "unaffected simplicity" (E 524). And if Blake is so tricky about clothing, is he straightforward when he praises the Knight as a "true Hero, a good, great, and wise man... that species of character which in every age stands as the guardian of man against the oppressor" (E 524)? I would suggest that the Knight, as an eternal type, takes it upon himself to define man's oppressor. And with the rules and trappings of chivalry, he guards against forces that man—if left to his own inspiration—might embrace rather than fear. Like his son, then, the Knight in the picture is spiritually ambivalent, neither clearly good nor clearly evil.

The Host "directs them to the Knight as the person who would be likely to commence their task of each telling a tale" (E 523). He gestures toward the Knight, whose backward-gesturing hand mirrors the Host's—"their fingertips at a level, as if strung together. The procession, in fact, features a series of prominent hands. The Knight and Chaucer, at beginning and end, clutch reins to breasts with left hands. But the Poet holds in his right hand a rosary, as tradition dictates for Chaucer portraits, whereas the Knight makes the open-palmed gesture that seems to pull the Host toward him. Next in line, the Prioress' tiny and spidery right hand is writ large as the Pardoner's huge, bejewelled, writhing, clutching hand. The Host's armspread bisects the picture. His left hand presents the Knight; his right hand presents the Parson, who will be the last pilgrim to tell a tale. The Parson's hand rests placidly on his knee. The Wife of Bath, with two fingers extended, delicately clutches her chalice of evil. The Cook's spidery right hand steadies his mug. And the positioning of Chaucer's hands, as I will show, are an iconographic attribute of the poet in a long artistic tradition.

The third pilgrim in line is the Squire's Yeoman. Chaucer lists the implements he carries: a "mighty bowe," sheaf of arrows, arm-guard, sword and buckler, dagger, St. Christopher medal, horn, and green belt to match his coat and hood (vv. 103-16). He tells no tale, so is not pictured in the Ellesmere nor in Thynne's edition. In Urry's edition, the tight-lipped Yeoman carries every weapon specified. In Stowe's 1561 edition he carries only bow and arrows, and wears a strapped cap. Both prototypes are beardless. Blake has added the whiskers, the huge soft hypnotic eyes (he is the only pilgrim who looks directly out of the picture at the observer), and the dark "broune visage" (v. 109). The Squire's Yeoman in Blake's conception seems seductively Satanic. But the face in the procession very similar to his is Chaucer's; the Poet's; again, spiritual ambivalence remains unresolved.

Next in line come the three priests. Only the one Nun's Priest had been portrayed before, in the Ellesmere and in Urry. Both those are young and beardless; whereas Blake portrays a middle-aged, fat, smug priest, a glaring dark-bearded one, and an old tired hooknose with white beard. They appear as three variations on a theme, perhaps hypocrisy.

The Second Nun tells a tale but is not described in the General Prologue, which says only that she is chaplain to the Prioress. One might assume, then, that their habits would be of the same order of nuns. In the Ellesmere, both wear plain black robes and veils, and close-fitting white covers over forehead and neck. Thynne uses the same woodcut for both; Stowe omits the Second Nun. Urry's artist reproduces the Ellesmere habit for both, altering the high collar into a ruff.

But it seems that Blake's two clergywomen would not be caught dead wearing identical outfits on a pilgrimage. Compared to the Prioress, Blake's Second Nun wears white rather than dark sleeves, a clasped rather than a thrown-back veil, a high neckline, no tiara, and dark curls rather than long straight blond hair—whereas nuns did not show their hair at all.

The Second Nun's round face, angle of profile, and wreathlike curls pair her off visually with that "Devil of the first magnitude" (E 526), the Summoner. And the Prioress resembles the Summoner's cohort, the Pardoner. Each wears pointed headgear and long blond hair, and each holds a cross by a writhing spidery right hand. (Notice too the other crosses in the procession: between the breasts of the Wife of Bath, among the Knight's decorations, atop the Prioress' head, on the forehead of the Pardoner's horse, and on his own back and satchel. Chaucer's rosary consists of beads, without the usual cross. And the Host's body forms a cross that bisects the group, for better or for worse.)

Besides visual details, Blake uses similar words in the Descriptive Catalogue to link Prioress and Pardoner. The Pardoner is a scourge and a blight (E 526), and also "grand, terrific, rich and honoured in the rank of which he holds the destiny" (E 526). The Prioress is "of the first rank; rich and honoured... truly grand and really polite" (E 524), and is equated with the Wife of Bath as "also a scourge and a blight" (E 528). Kiralis explains why the "also" in this sentence must mean "likewise" rather than "in addition," syntactically (pp. 160-61). But I believe that Blake here intended an unresolved syntactic ambivalence, intended that the Urizenic mind reading the passage dichotomize, and try to choose logically, and fail, and thereby look at the picture to find out whether or not the Prioress is visually paired with the Wife as being also, likewise, a scourge and a blight. And indeed, she is.

Kiralis brings outside evidence to bear on his extensive analysis of the Wife and Prioress as Rahab and Tirzah, as grasping and repressed female sexuality. He documents descriptions of female beauty from medieval sources (none certainly available to Blake), Blake's use of nets as symbols of repression elsewhere, and opinions of modern Chaucerians on the
The pairing of Wife and Prioress also occurs in other artists' interpretations. Stowe's 1561 edition simply uses the same nunlike woodcut for both. But Thynne's artist carefully distinguishes the Wife from the Prioress, and they particularly seem two variants on one theme because of their identical spraddle-legged nags. Each sits toward the off (i.e., improper, right-hand) side of her horse. The Prioress faces three-quarters sideways; the Wife turns full face toward the observer. Thynne's Prioress, high-collared and properly veiled, peers toward her horse's front hooves with an expression of severity or nausea. The Wife wears a scarved sunhat "as brode as is a bokeler, or a targe" (v. 154-55) with which Chaucer suggests her vanity; and unlike Blake's Prioress, she keeps her forehead, hair, and bodice properly covered.

Behind the Prioress rides the Tapiser, or Tapestry Weaver (E 523 and 528). His particular skill accentuates the link between the two women, for Blake's Rahab and Tirzah are elsewhere forever weaving falsehoods, nets, veils, the Natural Body, the web of Religion, and other unpleasantness. The net over the Prioress' horse also suggests weaving; and of course Chaucer's Wife of Bath earns her living by "cloth making" (v. 449) as well as by outliving rich husbands.

Next follow the Monk and Friar. The two female clergy, from the same order of nuns, wore different clothing; these two principal male clergy, of altogether different organizations, wear identical clothing. Every previous illustrator had discriminated, had given each man the proper robes of his order. Chaucer likewise discriminates. Chaucer's Monk trims his robe with expensive fur, and fastens his hood with an elaborate gold pin (vv. 193-97). The Friar wears a short flared cape of double worsted

The Wife of Bath, from the Ellesmere manuscript (late fifteenth century). Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, Ca. Actual size, 52mm x 72mm.
(vv. 264-65) in which he carries "knives / And pinnes, for to given fayre wives" (vv. 233-34). Blake ignores Chaucer's rich details, to show the two clutching at identical throw-back hoods. In earnest argument or conversation, the Monk looks stern; the Friar points, apparently asking advice or admonishing him.

In his text, Blake attacks those who consider the Monk and Friar to be burlesque characters (E 525). Presumably he attacks Cromek's prospectus for Stothard's painting. But the prospectus included in the 1808 edition of Blair's The Grave, the prospectus Blake likeliest saw, does not use the term "burlesque" or "buffoon." Blake may be interpolating from Cromek's overall understanding of Canterbury Tales as "a pleasurable Tour, sanctified by the name of Pilgrimage." The covert ridicule on these eccentric excursions, which Chaucer intended, is very happily preserved in his Face." Further, Cromek was not alone in his interpretation. Spurgeon notes that during the eighteenth century, the quality most frequently attributed to Chaucer was jocosity: "'Joking,' 'jocound,' 'sprightly,' 'gleeful,' 'blithe,' 'merry,' 'gay,' 'frisky,' 'facetious,' are among the adjectives used quite constantly in speaking of Chaucer or his work at this time" (I, xcix). When Blake declares that he must "set certain mistakes right in their conception of the humour and fun that occurs on the journey" (E 525), then, the plural "critics" is probably literal, not sarcastic, for he attacks others along with Cromek.

The Monk and Friar, Blake insists, are characters of "a mixed kind" (E 525), not wholly comic. He points out the Monk's knowledge of the tragic, as an example of how Chaucer complicates a reader's interpretive response to the cleric. Blake, while seeming to praise the Monk, also warns not to trust surface appearances: "Though a man of luxury, pride and pleasure, he is a master of art and learning, though affecting to despise it" (E 525). This doubly-masked Monk pretends education matters and further pretends he doesn't care. From Chaucer's description, Blake points out details that specify the Monk's ambiguity - that show him neither good nor evil, neither comic nor tragic, neither lewd nor learned. Again, one must must look at the picture to interpret the character, and there see him as the twin of the Friar.

Of the Friar, Blake points out, Chaucer likewise uses two apparently contradictory concepts to complicate a reader's response to the character - he is "a wanton and a merry," but also "full solemn" in his office. Blake describes the Monk and Friar with many of the same adjectives of apparent praise that he uses for others in the second half of the procession: "of the first rank in society, noble, rich . . . a leader of the age . . . young, handsome, and rich . . . a master of art and learning" (E 524-25). But further on, Blake condemns the Friar outright. In praise of the Good Parson, he says, "Search O ye rich and powerful, for these men and obey their counsel . . . But alas! you will not easily distinguish him from the Friar or the Pardoner, they also are 'full solemn men,' and their counsel, you will continue to follow" (E 526).

Whenever Blake seems to be using wealth or social power as positive attributes of a character, certainly, he intends some degree of irony. The "rich and powerful," addressed here, clearly rank far below the Parson on Blake's scale of values. The overtly evil Summoner is "rich and honoured" (E 526); the brutal Miller "exists . . . to get rich and powerful to curb the pride of Man" (E 527).

Previous artists' conceptions of the Monk and Friar do little to either support or deny the moral ambivalence that Chaucer's poem and Blake's picture and commentary suggest. Most earlier portrayals lack energy and appropriateness - one exception being, surprisingly, Stowe's woodcut Friar.

Even Urry's usually accurate artist fails to follow Chaucer's details for the Monk and Friar, who simply wear proper robes of their brotherhoods. An Ellesmere artist who painted small and unspirited pilgrims did the Friar and also the Parson. They merely display their identities -- the Friar by his tonsure, the Parson by folding his arms in blessing. A more inspired Ellesmere artist portrayed the Monk, however. With his hood thrown over a wide-brimmed hat, he rides accompanied by his greyhounds (eliminated by Blake) and his bells "gingeling . . . as loud, as doth the chapell belle" (vv. 170-71). Stowe's Monk is a hooded robed figure; Thynne's edition includes no Monk. But a reader with some imagination could see a self-satisfied inertia in the heavy-lidded eyes of Thynne's Friar, and see also what might be a bottle in his hand. And the woodcut in Stowe's edition picks up on that hint. His wanton and merry Friar does carry a bottle, and in addition he smiles a small smile and closes one eye in an unmistakable wink.

What is the significance, in Blake's symbolism, of the identical robes and serious tête-à-tête conversation of Monk and Friar? Their pose is mirrored by the next pair, the Summoner and Pardoner. But we know well why these two gaze lovingly at one another: they indulge in "that abominable sine, of which abominable sin no man uneth ought to speke ne write" (says the Parson, II, 369). The Pardoner and Summoner, also, gleefully cheat the poor and helpless. They are evil in anyone's judgment in any age; but still the Christian church provides their livelihoods. Blake's description of them is full: "the Pardoner . . . commands and domineers over the high and low vulgar. This man is sent in every age for a rod and scourge, and for a blight . . . and he is suffered by Providence for wise ends, and has also his great use, and his grand leading destiny. His companion the Somnour, is also a Devil of the first magnitude, grand, terrific, rich and honoured" (E 526). The same as the Monk and Friar and Priores and Knight and Squire, then, the satanic Pardoner and Summoner are grand, rich, and honored leaders of the first rank.

Earlier portrayals of the Pardoner and Summoner show effectively that an artist who reproduces the details of Chaucer's text can thereby create a character who suggests the spiritual nature that is elaborated by Blake. The two woodcut editions tend to ignore potentially picturable details; Urry's engraver, likewise, gives the Pardoner long blond
hair but little else from Chaucer's account, so that this prettified Pardoner seems not very sinister. In contrast, the Ellesmere Pardoner's flowing yellow hair combines with his scarlet robe, his vernicle, and his huge bejewelled cross, to portray a character not to be trusted (illus. 7). Two-faced, as it were. The Summoner's acne and "gerlond . . . upon his hede" (v. 668) appear only in the Ellesmere, Urry, and Blake. His pitted face and headwear do, in all three, create the supernatural aura that Blake would expect of a Devil. In Thynne's edition, the same woodcut portrays indiscriminately Summoner, Merchant, Franklin, and Manciple; in Stowe, the Summoner arbitrarily carries a spear and rides a rearing horse.

The sixteenth-century editions' use of the same woodcut to portray several pilgrims highlights an artistic problem. Neither Urry's careful engraver nor Blake follows the Ellesmere's example of carefully distinguishing each business and professional man by costume and other attributes. Urry's artist does show each bourgeois pilgrim differently—but you shuffled his engravings like a pack of cards, you would have a lot of trouble sorting out which was the Summoner, the Parson, the Physician, or the Pardoner. Nevertheless, Blake's Manciple—looking as if he wishes he had been tucked anywhere but in between these two loathly lovers—does form a pair with the Reeve. Blake places the Manciple at the end of the first half, and emphatically places the Reeve "hinderest of the rout" (E 523). Blake's Descriptive Catalogue, like Chaucer's General Prologue, pairs the Manciple and Reeve. The "worldly wisdom" Blake attributes to them both (E 527) is a term from morality plays and John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress ("Mr. Worldly Wiseman"), suggesting the delusive nature of such wisdom. Chaucer makes it clear that Manciple and Reeve both get rich by cheating in business--to either Blake or Chaucer's artist. They are, by definition, untrusted men. The Shipman does not look longingly at a lover, though; instead he faces directly backward, to glare at the Plowman. The slanted caps of Parson and Pardoner frame the less prominent angles of Plowman and Shipman, their profiles in direct confrontation. Chaucer's poem offers no hint of hostility between Plowman and Shipman, of earth and sea. Blake, I would suggest, intends a confrontation--framed by the purely good Parson and the evil Pardoner--of two types of courage: the Plowman's simple selfless courage, as opposed to the Shipman's tricky self-serving courage.

All four bourgeoisie who ride behind the Shipman watch him anxiously. The Franklin seems particularly worried that a fight is about to flare. Among these men, Blake terms the Franklin the Bacchus of the company, and the Physician the Esculapius (E 527). Such references to classical tradition clarify Blake's mythic construction of Chaucer. Blake has elsewhere invented his own names but he describes the same characters, the same eternal Principles, as does classical or Norse or Christian or any other mythology. Any true poet does the same, says Blake; any poet creates his own imaginative mythology. "Canterbury Pilgrims" shows in artistic detail how Chaucer's mythology parallels Blake's and others'.

To skip the Plowman for a moment, the Physician and Man of Law form a professional pair, one that balances the Monk and Friar. Blake uses the term "master" only to describe these four: the Monk is "master of art and learning" (E 525); the Friar, "master of all the pleasures of the world" (E 525); the Lawyer, "master of the jurisprudence of his age" (E 526); the Physician, "Master and Doctor in his art" (E 527). Chaucer does not directly link the two professionals, but he does use a distinctive technique in their General Prologue descriptions. Chaucer appears to praise each man unreservedly, until a final, neat, balloon-pricking couplet. The Lawyer: "Nowher so besy a man as he ther n'as, / And yet he seemd besyer than he was" (vv. 323-24). The Doctor: "For gold in phisike is a cordial; / Therefore he loved gold in special" (vv. 445-46). I have suggested that Blake's pairings of bourgeois pilgrims are less striking, visually, than are those who serve a centering role in Blake's moral schema: he is a sort of presiding spirit over this pilgrimage through life, representing neither good nor evil, neither expression nor repression, neither heaven nor hell but both together, in the unresolvable world of Experience. No earlier artist had portrayed the Host.

Of the earlier portrayals of the Shipman, only the Ellesmere artist uses his "hewe al browne" (v. 396) to give him a sinister appearance, as does Blake. The Shipman, or Sailor, is a similar genius of Ulyssian art"--similar to Reeve and Manciple--"but with the highest courage superadded" (E 527). Ulysses sailed, of course, but he is also a type of the trickster. Thus the Shipman fits with the two shady money-managers, as variants on one type of "consummate worldly wisdom."

He is placed just behind the Host, paired with the gruesome Summoner just before. The Shipman's furry cap echoes the Summoner's headwear, and the dark faces of the two are intensified by thick eyebrows and by the Shipman's beard, the Summoner's acne. The Shipman does not look longingly at a lover, though; instead he faces directly backward, to glare at the Plowman. The slanted caps of Parson and Pardoner frame the less prominent angles of Plowman and Shipman, their profiles in direct confrontation. Chaucer's poem offers no hint of hostility between Plowman and Shipman, of earth and sea. Blake, I would suggest, intends a confrontation--framed by the purely good Parson and the evil Pardoner--of two types of courage: the Plowman's simple selfless courage, as opposed to the Shipman's tricky self-serving courage.
of the characters he portrays full-length. But a Doctor/Lawyer pairing does contribute to the picture's visual and symbolic symmetry. In front of the Host's left hand ride two purely evil clergy and two smooth-surfaced, hypocritical, educated clergy—each pair introverted, Monk and Friar linking eye contact as do Pardoner and Summoner. Behind the Host's right hand ride two purely good pilgrims, eyes straight ahead, and two educated and mildly hypocritical professional men, their faces at three-quarter profile. Blake hopes that they will continue to ride and keep counsel with the Parson and Plowman (E 526).

Blake's Descriptive Catalogue becomes less misleading concerning the characters in the second half of the procession. He usually says in words what he means in the picture; and he explains precisely what he is doing with binary symmetry. He describes the Plowman as "Hercules in his supreme eternal state, divested of his spectrous shadow; which is the Miller ...

... Chaucer has divided the ancient character of Hercules between his Miller and his Plowman" (E 527). Here is perhaps Blake's clearest statement of just how he sees different mythologies interrelate: not as one-to-one relabelings of one another's deities, but as once-inspired attempts to divide the continuous spectrum of the human psyche into discrete but interacting bundles of characteristics.

The Plowman and Miller both display physical strength and stamina. But the Miller uses his strength to terrify people, whereas the Plowman uses his to help. He is "simplicity itself, with wisdom and strength for its stamina" (E 527). Kiralis suggests that Blake intends his portrait of the Plowman to be his own idealized self-image (p. 147). The Plowman also evokes the apocalyptic imagery in Revelation, the most poetically inspired book of the Bible, and in Langland's Piers Plowman as well. Further, Blake emphatically portrays the Plowman as young, and his brother the Parson as very old. The physical wisdom and strength of the good young man must complement the spiritual wisdom and strength of the good old man, even if such symbolism makes them look more like father and son than brothers.

For these two, Blake creates no conflict between text and picture. For the Parson, he resurrects from his Grave illustrations the Counsellor and the Good Old Man. He ignores artistic tradition to do so: in the Ellesmere, Thynne, and particularly Urry, the Parson is young and beardless. Chaucer gives no hint of the Parson's age. In the book of Pables Anciend and Moderne that I have suggested Blake knew, however, Dryden expands Chaucer's General Prologue paragraph into a seven-page "Character of A Good Parson," in couplets, and there describes the Parson as a "good old Man" (p. 534).

Because the Plowman tells no tale, only Stowe and Urry had portrayed him earlier. The nobility of Blake's rendering suggests that he would be displeased at Stowe's Plowman, a nondescript fellow who seems a misplaced cleric. Urry's Plowman at least looks proud, reining his draft horse with a thick rope.

Urry's Wife of Bath, similarly, is characterized with a hint of the symbolism that Blake renders full-blown. Blake copied Urry's Wife exactly, for Hayley's library at Felpham. He certainly also saw the openly flirtatious Wife in Bell's 1782-83 edition of British Poets (illus. 2). And whether Blake saw them or not, Mortimer's Wife is a sinister witchlike hag (illus. 4), and the Ellesmere Wife (illus. 9) shows how she looks when an artist exactly follows the details of Chaucer's text. Kiralis (pp. 148-53) summarizes the visual details that support an intuitive response to Blake's Wife of Bath as Rahab, the Whore of Babylon.

The Wife's thronelike headpiece is framed by Miller and Merchant. Blake in his text barely mentions the Merchant, who wears a forked beard and tall hat, as specified by Chaucer and shown by earlier artists. He looks somewhat sinister, especially in comparison to the kindlier-looking Physician (who also wears forked beard and tall hat), and to his prototypes, including the one that Blake copied from Urry's edition to accompany the "Head of Chaucer" in Hayley's library. Why does Blake pick the Merchant to escort the Wife, both for the library and here? From Chaucer's poem come tenuous connections: the Merchant is newly wed to a shrewish wife (vv. 9089-9115); he perhaps cheats at business (vv. 276-84); his Tale of semen amans and young lust makes sexuality disgusting and, like the Wife's Tale, it suggests female dominance; a character within the Merchant's Tale mentions the Wife of Bath, in one of those fine Chaucerian inconsistencies that keep Notes and Queries chugging along for decades. But none of these threads seems quite substantial enough to pair him spiritually with the Whore of Babylon and with Hercules' discarded spectrous shadow, the Miller, as his position in Blake's composition (and in Mortimer's, illus. 4) would suggest.

Concerning the Plowman's spectrous counterpart, Blake's text is again a straightforward explication of his painting, with the negative connotations of abstract words made explicit: "the Miller, a terrible fellow, such as exists in all times and places, for the trial of men, to astonish every neighbourhood with brutal strength and courage, to get rich and powerful to curb the pride of Man" (E 527). Like the Pardoner, he exists "for a trial of men" (E 526); like many of the front-rank pilgrims, and unlike millers in the real world, he is "rich and powerful."

The Ellesmere artist, following Chaucer's details except for the red beard, has painted a hunched, loutish, very sinister-looking Miller. Each of the woodcut Millers rides a mule, plays a clarinet-like pipe, lacks the beard that Chaucer specifies, and looks rather frail to break a door "at a running with his hede" (v. 553). But at least they are unmistakably millers; a windmill in the background assures the identity, in Stowe. Urry's bagpipe-bearing Miller seems too genteel for the part, as the artist follows his tendency to soften into detailed realism rather than harden into characterization. And Blake's seems not particularly sinister, either, although Blake incorporates the same details as does the Ellesmere—big bones and brawn, thick neck, bagpipe. Brutal strength and courage pose a "trial of men" that terrifies them openly, in contrast to the insidious moral terror, of hellfire and summonses, with which systematized religion scourges and divides the classes of men.
Behind the Miller, and oblivious even to the Wife's charms, rides the most vulgar pilgrim. The Cook falls lolling drunk off his horse, in the prologue to the Manciple's Tale. And Chaucer gives him no professional ethics whatsoever. He serves stale pastry disguised as fresh; and old tough goose disguised in sauces; his customers fall ill because in thy shop goth many a flye los (v. 4350). Blake says only that the Cook is the leader of a class of men (E 527). He mentions leadership also as an attribute of the Knight, Monk, Host, Three Citizens, Prioress, and Wife of Bath. Thus Blake uses leadership, like wealth and power, as an intentionally ambiguous abstract term. Like perfection as an attribute, leadership describes without necessarily praising: "every one of his characters [is] perfect in his kind, every one is an Antique Statue; the image of a class, and not of an imperfect individual" (E 527). (Analogously, Chaucer's narrator describes, for example, the gold-loving Physician as "a veray parfit practisour"—v. 424.)

Blake's Cook looks more animal-like than do any of his prototypes—in particular more than Urry's Cook, who resembles Urry's Knight. The Ellesmere Cook looks slovenly and mean; he incorporates all the details of Chaucer's text, even to the bandage over his running sore. But the Cook's ape-like forehead, pig-like nose and lips, and spidery right hand are all original to Blake's conception. The Cook represents brutality divested even of strength and courage—the spectrous shadow in his turn of the already spectrous Miller.

Blake's intention to pair off eternal Principles is again shown in his description of "two classes of learned sages, the poetical and the philosophical... side by side, as if the youthful clerk had put himself under the tuition of the mature poet" (E 528). Visually, then, the two might have presented a third age/youth pair, with Knight/Squire and Parson/Plowman. But, I will suggest that Chaucer here is a noticeably younger man than he is in any prototype available to Blake. Thus Blake sacrifices to his spiritual symbolism the visual impact that a third clearly-defined age/youth pair would produce. And he sacrifices to his binary symmetry the Clerk's carefully-described preference for books over food.

The Clerk's round face and tiny mustache are original to Blake. Chaucer specifies that he was "not right fat... but loked holwe" (vv. 290-91). The Ellesmere and Urry Clerks have thin faces; and none of the previous four Clerks wore whiskers. The adolescent visage of Blake's Clerk mirrors the face of the Squire. The two youths, balanced in the picture's composition, also share spiritual attributes, for each student learns from a mature teacher. The Clerk is "servant and scholar of inspiration" (E 528). The Squire is servant and scholar instead of an armored, overaressed Knight who teaches the inviolate rules and strictures of the chivalric code.

The Clerk's teacher, Blake's Poet, is only the third equestrian Chaucer portrayed, perhaps excluding those lost drawings by James Jefferys. Blake could have examined the Ellesmere equestrian Chaucer, at Bridgewater House, and he certainly examined the portrait in Urry's edition. Urry's book includes three engraved portraits of Chaucer: miniature full-length on a small picture of his monument, full-page half-length as frontispiece, and a half-page equestrian medallion behind the Tale of Malibeus, which reproduces the pose and facial features of the frontispiece (illus. 6). The edition includes also a typical description of the poet, pieced together from tradition, hints in Chaucer's poetry, remarks by his contemporaries, portraits genuine and not, and much interpolation: "He was... of a middle stature, the latter part of his life inclinable to be fat and corpulent... His face was fleshy, his features just and regular, his complexion fair, and somewhat pale, his hair of a dusky yellow, short and thin; the hair of his beard in two forked tufts, of a wheat colour; his forehead broad and smooth; his eyes inclining usually to the ground, which is intimated by the Host's words [vv. 13626-27]; his whole face full of liveliness, a calm easy sweetness, and a studious venerable aspect."35

Lively, sweet, and venerable certainly describe Vertue's portrait of Chaucer, which Blake probably copied for Hayley's library. The caption to this frontispiece attributes the drawing to Thomas Hoccleve, whose fifteenth-century De Regimine Principum has a verse beside which an artist can insert Chaucer's "lyknesse." But Vertue's engraving little resembles the marginal Chaucer in what was by Blake's time Harleian MS 4866 in the British Museum.36 Without intending deception, Vertue had engraved not a copy from the Hoccleve manuscript but instead one in a long line of pleasant-faced and firm-fleshed Chaucers, all facing three-quarter profile, smiling wisely, and fingering dangling pencases with their right hands and rosaries with their left. Most were sixteenth- or seventeenth-century paintings on panel, owned by various lords or the two universities.37 Blake's portrait for Hayley's library is one more in the line. But his equestrian Chaucer in "Canterbury Pilgrims" shows significant alterations.

And neither does Blake's Poet-pilgrim much resemble the earliest manuscript Chaucers, in the Ellesmere and in Harl. MS 4866. Both fifteenth-century portraits show Chaucer as a noticeably old man, with white hair and sharp facial lines and contours. Both have downturned mouths and stern, almost suspicious gazes. From each one's neck button dangles a pencase; each points to the text with one hand and holds a rosary in the other.

The Ellesmere equestrian Chaucer holds reins and rosary in the same hand; Blake's Poet-pilgrim holds them separately. Other nearly obligatory, iconographic details—the forked beard, downcast eyes, and positioning of hands—remain constant with the tradition. But, Blake's Poet wears a white robe; the others, to a man, wear dark. His headcovering somewhat resembles earlier versions; but the cut of his gown differs from all, with its low-cut neckline, embroidery, and billowing folds. His heretofore ubiquitous pencase is gone, or hidden (perhaps signifying that poetic inspiration need not be in writing). His is a pensive expression, not one of wisdom like the tradition nor of severity like the earliest manuscripts. He is thinner and younger than any previous Chaucer. His mouth and goatee are
smaller than tradition suggests, and his eyes and forehead larger.

Here Blake is continuing the tradition represented by Vertue's portrait, but with variations that make Chaucer look younger and saintlier than ever before. To some degree his youthful appearance suggests the poetic genius of Los; he also appears Christlike, with eyes and whiskers that particularly resemble those of the Christ in Blake's *Paradise Regained* series (ca. 1816-18). Chaucer's awkward riding posture also draws attention to itself: the Host forms a living cross, and the Pardoner a contorted swastika, while the Poet's body forms a hunched, soon-to-be-saddle-sore counterpoint to the Knight's professionally balanced seat.

Blake pairs the Poet with the Knight because each of these two types teaches a different, contrasting way of life to his young follower. Also, Chaucer and the Clerk form a complementary pair, a yin/yang pair, encompassing the dual aspects of the eternal Sage, "the poetical and the philosophical" (E 528). Chaucer forms a visual pair with the Pardoner, as well. Each has a similar style of headpiece, a clinging and flowing light-colored robe, a dark horse, and awkward anatomy. The Parson and Knight form a similarly balanced pair of dark-clothed figures on light-colored horses. The Pardoner and Parson confront in direct profile; the Poet faces three-quarters forward and the Knight three-quarters backward.

The symmetry of these major figures in the foreground shows varying degrees of spiritual opposition. The Knight, unlike the Pardoner, can avoid a direct confrontation with the Parson—perhaps because the moral code of chivalry has some eternal validity. And the Poet, to the same degree, can avoid a direct confrontation with the Pardoner's corrupt and worldly evil—perhaps because eternal poetic inspiration can make a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven. The Poet and the Knight, who frame the procession, confront even less directly. Their lines of sight would intersect even with the Host, midway, at 45° outward. Outward, toward the observer of the picture. The observer must make up his own mind which way to go. For the dichotomy of poetic inspiration vs. chivalric structure, there is no such simple choice as between Parson and Pardoner.

The spiritual dichotomy represented by the Knight and the Poet extends to the front and rear halves of the procession. With the two female figures as keystones, many of the figures in the front half—those "above the common rank in life or attendants on those who were so" (E 524)—repress their energies into static systems, into set structures. Visual details suggest introversion and repression: the net over the Prioress' horse, the Knight's multilayered clothing, the eye contact within each pair of principal clergy. Blake's text likewise suggests the static nature of language. Most of his tricky wording, his seeming praise in abstractions called into question by visual portraits, refers to these front-rank characters. When he refers to figures in the rear half of the procession, Blake usually makes words and picture agree. And these lower-rank characters include more whose energies are extroverted—whether they turn those energies toward constructive ends, like the Poet, or destructive ends, like the spraddle-legged Wife of Bath.

The procession is a universe made up of active and passive halves, of characters who express or who repress energies. Blake does not pass moral judgment on either half. Although his Poet and Parson are outer-directed forces for "good," they share their expressive half of the universe with the most dangerously seductive force for "evil," the Wife of Bath. The repressive half of the procession does not include such extremities of moral blacks and whites. Except for Pardoner/Summoner, the pilgrims who follow set structures appear ambivalent, as moral shades of grey. But as if a newspapers photograph, the picture from a distance shows black-and-white as also grey. Even the sheer moral blackness of Pardoner/Summoner is balanced at a far enough distance by the bright white light of Parson/Plowman. Blake preaches the value of the expressive half. But both halves are always there, in every person's mind, even Blake's. "Man or humanity" is the characters, all together.

And no individual ought to pattern himself after any one ideal, after Plowman or Parson or Poet, or Jerusalem or Jesus Christ, without realizing that they are all manifestations of "man or humanity" (E 527). Blake says that all these pilgrims, both good and evil, both expressive and repressive, that all these "visions of the eternal attributes" (E 527) are happening simultaneously inside each man's head. And if a person follows his poetic inspiration, he will be able to recognize and separate out bundles of characteristics from the forces writhing inside his psyche. He can separate and shape them into symbols, into characters, into dieties. These symbols must keep on interacting, then, because the human mind never stops moving, never accepts a static relationship among forces. Systems and religions, Blake would say, do try to pin down psychological forces into set patterns. But a dynamic bundle of characteristics, say a creation like Hamlet, will never offer final answers—just more and more questions as the play goes on.

It is beyond my scope in this paper to try to label the dynamic binary relationship of every figure to every other one in "Canterbury Pilgrims." For example, though, let me begin with the Plowman, define his binary relationships to other figures, and show how in this particular picture Blake overcomes the limitations of time and space by means of a cell-like growth involving bisection and re-bisection of his symbols, his types.

Blake states clearly that "the Plowman of Chaucer is Hercules in his supreme eternal state, divested of his spectrous shadow; which is the Miller" (E 527). Thus no single pilgrim is Hercules, the type of physical strength and courage; the Plowman and Miller together make up Hercules' eternal type. The Plowman aspect of this pair can simply discard and ignore his spectre of brute strength and animal courage, the Miller—which spectre in turn, but simultaneously within this picture, sloughs off his own animal spectre, the Cook. But the Plowman must confront and keep at bay, ready to
fight, another spectre: the type of sly self-serving
courage rather than selfless benevolent courage, the
Shipman. To call the Miller the spectre of "bad"
strength and the Shipman the spectre of "bad"
courage, and to say that the strong-and-courageous-
and-good man must rid himself of both spectres,
measurably sounds like a moral plan that an
individual human being might follow, in linear time,
whereas the types are eternal. But "the strong-and-
courageous-and-good man" is perhaps as close as one
can come, in words, to saying what Blake's portrait
of the Plowman shows to the eye.

The Plowman also forms half of the complementary
pair, Parson and Plowman. Like yin and yang, they
together make up a larger whole, which could be
termed benevolence (E 527). To emphasize this
unification of dualities--dualities that might be
labelled spiritual and physical benevolence--Blake
portrays the brothers as old and young, encompassing
in one pair two terms that in a logical system would
be mutually exclusive (A and not-A, old and young).
The Plowman and Parson together make up a symbol that
keeps the mind in motion as does, say, the symbol
Virgin Mother, likewise A and not-A. One's knowledge of
pregnancy makes the two halves mutually contra-
dictory, like old and young in Blake's picture.

By poetic faith, however, one can understand such a
symbol as one and as two, at the same time.

This dual symbol of benevolence, Parson and
Plowman, cannot remain static either. It balances
visually with the Pardoner/Summoner pair, whose evil
appearance makes them symbolize some quality that is
mutually exclusive of benevolence, and whose position
--especially the opposition between Pardoner and
Parson--indicates a direct conflict between binary
oppositions. What do they represent, as the opposite
of benevolence? Perhaps avarice, the topic of the
Pardoner's Tale? It is with good reason that Blake
turns away from the limitations of verbal abstraction,
to communicate visually. His portrayals of Pardoner
and Summoner call up a richer and exacter reproduction
of Blake's intentions than such words as "avarice"
or "absence of benevolence" or "pure evil" ever

could.

The cell bisects and doubles itself once again,
but all within the same space and time of this
picture. The Pardoner/Summoner combines with Monk/
Friar, such that Pardoner/Summoner seems the discarded
spectral shadow of the whole bundle Pardoner/
Summoner/Monk/Friar. What verbal label could cover
the visual group of avaricious clergymen, two of
them hypocritical and two overt? Simultaneously, in
the rear half of the procession, the Parson/Plowman
joins forces with Doctor/Lawyer, to balance with the
four churchmen ahead. The Doctor and Lawyer are some-
what benevolent in that their professions are outward-
directed, but unlike Parson and Plowman they do not
help people for selfless reasons.

The symbolism cannot keep bisecting neatly.
That last eightorne was already getting blurry--
getting out of microscope range, so to speak. I
started with the Plowman, and lacked this symbolism
both inward (to the Hercules he "was" before he
eliminated his spectre) and outward (to what he
"becomes" in the procession). Could one do the
same, starting with any pilgrim chosen at random?
No, because the pilgrimage would then represent a
universe without chaos. The mind of "man or humanity"
pairs many, but not all, sets of stimuli in order to
understand them. Sometimes, misled, the mind
believes it must choose logically between the
opposite poles it perceives, and eliminate Urizen-
tically one or the other. "Chaucer's Canterbury
Pilgrims" shows that even though some pairs may
temporarily appear to cancel out each other, that
still all the oppositions and all the other binary
relationships and even all the odds and ends of
perception keep on happening. All possibilities
remain. All possibilities remain in motion. Nothing
was delivered. And the Reeve and the bristling black
dog go their snarling ways.

1 The critics, cited hereafter by authors' names, are Karl
Kiralis, "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to
Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," Blake Studies, 1 (Spring 1969),
139-90; Warren Stevenson, "Interpreting Blake's Canterbury
Pilgrims," Colby Library Quarterly, 13 (June 1971), 115-26; and
Orpha Jane Allen, "Blake's Archetypal Criticism: The Canterbury
Pilgrims," Genre, 2 (Summer 1978), 173-89.
2 The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman
for Blake quotations are to this edition, abbreviated "E."

3 Geoffrey Chaucer, Canterbury Tales, ed. Thomas Tyrwhitt, 2nd
for Chaucer quotations are to this, the most accurate edition of
Blake's time. Poetry references are line numbers, continuous
through the two volumes; prose references include volume and page.

4 I am discussing not the painting itself, but the engraving
Blake made from it in 1800--precisely, the fourth state of that
engraving, as displayed in and reproduced by the Huntington
Library. The painting itself hangs in Pollock House, Glasgow,
and differs in details--facial expressions, most noticeably--
from the later engraving. Reproductions of this painting should
not be trusted indiscriminately, especially as to color. For some
account of the states of the engraving, see Kiralis' Appendix B,pp. 174-77.

5 Kiralis, throughout his cited article, discusses fairly
thoroughly the background of the picture.

6 "A Letter to a Friend," Guattherus and Orleasa (London: R.
Dodsley, 1739), pp. viii-ix. This letter as reprinted two years
later was definitely available to Blake, as described in n. 29.

7 A General History of the science and practice of Music (London,
1712), II, 110. Quoted by Caroline F. E. Spurgeon in her Five
Hundred Years of English Criticism and Allusion, 1500-1600
(Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1925), 1, 446-47; cited hereafter
by author's name.

8 Cursory Remarks on some of the Ancient English Poets (London,
1789), pp. 2-3; quoted by Spurgeon, I, 488.

9 For accounts of the incident, see Mona Wilson, The Life of
Press, 1971), pp. 232-41; and Alexander Gilchrist, Life of

10 See G. E. Bentley, Jr., Blake Books (Oxford: Oxford U.
experience" was re-engraved by Cooke in 1787; in later editions
of Bell, Blake's plate was replaced by Cooke's.

11 For example, the Wife's dialogue with the Friar, vv. 6411-38.

12 Reproduced in Richard Garnett and Edmund Gosse, English
This useful book reproduces several of Blake's poems, and I will refer
to such as the manuscript portraits of Chaucer.

13 History from J. Mordaunt Crook, The British Museum (New York:
Prager, 1972), pp. 39-71; and from Henry C. Shelley, The British
Museum: Its History and Treasures (Boston: L. C. Page, 1911),
pp. 48-70.
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20 Ibid. The edition is available on film.
23 Plates from both these books are at the Victoria and Albert, along with the original drawings of four of the nine scenes excised to the Department. I have located neither book in the U. S.; Tyrwhitt's 1788 edition is common here, but each library I have contacted owns a copy illustrated only by a frontispiece portrait of the editor. According to Henry G. Bohn, ed., The Bibliographer's Manual, by William Lowndes (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890), 1, 427, the Mortimer plates were in copies sold at Roxburghe auction (Catalogue no. 3253), at White Knight's (no. 954), and at Edwards's (no. 125).
25 In a letter to Gentleman's Magazine, 53 (1783), 461, Tyrwhitt rather good-naturedly reports that Bell had lifted his name, text, and entire scholarly apparatus without even consulting him. See Spurgeon, 1, 474.
28 In "James Jeffrey, Historical Draughtsman (1751-84)," Burlington Magazine, 110 (March 1968), 146-57, Mary Clifford Legoux include among "Lost works by James Jeffrey" two items that apparently align with Spurgeon's description of the 24 Chaucer drawings. Design for Pilgrims' Progress to Canterbury made during his stay with Mr. Davy of One House, Suffolk, later in collection of Sir George Beaumont" (ref. Clement Taylor Sayce coll., Maldonstone Museum, IV, f. 318); and "James Jeffrey's / Lot 72, THE PARSONNIER; HARRY BAILLEY and FRARI--from Chaucer--three pictures," in sale of late John Newington Hughes, Esq., of Winchester, Christie and Manson, 14th-15th April 1848. According to annotated catalogue at Maldonstone Museum bought 'Manger.' Apparently the set of drawings was broken up for sale.
29 This manuscript was in the Cambridge Library at Blake's time, according to John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, The Test of the Canterbury Tales (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1940), I, 182. It shows "Drawings of 6 Tellers of 6 Canterbury Tales and 6 Allegorical Figures for the Passion Tale (being all those that were not cut out of the ms. by some scoundrel)--" as reproduced in Cambridge MS Appendix, ed. F. J. Furnivall, Chaucer Soc. Publs., Ser. 1, no. 66, part 8 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1888). These long-bodied turbaned pilgrims are considered the work of a Dutch or Flemish artist employed by some English lord; the manuscript is "entirely outside the main stream of development in 15 C English Illumination" (Manly and Rickert, I, 564).
31 History from Manly and Rickert, cited in n. 23, I, 149; and from Alix Egerton, preface to The Ellesmer Manuscript, Reproduc-
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MILTON AND THE PANGS OF REPENTANCE

WAYNE GLAUSSESS

In several pronouncements on the subject of imagination, Blake expresses a ringing disdain for memory as a visionary resource. Blake's confrontation with memory begins with the issue of artistic influence, and what he considers a slavish dependence on neoclassical forms; but once it has entered his vocabulary of ideas, the problem of retrospection comes to assume a more general significance. In Milton, Jerusalem, and various pieces of prose, Blake makes it clear that memory combines with reason and nature to form an unholy trinity of fallen mentality. Interpreters of Blake have defined memory as the unsuccessful appropriation of the past—that is, when some gap remains between time past and time present, some distortion or fragmentation of knowledge, or anxiety of unfulfilled desire. "Memory records and recalls unredeemable time; that is, memory is unredeemable time—time past."

Blake announces in Milton that the poet's time is "a Moment," the period in which "all the Great / Events of Time start forth & are conceived" (29:1-2).2 Readers of Milton, informed by Blake's concept of momentary time, and by the folded, simultaneous structure of the epic, have described this poem's great event as a triumph over time. Susan Fox defines a central event in Milton, and observes: "All perspectives focus on a single instant, the instant of the purgation and union of Milton and Ololon, the instant in which past and future are joined in the abolition of time."3 The abolition of time would mean the end of temporal dislocation, and in particular, of a separation between past and present. Milton would thus achieve a victory over memory.

If Milton can be described as an attempt to overcome the separation between past and present, it does not succeed merely by rejecting memory. Nor does it offer any simple solution to the problems that memory brings. Milton must really be called a memory poem—an epic about what it means, in several different ways, to appropriate the past. On a basic level, after all, this is Blake's attempt to remember Milton; or from another perspective, his effort to recollect three years of experience at Felpham. The most telling aspect of memory in Milton has to do with repentance, the retrospective effort to cope with transgression and guilt. Ololon, a key figure in such a discussion, provides the appropriate descriptive phrase: resolving to descend, she tentatively refers to the turmoil of the lower world as "the pangs of repentance" (21: 50).

Repentance occupies Milton in several ways. At the simplest level, Milton comes back to repent of his misapprehensions and correct the harmful consequences of his poetry. Milton is only one of several characters who recognize past errors and try to undo their effects. By the middle of the first book, Leutha, Los, and Ololon have all made significant admissions of guilt. Milton as a whole could be taken as a complicated act of repentance on the part of Blake: he corrects the simple and rather slitting treatment he had earlier given Milton; through Los, he regrets the revolutionary
impatience of a younger prophetic voice; binding "all this vegetable world" to his left foot as a scandal, he converts previously alien or destructive natural images into vehicles of imagination. In his explicit comments on the subject, Blake scorns memory as a passive and defeated faculty. Repentance constitutes a form of memory with real power, since it manages to lift the oppressive burden of a regretted past. But repentance includes both an active and a passive element—appropriately enough, in this poem so concerned with the relations between masculine and feminine. In its passive aspect, repentance takes on the burden of the past. An act of recognition and appropriation must precede anything else, as an individual chooses to be responsible for something which has come before. The active power of repentance attempts to annul the past, to obliterate the effects of what now appear harmful decisions. If dominated by the passive appropriation, repentance stagnates as insuperable guilt; if by the active power to annul, it imposes a strict moral judgment on a situation which cannot be so easily controlled.

After the trial of Palamabron in the Bard's Song, Satan's emanation, Leutha, comes forward to give a lengthy speech of repentance. The narrator introduces her as a Christ-like figure of self-sacrifice: "She down descended into the midst of the Great Solemn Assembly / Offering herself a Ransom for Satan, taking on her, his Sin" (11:29-30). Leutha begins by declaring, "I am the Author of this Sin; by my suggestion / My Parent power Satan has committed this transgression" (11:35-36). The question of responsibility has been thrown into some confusion. Blake refers to "his Sin," as if the primary fault belonged to Satan. Leutha attests to Satan's authority by calling him her "Parent power." But Leutha then claims priority in the origination of this sin. Perhaps a third possibility remains unstated—that part of Satan/Leutha is trying to keep the rest of Satan/Leutha innocent. This raises an important question. If we assume that the third explanation best describes the situation, responsibility has been deflected by dividing the self into a guilty fragment and an innocent essence. The female tendencies in Satan can be singled out for punishment. In this manner a sinner may be kept separate from his sin: the transgressing act, because it proceeds from accident instead of essence, does not represent a radical infection. Innocence holds indisputable priority over guilt, both as an origin and an end of human spirit. No sin can truly be called original unless it is fundamentally constitutive of identity. The nature of repentance depends on whether or to what extent these conclusions may be upheld.

Leutha confesses to sole responsibility for Satan's usurpation of Palamabron's harrow. This is a disaster for which Los has already accepted full blame: "Mine is the fault! I should have remember'd that pity divides the soul / And man, unnarms" (8:19-20). Los's confession emanates from a more sensitive, cerebral conscience than Leutha's; he assumes a more remote guilt, based on a misinterpretation rather than a sin of desire. As elsewhere, Los considers his power to "circumscribe this dark Satanic death" of paramount importance, and he believes his error to be primary. Los has had particular trouble with this case. His first judgment—"Henceforth Palamabron, let each his own station / Keep" (7:42-43)—sounds suspiciously like Satan's detested "principles of moral individuality" (9:26), and accomplishes little except to aggravate the emotional violence of the scene. When he afterwards takes the blame, Los again makes little or no progress toward a resolution of the conflict. Enitharmon creates moony spaces to protect the combatants, and the Eternal Assembly must be called in to straighten things out. The Eternals judge against Rintrah and his rage—or, as they later make clear, against the Rintrah in Satan. Like Leutha, whose confession follows the Eternal judgment as if to correct it, the Eternals propose a division of Satan into separate parts. So far the guilt for Satan's sin has been assigned to Los, Rintrah, and Leutha. In attempting to prove more deeply than Paradise Lost into the origins of Satanic transgression, Milton finds an abundance of guilt, but cannot establish an alternative central responsibility.

Leutha's speech of repentance begins with a forthright admission of guilt, but as she continues, the nature of her sin and the quality of her repentance come to seem much more problematic. Confessing to love and jealousy, she opens with a definitive analysis of her motives:

I loved Palamabron & I sought to approach his Tent,
But beautiful Elynitttria with her silver arrows repelled me,
For her light is terrible to me. I fade before her immortal beauty.
O wherefore doth a Dragon-form forth issue from my limbs
To seize her new born son? Ah me! the wretched Leutha!
This to prevent, entering the doors of Satans brain night after night
Like sweet perfumes I stupefied the masculine Perceptions
And kept only the feminine awake. hence rose his soft
Delusory love to Palamabron: admiration join'd with envy
Cupidity unconquerable! (11:37-13:8)

Leutha's first emotion is love of Palamabron, and a desire to reveal herself to him. Elynittria obstructs her approach. Leutha's awareness of this blocking is a measure of her jealousy. Friendship or love intend a mutual exchange of essences, and jealousy recognizes a threat to the necessary act of appropriation. Leutha senses that Palamabron will save himself for Elynitttria, who in her brightness must constitute a more appropriate lover. In order to cope with this obstruction, Leutha infects Satan with her jealousy: at this point Leutha and Satan come together as a single personality, although they will divide again by the end of her speech. Part of the difficulty of Leutha's confession stems from the fact that she and Satan at times seem united, at times distinct, and waver between priority and subordination in the control of their behavior.
The attachment to Palamabron takes the form of "admiration join'd with envy." Leutha's phrase reveals two aspects of friendship, difficult or impossible to keep separate, and always a source of severe contention: to what extent is friendship a matter of benevolent and generous influence, and to what extent does it consist of jealous restriction designed to keep the friend close? Admiration describes the positive emotion, the desire to share someone's life; envy suggests a darker side, the possibility that this can be accomplished only by restricting someone's choices, reducing him to controllable proportions. Satan/Leutha wishes to share in Palamabron's creativity, and takes over the alien control, Satan, now beginning to separate from Leutha, responds with acts of suppressive power:

Satan astonished, and with power above his own control
Compil'd the Gnomes to curb the horses, & to throw banks of sand
Around the fiery flaming Harrow in labyrinthine forms.
And brooks between to intersect the meadows in their course.

(12:16-19)

Satan's sin begins as admiration and expansion, and ends as jealousy and restriction. His astonishment must be genuine. What he intended to be a friendly exchage of influence has become a power struggle.

Now that Satan seems primarily responsible for the actions of Satan/Leutha, Leutha begins to separate as a dissenting fragment. When Palamabron's gnomes retaliate against Satan for making them follow his direction, Leutha "weeping hid in Satan's inmost brain" (12:36). Leutha's original desire was to approach Palamabron and reveal her love, but now she withdraws into Satan and hides in fear. The reflex fear suggests that guilt now dominates her emotions. Satan/Leutha has divided into a suppressive masculine part trying to shape Palamabron according to its own will, and a guilt-plagued feminine part retreating for protection into the masculine brain. In a moment of crucial influence, when Elynittria meets Satan, this separation becomes permanent:

For Elynittria met Satan with all her singing women.
Terrific in their joy & pouring wine of wildest power
They gave Satan their wine: indignant at the burning wrath.
Wild with prophetic fury his former life became like a dream
Cloth'd in the Serpents folds, in selfish holiness demanding purity
Being most impure, self-condemn'd to eternal tears, he drove
Me from his inmost Brain & the doors clos'd with thunders sound.

(12:42-48)

The incident is difficult to interpret, partly due to confusing syntax, partly because Leutha narrates rather elliptically. Elynittria and her women, indignant at Satan's wrath, give him a heavy dose of prophetic enthusiasm." Newly inspired and brash with Palamabron's own sense of self-importance, Satan's urge to control Palamabron becomes stronger than ever. He banishes Leutha and the lingering guilt she represents.

As a dismembered sense of guilt, Leutha has come before the Eternals to repent. She considers Satan's refusal to do likewise the chief problem now facing them: "I humbly bow in all my Sin before the Throne Divine. / Not so the Sick-one; Alas what shall be done him to restore?" (13:3-4). But the value of Leutha's repentance is open to serious question. She concludes with a recollection of The Four Zoas:

All is my fault! We are the Spectre of Luvah
the murderer
Of Albion: O Yala: O Luvah: O Albion: O
lovely Jerusalem
The Sin was begun in Eternity, and will not rest to Eternity
Till two Eternities meet together, Ah! Lost! lost! lost! for ever!

(13:7-10)

As Blake joins his second epic to his first, Leutha recognizes the archetypal pattern of her crime. Although she begins by reaffirming her guilt, her statement modulates into the passive voice--"The Sin was Legun in Eternity": fading into the distance, the sin becomes less personal, less accessible. Accordingly, Leutha's guilt does not appear quite so crucial, nor does her repentance seem very effective. As she remembers the supposed key to the fall as presented in The Four Zoas, she manages only to repeat the helpless cry of Tharmas at the beginning of that poem--"Ah! lost! lost! lost!"

Leutha expects no relief "till two Eternities meet together." Like many other "till" clauses in Milton, this one points forward and backward, describing a moment yet to come in which something that has already happened will be accounted for. Leutha knows that redemption must wait until origin is continuous with purpose, until memory coincides with imagination. In her helpless state she suggests that these eternities can never meet. Since the transgression dates from eternity, it would appear to be radically constitutive of human identity; if this is the case, men do indeed suffer under the burden of original sin. Leutha traced the origin of her sin back to a desire, her love for Palamabron, and its accompanying jealousy. Her speech of repentance attempts to annul this origin. Judging from her concluding despair, the project has not succeeded. The final incident related in the Bard's Song supports this pessimistic view: invited into Palamabron's bed, Leutha pursues her original desire, with most unfortunate results--"In moments new created for delusion" (13:39), she gives birth to Death and Rahab. Repentant Leutha has managed only to describe and commiserate over the disruptive desire which remains central to her identity.

Because Leutha finds her sin to be original, she faces an infinite and apparently impossible task of repentance. Repentance in its passive,
feminine aspect overwhelms the active power to change, and Leutha earns for her awareness of responsibility an oppressive guilt which she cannot remove. Kierkegaard describes the futility of repentance by suggesting that it creates a space impossible to fill. Repentance is the highest form of Kierkegaard’s ethical stage, but at best this can only be a transitional sphere between the aesthetic and the religious. "The aesthetic sphere is that of immediacy, the ethical is that of requirement (and this requirement is so infinite that the individual always goes bankrupt), the religious sphere is that of fulfillment, but note, not such a fulfillment as when one fills a cave or a bag with gold, for repentance has made infinite room."5 Blake would call this a female space: "The nature of a Female Space is this: it shrinks the Organs / Of Life till they become Finite & Itsel seems Infinite" (10:6-7). Milton, preoccupied with the question of what it means to appropriate the past, wavers between two possibilities for the spaces created by repentance. On the one hand, they convince men of original guilt and subject them to hopeless struggles for exoneration; Satan’s watch-fiends preside over this process, always vigilant "to condemn the accused: who at Satans Bar / Tremble in Spectrous Bodies continually day and night / While on the Earth they live in sorrowful Vegetations" (23:42-44). The other possibility is best articulated by Los, preaching patience to his sons:

We were plac’d here by the Universal Brotherhood
& Mercy
With powers fitted to circumscribe this dark
Satanic death
And that the Seven Eyes of God may have space
for Redemption,
(23:50-52)

Los creates redemptive space by retaining and guarding every moment of time: in the place of Satan’s watch-fiends, the daughters of Beulah attend his work. Like Satanic guilt, Los's redemptive conservation is a product of retrospective vigilance. The daughters of memory can appear in the guise of watch-fiends or muses, depending on the prospects of repentance.

Drawing on Blake's fourfold cosmology,6 we might describe four levels of repentance in Milton—or more precisely, four kinds of fault-finding, four ways of assigning guilt. Leutha's confession is the prototype of the second or Generation level. It differs from the first or Ulro type because Leutha acknowledges her own guilt; at the Ulro stage, an individual refuses any complicity in a violation and punishes someone else as the sole transgressor. Satan, the only bona fide representative of the Elect class in Milton, provides the model for this lowest level of repentance. Accusing Palamabron of ingratitude and malice, he thunders his judgment in a voice that parodies Jehovah's:

I am God alone
There is no other! let all obey my principles of moral individuality
I have brought them from the uppermost innermost recesses

Of my Eternal Mind, transgressors I will rend off for ever,
As now I rend this accursed Family from my covering.
(9:25-29)

Los's sons present another version of the Ulro state, less exaggerated and more sympathetic, but fully representative of the type. They insist that Milton's arrival will aggravate the evils of war and religion, and urge violent counteraction:

Let us descend & bring him chained
To Bowlahoola O father most beloved! O mild Parent!
Cruel in thy mildness, pitying and permitting evil
The strong and mighty to destroy, O Los our beloved Father:
(23:17-20)

Los claims to "have embraced the falling death," and counsels patience. But Los's first, instinctive reaction to Milton's descent was identical to his sons': "In fibrous strength / His limbs shot forth like roots of trees against the forward path / Of Miltons journey" (17:34-6). This image of obstruction contrasts with important images of communication or influence later in the poem. Los receives Milton as a star falling into his left foot; when messenger larks meet at the crystal gate, "back to back / They touch their pinions tip tip" (36:2-3).

Leutha best illustrates the second level of repentance. She takes full responsibility for the violation, but her admission leads to a double complication. First of all, Satan, as Leutha's complement, steadfastly resists her assumption of guilt. Taken as co-parts of a single personality, Leutha and Satan represent two competing attitudes toward repentance: Leutha, tormented by guilt and fear, willingly submits to self-accusation for the purgation she expects it to bring; Satan, reluctant to make himself an object of pity, and entirely sympathetic with his past actions, rejects her confessional self-punishment. Secondly, after Leutha has taken the blame, infinite guilt encloses her in a female space. Unable to get relief from this burden, she finds it convenient to forget the repentance and pursue her transgressing desire. Leutha repents in order to heal herself of the crime's effects, but when this brings only despair, she returns to her original mode of self-fulfillment. On the Generation level of repentance, an individual begins by admitting guilt; finding that this creates a divided self, partly relieved and partly rebelling against the self-degradation, he finds some way to suppress or eliminate his repentant sense of responsibility.

Another version of Generation repentance takes place when Los accepts blame for the conflict between Satan and Palamabron: "Mine is the fault! I should have remember’d that pity divides the soul / And man, unmans" (8:19-20). Los does not realize that repentance can also divide the soul. Although the self-division caused by his confession is not nearly as pronounced as in the case of Satan and Leutha, it helps account for Los's self-doubt and
moments of despair. Los instinctively considers himself responsible for the chaos at the mills, but his repentance is premature and ineffective. At this moment of confession, Los doesn't really know what he is repenting of. He blames himself for forgetting the pernicious effects of pity, in effect apologizing to Palamabron for having sympathized with Satan's pity. But Los will later defend pity as he argues with his sons about the value of restraint. Los's instinct for repentance generates an internal conflict of considerable importance.

The third method of assigning guilt, the Beulah level, reacts against the division and conflict of Generation. At the Ulro state, someone else is guilty; in Generation, I myself am guilty; in Beulah, no one is guilty.

There is a place where Contrarieties are equally True
This place is called Beulah, It is a pleasant lovely Shadow
Where no dispute can come. Because of those who Sleep.

(30:1-3)

Beulah subdues the severe contentions of violation and guilt by granting a general amnesty. Beulah encircles its inhabitants with "arms of love & pity & sweet compassion" (30:12). At this third level of repentance, all sinners have their guilt removed or at least suspended, as if by an eternally forgiving mother. Many popular methods of psychological therapy depend on some sort of Beulah solution--either by dismissing the whole notion of a guilty act, or equalizing and hence neutralizing the guilt in any given conflict; or perhaps by training people to forget past debts and begin each new experience with a clean record. The inhabitants of Beulah, "who are but for a time" (30:26), cannot tolerate the rigors of permanent contention.

Beulah moments usually come after a violent conflict, when some female manages to lull both parties into temporary peace. At its best, Beulah preserves men from the dangerous effects of fault-finding--in particular, from the constricting network of defenses that an individual can build. Los recognizes the value of such repose in counteracting Satanic accusation:

These lovely Females form sweet night and silence and secret Obscurities to hide from Satans Watch-Fiends. Human loves. And graces; lest they write them in their Books, & in the Scroll Of mortal life, to condemn the accused: who at Satans Bar Tremble in Spectrous Bodies continually day and night While on the Earth they live in sorrowful Vegetations.

(23:39-44)

Enitharmon, one of "these lovely females," interposes a Beulah recess in the middle of the conflict between Satan and Palamabron: "She wept: she trembled! she kissed Satan; she wept over Michael / She form'd a Space for Satan & Michael & for the poor infected" (8:42-43). The effect of such deferral is difficult to estimate, but it may help prevent outright destruction. Enitharmon's intervention cannot postpone the conflict indefinitely. At its worst, Beulah amnesty may perpetuate or aggravate transgression by overlooking a fundamental disorder. Elynittriia's generosity to Leutha has quite unfortunate results:

But Elynittriia met Leutha in the place where she was hidden. And threw aside her arrows, and laid down her sounding Bow; She sooth'd her with soft words & brought her to Palamabron's bed In moments new created for delusion, interwoven round about, In dreams she bore the shadowy Spectre of Sleep, & nam'd him Death. In dreams she bore Rahab the mother of Tirzah & her sisters.
(13:36-41)

At the Beulah stage, Elynittriia abandons her arrows and bow, the very weapons demanded by the narrator in the prefatory hymn--"Bring me my Bow of burning gold / Bring me my Arrows of desire." Beulah subdues the eternal wars of desire by displacing guilt. The highest level of repentance, Eden, returns to the severe contentions of friendship and the pangs of repentance. As in the Generation phase, a subject accepts guilt, but somehow the process becomes redemptive. Generation and Eden repentance resemble each other so closely that it is dangerous to attempt a schematic analysis of the difference. The best way to approach Eden is to follow Ololon on her journey of recognition and repentance.

Oolon makes three speeches during the poem in which she tries to describe or account for the fallen world. Fox remarks that Ololon "has always asked the same thing," and finds her final speech simply the temporal manifestation of the first. Although Ololon's speeches address the same question, and to some extent even repeat the same answer, they show a gradual progression of understanding. The first occurs in Book One, after Milton has descended. Ololon has been lamenting his loss, and resolves to follow him:

And Ololon said, Let us descend also, and let us give Ourselves to death in Ulro among the Transgressors. Is Virtue a Punisher? O no! how is this wondrous thing: This World beneath, unseen before: this refuge from the wars Of Great Eternity! unnatural refuge! unknown by us till now! Or are these the pangs of repentance? let us enter into them.
(21:45-50)

Oolon makes this decision upon realizing that she has misunderstood Milton--or rather, that she has understood him too late: "for now they knew too
late / That it was Milton the Awakener" (21:32-33).
Ololon acknowledges that she has lost her immediate
opportunity, and faces a crisis of belatedness. Her
only hope is to undertake a descent similar to
Milton’s. Milton has descended in "self-
annihilation," attempting to correct the harmful
effects of his life. Repentance always means a self-
annihilation: in order to annul the past, a person
must turn against himself, and give up some means
of protection that had previously sustained his
identity. Milton, who assumes that his act does not
come too late, makes his descent confidently and
with considerable knowledge of what he is doing.
Ololon worries about a past that may be irreplaceable,
and approaches her journey with very tentative
notions of what it means.

She begins by positing the general purpose of
her descent—"Let us descend also, and let us give /
Ourselves to death in Ulro among the Transgressors." These basic terms of the journey will not change;
his final speech will again announce a descent into
death. But the tone and significance of the
passages differ substantially. Here Ololon makes
her proposal rather naively, with obvious curiosity
but little knowledge about the world below. She
treats "the Transgressors" as an alien, pitiful
group for whom her sympathy has been aroused.
Her intention to join them sounds a little like someone
going to visit a prison. She feels a substantial
but still quite vague sense of guilt: realizing
that the lower world suffers, she wonders whether
her higher, virtuous world can be the cause, and
cries at the thought of punishment. Ololon has
yet to comprehend that repentance amounts to a form
of self-punishment. Only at the end of this first
speech does she speculate about "the pangs of
repentance" and her venture into them. Interestingly,
Ololon seems to mistake Ulro for Beulah as she stares
beneath her. Looking at transgression in Ulro, she
first describes it in language more customary for
Beulah—"How is this wondrous thing: . . .
this refuge from the wars of Great Eternity:"—before
sliding into "unnatural refuge," a more appropriate
term for Ulro. In her innocence, Ololon only
gradually comes to acknowledge the pain of the lower
world. Her intention to descend, prompted by guilt
but still unsupported by knowledge, indicates a
desire to explore her origins, to retrieve from her
past the secret of a protected but empty present.
Her movement from higher to lower and present to
past itself represents a transgression, in the sense
that every transgression is a crossing over from
safety into danger.

Her second analysis of Ulro takes place much
further along, in a speech delivered by Ololon "in
reminiscence astonished":

How are the Wars of man which in Great
Eternity
Appear around, in the External Spheres of
Visionary Life
Here rendered Deadly within the Life & Interior
Vision
How are the Beasts & Birds & Fishes, & Plants
& Minerals
Here fix’d into a frozen bulk subject to decay
& death

Those Visions of Human Life & Shadows of Wisdom
& Knowledge
Are here frozen to unexpensive deadly destroying
terrors.

(34:50-35:1)

Still gazing downward on Ulro, Ololon’s wondering
curiosity has turned into fearful alarm. She
distinguishes between external and internal wars—
the former eternal and desirable, the later fallen
and deadly. Milton contains several images of
inside and outside. Although they do not conform
to a single pattern, these images clearly complement
the contrast between permanence and perishability
or identity and state that so preoccupies this poem.
Ololon is terrified to find that in Ulro the wars
of man appear to belong within the radical center
of human existence; belligerent contention and
destruction no longer seems a temporary, purgative
state, but the very essence of life. In her very
first words, Ololon resolved to give herself to
death, but this second speech finds her obsessively
fearful of death and decay. As she repeats "death"
over and over again (six times in the first fifteen
lines), it becomes less the one death, and more a
general term for the violence and loss underlying
everyday life.

Ololon, as the narrator afterwards warns us,
has not yet "passed the Polypus" when she makes
these judgments. Since "Golgonooza cannot be seen
till having passed the Polypus," it comes as no
surprise that she describes Golgonooza activities
without recognizing any hint of redemptive potential.
War and hunting, once "the Two Fountains of the
River of Life" (35:2), now bring only death; but
Luvah’s winepress of war constitutes an essential
part of Golgonooza. Weaving also belongs to the
deadly world Ololon sees: "0 dreadful Loom of Death!
0 piteous Female forms compelld / To weave the Woof
of Death" (35:7-8). But in Golgonooza, the magnifi-
cence of "every generated Body" is built by Los,

And the herbs & flowers & furniture & beds &
chambers
Continually woven in the Looms of Enitharmons
Daughters
In bright Cathedrons golden Dome with care &
love & tears.

(26:34-36)

Greatly afraid of death, Ololon shrinks from
the lower world in revulsion. While his emanation
is struggling in her descent, Milton appears to have mastered the intellectual principles of repentance—or as he calls it, "self-annihilation." Here he addresses Satan, his Spectre:

Such are the Laws of Eternity that each shall
mutually
Annihilate himself for others good, as I for
thee
Thy purpose & the purpose of thy Priests & of
thy Churches
Is to impress on men the fear of death; to
 teach
Trembling & fear, terror, constriction; abject
selfishness
Mine is to teach Men to despise death & to go on
In fearless majesty annihilating Self, laughing to scorn
Thy Laws & terrors, shaking down thy Synagogues as webs.

Milton helps interpret Ololon's fears. In fear of death, men construct themselves in protective selfishness. Death thus suggests the risks of self-exposure and influence; "life" in this restricted, pejorative sense would mean the maintenance of careful defenses to guard against the pain and loss of intersubjective contention. Milton in his principle of self-annihilation asks men to overcome their natural inclination to englobe themselves. The Satanic world presents a contest of separate, hostile wills, with men continually seeking to make themselves invulnerable. Each man strives to "become the covering" for the other. Milton proposes that men continually annihilate these protective wills, and reorient their interests according to a fuller, more responsible version of the self. He hopes that heightened sensitivity to the fine networks of human interdependence will help men discover rather than cover each other.

Such intimacy and mutual responsibility will increasingly subject men to the pains of guilt and the pangs of repentance. It is not clear how Milton's version of self-annihilation can solve the problems experienced by Leutha in her attempts to repent for Satan. Milton's speech has a revealingly inconsistent tone. He begins with a calm reflection on the necessity of self-sacrifice—"Such are the Laws of Eternity that each shall mutually / Annihilate himself for others good, as I for thee." But right away this selfless equanimity turns into an aggressive, scornful challenge, as Milton readopts his customary adversative vigor. Milton, like Leutha's Satan, does not seem comfortable in a self-effacing role. Ololon, like Leutha, attempts to take on guilt, in an effort to restore her relationship with Milton to eternal perfection. Ololon has been inclined to confess from the start, and sustains a repentant mood while making her descent. But she does not yet know what she is repenting of; in this journey to retrieve her origins, she has not yet accomplished the crucial passage.

Oolon's final moment of insight, the last dramatic speech in the poem, comes in response to Milton's long denunciation of crimes against the imagination. Milton concludes by announcing that Jesus will cast away all these obstructions, "Till Generation is swallowed up in Regeneration" (41:3). This final "till" passage, for once, seems to point simply forward or upward—rather than forward and backward, as do so many "till" clauses in Milton. Milton's Jesus will "wholly purge away with fire" (41:27) the "rotten rags of memory" (41:4). Fire, as Harold Bloom has suggested, is a preeminent Romantic figure for the power of apocalyptic presence. But once again the "till" points forward only to look backward; as Ololon responds to Milton's call for regeneration, remembrance returns upon her:

Is this our Feminine Portion of the Six-fold Miltonic Female

Terribly this Portion trembles before thee O awful Man
Altho' our Human Power can sustain the severe contentions
Of Friendship, our Sexual cannot: but flies into the Ulro.
Hence arose all our terrors in Eternity! & now remembrance
Returns upon us: are we Contraries O Milton, Thou & I
O Immortal! how were we led to War the Wars of Death
Is this the Void Outside of Existence, which if enter'd into
Becomes a Womb? & is this the Death Couch of Albion
Thou goest to Eternal Death & all must go with thee.

Oolon's concluding decision repeats what she has resolved from the beginning, to join Milton by giving herself to eternal death. But something in between has finally prepared her to make the statement; after she speaks, Milton comes to a rapid end. Oolon's descent has been a retrospective search for the key to repentance. As she suddenly understands that she and Milton must be the source of division, Oolon seems to be remembering not only her past life with Milton, but the poem Milton as well. Her final analysis of the lower world and eternal death represents a definitive interpretation of conflicts described in the Bard's Song and sustained throughout the poem. She now recognizes the Ulro as a very familiar state—most intimately her own—instead of an alien world, as she first saw it. In that first speech she gazed curiously at Ulro, "unknown by us till now"; now Oolon remembers that Ulro has been part of her all along: "Hence arose all our terrors in Eternity! & now remembrance / Returns upon us!" Oolon discovers Ulro to be an uncanny phenomenon, an intimate and original secret which hides as something strange and unknown.

Oolon is both a plural and a singular entity. When she uses the pronoun "us" in this speech, it could designate either Oolon alone or Oolon and Milton. For the first five lines, it seems that she might be referring to herself as a plural being. But in line 35 she uses the singular—"Are we Contraries, O Milton, Thou & I." It would thus appear likely that when "remembrance returns upon us," it is returning upon both Milton and Oolon. This scene of repentance has taken a turn away from Leutha's, in that the principal antagonists now tend to converge in mutual responsibility. Leutha took the blame entirely on herself, and she and Satan remained separate throughout. Oolon has traced back to the beginning of her problems with Milton, and confidently proclaims her discovery—"Hence arose all our terrors in Eternity!" But she continues in a slightly different tone: "O Immortal! how were we led to War the Wars of Death." Oolon defers the issue of original cause. Asking an unanswerable question, she seems to dismiss any inquiry which would try to determine unilateral and unequivocal fault. Leutha in her confession claimed to know a definite initial cause of the Satan-
Palamabron incident, her own jealous acts. Satan, her complement, reacts violently against this self-punishing repentance. Ololon's rhetorical question tends to push into the margin such matters of who first did what to whom, and directs attention to the general nature of human fault.

Ololon concludes with an intriguing set of metaphors. "Is this the Void Outside of Existence, which if enter'd into / Becomes a Womb? & is this the Death Couch of Albion." This represents her ultimate figuration of the lower world, and should be considered directly opposite to her first description: "Or are these the pangs of repentance?" Ololon has finally reached the world beneath by remembering the secrets of her past. In order to make this memory journey, she had to commit an act of temporal transgression; crossing over from present to past, she risks becoming dislocated in time, removed from fulfilling presence. The image of "a Void Outside of Existence" reflects her fears about what she may have discovered: Ololon's repentant memory traces back to an origin, but finds a kind of void there, an original lack. She now knows that severe contention and eternal wars of contrariety belong to her essence. Human souls aspire to, or think they remember, some sort of harmony or perfection, but all men find themselves coming after an original sin.

Given such a world, repentance becomes a crucial aspect of consciousness. If "the pangs of repentance" are really a "Void Outside of Existence," repentance does indeed create a female space. Repentance would seem to be an illimitable task, a boundless void. This void outside of existence, if entered into, becomes a womb. Once again Ololon distinguishes between inside and outside. Seen from the inside rather than the outside, the void becomes a different kind of female space. Confinement in a womb suggests some of Blake's greatest fears: as a place of protective exclusion and vegetative enslavement, it represents the lowest form of life, even "death-couch." But this is where Ololon knows she must go, into this void which becomes a womb--"Thou goest to Eternal Death & all must go with thee." With Ololon's clouds of blood wrapped around him, "Jesus wept & walked forth / From Felphams Vale clothed in Clouds of Blood, to enter into / Albions Bosom, the bosom of death" (42:19-21). As the preeminent model for taking on a burden of original sin, Jesus makes his descent into the pangs of repentance; confronting a void, he will enter a womb--the place where all the great events of time start forth and are conceived.

4 W. H. Stevenson, in The Poems of William Blake (London: Longmans, 1971), punctuates so as to make Satan the indignant one; since Satan has been wrathful and Elynirtria joyful, it makes better sense to take Elynirtria as the antecedent of "Indignant at the burning wrath." This reading also conforms to Blake's own punctuation.
6 Although in Milton Blake has not yet settled on his scheme of Ulro, Generation, Beulah, and Eden, all the elements are present for what will become in Jerusalem an orderly cosmology. Beulah receives its most elaborate description in Milton; Eden is mentioned several times as the highest state; Ulro is subdivided into two states, Al-Ulro and Or-Ulro, which later become the separate realms of Generation and Ulro.
7 Poetic Form, p. 180.
8 Bloom remarks: "Fire is the prime perspectivizing metaphor of Romanticism, and to burn through context, the context of precursors and of nature, is the revisionary aim of that metaphor." (Poetry and Repression [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1976]), p. 106.

Christine Gallant's *Blake and the Assimilation of Chaos* offers a Jungian interpretation of Blake's major prophecies. Accordingly, this study equates chaos with the Jungian unconscious and reads *The Four Zoas*, *Milton* and *Jerusalem* as expressions of the mythmaking process whereby Blake, through the use of what we can now identify as Jungian archetypes, was able to move from the "static" mythology of the Lambeth books to a more dynamic mythology—a mythology of "ongoing process"—by assimilating chaos or the unconscious. Blake achieves this assimilation by recognizing that chaos and creation, non-myth and myth, are necessary polarities that must co-exist in the reintegrated psyche. Gallant sees Blake's mythic system in the Lambeth books as being static because, she contends, it contains a dualism still closely allied to traditional Judeo-Christian millenarian thinking, which, according to Gallant, posited a linear vision of time and projected an eschatological vision that would totally exclude the darker aspects of the human psyche. In *The Four Zoas*, on the other hand, Blake begins to reject this dualistic view, as he enters into chaos and fully explores its psychological implications. Blake's first major prophecy, then, is a record of "consciousness...trying to comprehend the unconscious without being overwhelmed by it," depicting (1) a descent into the unconscious (the fall of the Zoas, who are agents of the conscious mind); (2) the revelation of the darker aspects of the unconscious (such as the manifestation of Vala as the "Devouring Mother" archetype), which the conscious mind either succumbs to or rejects; and (3) the acceptance of the unconscious through the imaginative use of its energies to create a mandala, a holistic vision that integrates consciousness with the unconscious (represented most prominently by the building of Golgonooza). In the last two Nights of *The Four Zoas* Antichrist is recognized as the "dark aspects of the [Jungian] Self," a complement of Christ that must be accepted and "incorporated into the process of Regeneration rather than being cast out." The apocalyptic ninth Night, with its invocation of agrarian imagery, becomes, for Gallant, the ritualized re-enactment of the "myth of the eternal return" (as defined by Mircea Eliade), playing out the necessarily cyclic interaction and interdependence of Christ and Antichrist, cosmos and chaos, as a universal, repetitive "cycle of generation, death and regeneration."

Having traced this Jungian pattern in *The Four Zoas*, Gallant sees similar patterns working on the biographical level in *Milton* and on the public level in *Jerusalem*. *Milton* is described as Blake's autobiographical journey through the Jungian process of individuation, as Blake recognizes and penetrates his persona (his socially correct self, represented by Satan-Hayley), incorporates his Shadow (the darker side of his psyche) and avoids being overwhelmed by the archetypes of the unconscious through the invocation of Milton as the archetype of the Wise Old Man, an archetype that helps Blake's
conscious ego avoid the temptation to appropriate to itself the mana (or power) of the unconscious and thus helps him escape schizophrenia (either seeing his visions as objective reality, or perceiving himself as a literal incarnation of Milton). Like Milton and The Four Zoas, Jerusalem is treated as an exploration of the unconscious, but, Gallant says, in his last major prophecy Blake, from the very beginning, more confidently affirms his hard-won acceptance of the unconscious and uses this new consciousness to diagnose and attempt to cure the psychological/sociological ills of nineteenth-century England, the cause of which is Albion's unconscious that he is to diagnose and attempt to cure. The unconscious, in the form of the Antichrist, as the source of energy for the reintegration of man's fallen psyche.

If this necessarily simplified summary of Gallant's argument makes Blake and the Assimilation of Chaos appear to be reductive in its implication of Jungian psychology to Blake's poetry, a more detailed examination of the argument would only serve to confirm this conclusion. Although Gallant clearly shows the attractiveness of Jungian psychology as a potential tool for analyzing Blake's works and begins her study with a caveat against the pitfalls of carelessly imposing Jung's system upon Blake's, her performance undermines her own good intentions and becomes an unintentional example of the dangers of imposing another system upon Blake's. While scholars such as Northrop Frye, Mary Lynn Johnson and Brian Wilkie have been more wisely cautious in their application of modern psychological systems, valuing these systems mainly as analogues that may aid in our understanding of Blake, Gallant asserts that "it is only through attention to the changing pattern of Jungian archetypes" (the italics are hers) that we can understand the changes that occurred in Blake's myth during the composition of The Four Zoas. Her determination to demonstrate the value of Jung's system as an exclusive means of apprehending the psychology of Blake's mythic process leads to the kind of oversimplification of Blake that she warns against, as well as to some serious misreadings of the texts and some distortions of Blake's thought.

The biggest problem underlying Blake and the Assimilation of Chaos is its use of the term "chaos." A great deal of Gallant's argument begs the question because of her unproven and unqualified equation of the Jungian concept of the unconscious with Blake's idea of chaos. When most readers of Blake are aware, Blake names many different things "chaos" and represents many things as being chaotic: the void created by Urizen's fall and the equally chaotic laws inscribed in his book of brass in The Book of Urizen, the social disorder described in America and Europe, the states of "Non-entity" and "Eternal Death" mentioned in numerous prophecies, the Mundane Shell, the "unorganized Blots & Blurs" of bad art--to name just a few examples. In short, Blake applies the word "chaos" and its analogues to everything that is not imaginatively organized (including rational constructs such as Deism) and not exclusively to what we can recognize as Jung's idea of the unconscious. To be sure, some of the voids described or mentioned by Blake, such as the one created by Urizen's fall in The Book of Urizen and Urthona's dens in The Four Zoas resemble the unconscious; but more often than not Blake uses chaos as a means of identifying modes of false consciousness or false vision. Therefore, not every mention or depiction of chaos represents Blake's confrontation with the unconscious, nor do symbols of error, which Blake desires to cast out, represent the unconscious that must be acknowledged and assimilated.

This loose application of terminology undermines Gallant's argument, leading either to confusion or to conclusions anathetical to Blake's basic tenets. For instance, it is absurd to assert that Blake accepts chaos and creation as necessary polarities of existence when Blake himself asserts in The Vision of the Last Judgment that the idea of a creation ex nihilo "is the most pernicious idea that can enter the mind and it takes the sound and sense out of the Bible & Limits All Existence to Creation & to Chaos." For Blake, the necessary polarity to creation is Eternity. Of course, it can be argued that in the passage I have quoted Blake is using chaos in a different sense than he usually does in his prophecies, but that is just the point: one needs to discriminate among these different ideas of chaos if the term is to have any value. Similarly, while Blake's Antichrist may represent chaos, he does not represent the unconscious or even symbolize unconscious forces that must be accepted as a necessary polarity of existence. Here Gallant completely disregards Blake's distinction between contraries and negations, and she also overlooks Blake's statements about the apocalypse as the casting out of error. When she says that Blake's advocacy of the wirey bounding line in opposition to chaos "no longer holds" in Jerusalem, since she sees chaos as an essential part of Blake's final vision, Gallant seeks to reconcile that which Blake desires to separate: the imaginative vision that triumphs over chaos.

This tendency to impose Jungian categories indiscriminately upon Blake's poetry persists throughout the book. In her analysis of The Four Zoas, Gallant tactfully resists the temptation simply to identify the eminations with the Jungian anima, but by the time we reach Milton we are told that Leutha and Ololon are both anima figures. Without explanation or qualification, Ulro becomes the personal unconscious. The nameless shadowy female in the Preludium to Europe, because of her snake-like hair, is likened to and thus identified with Medusa, who is an archetype of the threatening unconscious; and to support this interpretation Gallant accordingly describes the female's speech as being "savage," despite the fact that the form of her speech (a lament), Blake's allusions to Spenser and the Wisdom Books of the Bible, and the tone and rhetoric of the passage itself make the female an object of pathos rather than terror. In the analysis of Milton, Blake's poetic forebear is identified as the archetype of the Wise Old Man, even though in every illustration and most of the poetry Milton appears as a man in his prime.
In pursuing this kind of analysis, all too often Gallant uses the following rhetorical pattern: (1) Blake says x; (2) x resembles Jung's (or Eliade's) concept of y; (3) therefore y is identical to and explains x. This confusion of resemblance with identity, caused by a failure to notice important distinctions, produces, among other problems, a total misapprehension of Blake's concept of time. Drawing upon the agricultural imagery in Night Nine of The Four Zoas, Gallant equates Blake's apocalypse with the agrarian rituals that Mircea Eliade interprets as the re-enactment of the cyclical "myth of the eternal return," the repeated process of generation, death and regeneration. Through this ritual re-enactment, "sacred time" abolishes profane time, as the participants in the ritual return to the primordial moment when creation emerges out of chaos. Gallant distinguishes this concept of time from "the linear Judaic" concept of time, perceiving the latter as dominant in Blake's earlier poetry and the former as a new concept of time that Blake unconsciously reached in the process of writing The Four Zoas. This argument not only misconstrues Blake's concept of time in his earlier and later prophecies, but oversimplifies the biblical concept of time as well. Like the "consciously inspired" writers of the Bible, Blake was aware of the implications of the agrarian myths and rituals of the pagans; and, as we see in Europe, Blake represents and rejects the idea of mythic-cyclical time through the symbol of Enitharmon's sleep. In this work and in his other prophecies as well, Blake sees time as being both cyclical and progressive--a view of time that is perfectly in accord with the Bible and with eschatological tradition, as M. H. Abrams and Ronald L. Grimes have pointed out. While the narrative of the Bible is essentially linear, it progresses by repetition, as can be seen most obviously in the allusions to the Old Testament in the New and in the repetition of key motifs even within the Old Testament. Through this repetition of types, a dialectic of constancy and change, repetition and progress, cyclical and linear time, is at work in the Bible; and it is at work in Blake's poetry as well. Against the essentially conservative duplication of the processes of nature through the use of myth, both Blake and the Bible posit the continual radical re-creation of divine events through the use of types, which are rooted in man's historical experience. This distinction between mythology and typology--and the concept of time that each implies--lies at the very heart of Blake's aesthetic and explains, in part, Blake's preference for the Bible over the classics. To say that Blake abandons historical time in favor of mythic time is to ignore the function of history in his prophecies and to forget that, however radical his Christianity may be, Blake is still a Christian poet whose very radicalism is derived from and sustained by Judeo-Christian tradition.

One cannot, of course, take Gallant to task for not elucidating this or any other traditions that inform Blake's work, since her approach is not literary-historical. Nor can one affirm that because of the problems exhibited in Blake and the Assimilation of Chaos a valid Jungian interpretation of Blake is impossible. Such an interpretation, however, does need to be tempered by some historical perspective, as well as by some more critical tact. One senses that Gallant is not completely wrong: Blake's later prophecies do show a greater integration of elements of the human psyche that were formerly undiscovered or rejected, as witnessed, for example, by the change in the relationship between Los and Urizen in The Four Zoas. Yet one questions whether Gallant's application of Jung's system adequately explains this change, since the methodology is not one that "grants the work its own stubborn autonomy," despite Gallant's claims to the contrary. The problem lies, I think, in that which makes Jung's system appealing in the first place, the fact that Jung himself is the product of traditions that he shares with Blake, including the Romantic tradition. As with Blake's similarities to Boehme (with whom Jung was also familiar), the similarities between Blake and Jung are so striking that they may tempt the critic to suspend skepticism and become lax about probing differences. Building upon these similarities, the critic may then assume, since Jung is more modern and has the benefit of modern psychological research (which, like Blake, is really constructing metaphors of the human mind), that Jung has a more conscious grasp of what was unconscious in Blake. However, this assumption is shaky at best, since Blake, through his knowledge of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century mythographers, was quite consciously working with what Jung later identified as archetypes and was constructing, also quite consciously, his own model of the human mind and its processes. Therefore, it is difficult to determine what parts of Blake's work are a recording of a personal descent into the unconscious and what parts are a conscious exploitation of traditional mythic and literary material. Perhaps Blake's work is a combination of the two; but until this issue is explored more thoroughly, one must at least recognize the fact that Jung and Blake were consciously using many of the same traditions but not necessarily in the same way, that both writers were co-workers in the same enterprise (the exploration of "the extent of the human mind") and, therefore, that the differences between their systems are as important as their similarities. Most of all, when comparing Jung's system with Blake's, one must discriminate between analogy and identity. It is the absence of this kind of discrimination that makes the methodology of Blake and the Assimilation of Chaos so questionable and the book's conclusions so unconvincing.

The book's title provides, properly, an avenue toward its contents. The "evidence" of the imagination, of course, is the finished work of art, or, alternatively, a specific attitude toward experience on the part of the writer that is expressed and given shape in his letters, notebooks, or diaries. "Evidence" signifies the interaction between art and life, certifying that an imagination has existed and that it has interacted with life.

These sixteen various essays on Romantic writers, collected by Donald H. Reiman et al., fall roughly into two groups: those that draw extensively on biographical materials, such as letters, literary anecdotes, or journals, to illustrate the transforming force of imagination on the raw events of an author's life, and those that use mainly that author's published texts to establish a specific theme or line of argument in his works. In both cases, as Donald Reiman makes clear in his introduction, the objective has been primarily a scholarly one: the studies seek to clarify particular themes and attitudes developed by the authors with which they are concerned, and to derive these themes and attitudes from the context of the authors' lives and times. But the studies do not seek primarily to evaluate or comment on these themes or attitudes; this, as Professor Reiman says, would be a task for the general critic.

Notwithstanding this delimitation, I find that many of the essays, including some of my favorites in the collection, have been written "from within the bosom of Romanticism." I list some phrases that illustrate the prevailing sympathy of the scholars with the subjects of their study: Eileen Sanzo's "stretched across the city's own iron darkness"; Michael Jaye's "the empathic bond between men under the kindly auspices of nature"; and Carl Woodring's "Richard Payne Knight ... went far beyond John Baillie's point ... that an encounter with the sublime expands the mind." It should probably be said that not all the Romantic attitudes discovered in the volume would win immediate assent from all unindoctrinated readers, and I would have opted for a greater overall effort to maintain the distinction between the specialist scholar and the general critic.

The grouping takes in an extremely wide range of Romantic figures, from William Blake to Thomas Love Peacock, including three studies of female writers—one on "Plin" Clairmont as revealed in her journals, one on Mary Shelley, and one on Mary Wollstonecraft. This is a generous and helpful selection—and yet I must complain that with six essays devoted to Wordsworth there are none on Coleridge!

Search of Thomas Love Peacock"). Jaye's essay discusses Wordsworth's Alfoxden Notebook as evidence of a fundamental advance in his poetic practice in 1798 in several areas. Especially useful and suggestive are his remarks on Wordsworth's establishment of a linguistic usage capable of conveying the distinct mode of self-apprehension which is Wordsworth's subject in The Prelude. Also subtle and intelligent are his analyses of passages in the Notebook which reveal Wordsworth's initial explorations of transcendental experience in his poetry, and various modes of interaction between the self and nature. At times, however, his language becomes a bit too abstract and ambiguous, such as in the sentence: "Experiential clarity depends on prolonging the temporal experience, perceiving its inclusivity through diffusion and radiating pervasiveness."

Irene Tayler finely recreates Wordsworth's circumstances in 1802 in order to show how he produced several monitory figures in his poetry to guide and sustain him during that year of stress. The conjunction of the Leechgatherer, the Pedlar, and Wordsworth's brother John as "silent poets" is very good, especially since it is often overlooked that these figures are all idealized versions of the poet, and not really Wordsworth as he was in himself.

Donald Reiman's thesis in "Poetry of Familiarity" is a bold one. He asserts not only that Wordsworth's art was made out of his psycho-sexual conflicts, but that Wordsworth's poetic decline was the direct result of the resolution of those conflicts. The interaction between Wordsworth's personal life and the specific quality of his art is very complex, however, perhaps more complex than will ever be sorted out entirely satisfactorily; so that while on the one hand Reiman is surely right in proclaiming a connection between Wordsworth's relationships and his art, on the other hand he runs the risk of being reductive in this essay. Nevertheless, he identifies a fascinating sequence in discussing the different nature of Wordsworth's feelings for Dorothy and then Mary, and finally in turning to the effect on Wordsworth's marriage of the deaths of his young son and daughter.

In Aileen Ward's lucid essay, the "evidence of the imagination" resides not so much in works of art as in the transformations which Keats's attitude underwent toward art and his own role as an artist. Interesting for a theory of Romanticism is the final transformation which Miss Ward suggests, occurring toward the end of Keats's life: Keats's "Public" became in his mind an idealized notion of the "People" who would be influenced by his works in future generations.

William Walling's interesting and stimulating discussion of Peacock is a departure for this group of essays in that it attempts a more general assessment of its subject, perhaps because Peacock has been less extensively interpreted elsewhere. Walling defines the comic element in Peacock as a paradoxical harmoniousness achieved by the fragmented, jarring subjectivities which are dispayed in his novels. Peacock's work, according to Walling, can be seen as a criticism both of the excesses of Romantic subjectivity and of the idea that moral progress was embodied in the laissez-faire economic system of the nineteenth century.

Among the other essays in the volume, David Erdman's interesting study raises large questions about Wordsworth's practical response to the French Revolution, ultimately about the extent to which he would have been willing to use force to achieve any revolutionary purpose. Carl Woodring points out that the Romantic emphasis on the mind's role in perceiving the sublime underlies Wordsworth's description of the phenomenon in "Tintern Abbey." Interestingly, Woodring suggests that the Romantic sublime has something to do with the "terror of the divided self," but doesn't expand on the phrase in his study. Paul Magnuson valuably clarifies the term "spontaneity" in Wordsworth's poetic theory, linking it through the idea of voluntary excitement to the self-sufficiency or self-generating quality of the imagination. Joyce Hemlow demonstrates the modification of fact in Lamb's attempt to create a unity of feeling in his essay "The Wedding." Marcelle Thiebaux's compendium of citations enables us to gauge the response to Mary Wollstonecraft's writings in America, though most of the cited criticisms of Wollstonecraft's work are tangential or superficial. G. M. Matthews' essay on Shelley is filled with rich biographical detail which makes his interpretations of three fragments entertaining as well as persuasive. John J. Lavelle demonstrates Shelley's admiration for Pythagorean teachings which proclaimed the semi-divinity of a certain order of men who sought to embody their superior knowledge of virtue and truth in "lasting Monuments." Leslie Marchand documents the relation between Byron and Francis Hodgson. Betty Bennett shows the consistency of Mary Shelley's novels with the beliefs of P. B. Shelley, William Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft. Margaret Kingston Stocking provides interesting information about an unconventional lady, Pauline ("Flin") Clairmont, niece of Claire.

The only essay in the volume devoted to Blake, by Eileen Sanzo, explores the alchemical metaphor in Blake's belief that the imagination must turn the iron (industrial) age to one of gold, though I miss the specifics of Blake's vision in the essay--how is the Golden Age to come about? Nevertheless, though Miss Sanzo--or Blake--fails to name the alchemical formula by which the iron age of oppression may lead towards social justice and the millenium, her essay--like the others in this volume--testifies to the power of the imagination to encounter reality, and to give evidence of its encounters in fructifying, seminal works of art.
NEWSLETTER

MLA SEMINAR

W. J. T. Mitchell was discussion leader of the special session on Blake at the annual MLA meeting in San Francisco this past December. He reports:

The basic idea of this year's seminar was to explore Blake's ideas about language, with particular emphasis on his notions of writing, both as a material craft and as a symbolic activity. A secondary purpose was to bring Blake's thought into contact with post-structuralist theories of language, particularly Jacques Derrida's concept of "writing" in the extended sense (material writing, pictograms, ideograms, imprints, tracks, traces, and "marks"). Peggy Meyer Sherry of the German Department at Princeton seemed most explicitly indebted to the Derridean vocabulary, discussing the metaphors of the human body as writing surface and as alphabetic form in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, and showing by references to Blake's Notebook, how and why the pictorial figures in *Visions* embody calligraphic forms. Stephen Behrendt of the English Department at Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, discussed Blake's notion of a language of art (primarily pictorial) in terms of the problematic notions of original and copy, and in relations to the revisions in Blake's series of pictures on the theme of the "Plague." Nelson Hilton of the English Department at the University of Georgia enriched our sense of "Blake's Polysemous Words" with a series of meditations on key word clusters (e.g. vale, veil, vile, evil) that are the focus of Blake's phonetic and typographic playfulness. Hilton's presentation included a textual emendation to *Jerusalem* (worship/warship) that David Erdman promises to include in the new revised edition. David Herrstrom of Roosevelt, New Jersey, presented what he called a "literal" account of Blake's ideas on writing, stressing Blake's concern with the material signifier (calligraphic or pictorial) in the context of his understanding of the incarnation. Herrstrom illustrated his presentation with a close analysis of verbal and pictorial symbolism in the Laocoon engraving. Finally, Ronald Paulson of the Yale English Department stepped outside the circle of Blake studies to bring us news of other Romantic poet-painters who were concerned with problems in language and writing. Paulson's presentation focused on the way emblems, marks, "graffitti," and other verbal elaborations (titles, accompanying poems) tend to augment meaning in the work of landscape artists like Turner and Constable, in contrast to the augmenting and disseminating power of verbal-pictorial interactions in Blake.

It will come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the genre of reportage on MLA Seminars that the session this year was a stunning success. All questions were discussed fully, and with the most rigorous respect for logic and rules of evidence, all the basic problems were solved, and all had a chance to speak their minds. The only sour note occurred when the participants rejected the Discussion Leader's proposal to conclude with a rousing chorus of "And did those feet..."

W. J. T. MITCHELL, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.

ROMANTICISM IN HOUSTON

During 25-28 February 1981 the University of Houston will sponsor its third humanities and fine arts symposium, which on this occasion has the theme: English and German Romanticism: Cross-Currents and Controversies. Topics under consideration for the symposium include: German Romanticism and English Literature; The Spirit of Place in English and German Romanticism; German Idealism and British Empiricism: Romantic Philosophy in Germany and England; The Goslar Year: Wordsworth and Coleridge in Germany; The "Other" Genres; The Romantic Novel and the Romantic Drama; Romanticism: Revolution or Evolution?; Dark Romanticism; National Views of History in the Romantic Period; The Political Dimensions of the Romantic Period; The Woman Artist in the Romantic Period; German "Classical" Writers as "European" Romantics (Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, Holderlin); Romanticism and the Napoleonic Wars.

Papers on these topics and proposals for other topics in the area of English and German should be sent to Professor Theodore Gish, Department of German, or Professor James Pipkin, Department of English, at the University of Houston, Houston, Texas 77004 by 15 October 1980.

THE MENTAL TRAVELLER

The Mental Traveller by William Blake, presented by Theatre of Man at the Performance Space, 1350 Waller St., Sat. and Sun. Feb. 9 and 10, 1980.

I was very curious to see what director Fred Curchack would do with his theatrical version of the William Blake poem, The Mental Traveller, an extremely enigmatic and haunting poem about a psychic journey through the unending human cycle of birth, infancy, love, death, rebirth. Throughout runs the recurrent theme of the sexual struggle between women and men and how sexuality both infantilizes and empowers us.

Curchack seems aware of the potent possibilities of this poem and its relation to modern psychological concerns about androgyne, sexual roles, etc. The problem with the piece for me was that instead of giving us his own meditations on this metaphysical fable, he offers us a heavy handed Show and Tell.

First, Curchack recites the poem, then he recites it as a man and a woman "act it out" for us behind round egg-like scrims, and finally all three performers act it out again with variations. I enjoyed the recitation, I found some of the first shadow images--
clearly meant to be archetypal—captivating, and then I lost interest, because the work simply never went anywhere. It stayed literal—earnest, obvious images presented to us as Big Truths. The actors sweat and groan to demonstrate sexual passion, they double over to show us they're old, they arm wrestle to let us know there is a power struggle.

There's nothing demonic about all this, it simply lacked innovation and relied instead on conveying familiar images via a kind of intense athleticism. Perhaps because he didn't want to violate the poem, Curchack missed an opportunity to truly expand and explore it, winding up instead with something vaguely analogous to a Classic Comics version of Blake. I'm sorry that Curchack's considerable imaginative theatrical gifts—effectively demonstrated in other pieces—didn't take him farther along on his travels with the visionary poet.

MISHA BERSON


The Theatre of Man is currently offering *The Mental Traveller*, based on the William Blake poem of the same name. The poem is written in a spare, balladic form. It is one of the bleakest and most dismal visions of fallen existence. A baby boy is born "in dire woe" and given to an old woman "Who nails him down upon a rock . . . [and] lives upon his shrieks and cries." Meanwhile, "she grows young as he grows old." He fades to "an aged shadow" while she grows younger. The cyclical struggle repeats in the opposite direction, with the "Female Babe" growing older and the "Poor Man" younger. Only as they pass each other in age can love and sex be possible.

Adapted by Fred Curchack and heavily influenced by the techniques of physical theater, *The Mental Traveller* cleverly utilizes a large revolving mobile, from which dangle two life-size see-through screens. Excellent lighting, eerie, primitive instruments and long enveloping shrouds grace the dance-like movements of the woman (Laura Jorgensen), the man (James Bryant), and the traveller (Curchack). After two early and powerful readings of the poem—one acted, the other in darkness—the audience is hurled, without dialogue, through the agony and wonder of solitude, rape, birth, narcissism, self-destruction, sensuality, creation, revenge and eroticism.

Curchack's traveller at times merely creates and observes. At other times he participates in the countless permutations of relationships. He is alternately accepted and rejected by the two who "Wander in terror and dismay . . . On the desart wild." However, Curchack's world becomes too personal, focusing primarily on sexuality and interpersonal dynamics, leaving much of Blake's mythic insight only half-explored.

CHARLES PELTON

Reprinted from *City Arts*, February 1980, San Francisco.
With Corroding Fires:
William Blake as Poet, Printmaker and Painter
An Exhibition and Symposium Sponsored by
Union College and Skidmore College
May 9 and 10, 1980

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