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Cover (and illus. 1 for Butlin, "A Blake Drawing," 22, below): The Last Trumpet, c. 1785. Pen, black ink and grey wash, 8 1/16 x 8 3/8 in. (20.4 x 21.2 cm). Butlin #617 recto. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's, London.
I. Romanticism, Unity and Difference

How we define romanticism is more than a quibble over literary history and periodization; it concerns our very self-definition. Indeed, it raises the question of whether collective self-definition is desirable, avoidable or possible. Such questions are also crucial for an understanding of Blake and his relationship to our time. For Blake is at once the very icon of self-definition in opposition to unified identity; phrases such as "I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's" and "One law for the lion and ox is oppression" are repeated and quoted beyond the context of romanticism and literary studies. At the same time, Jerusalem stands as an intense project of unification, integration and collective redemption, such that even sexual difference is sublated in the final Utopian gestures of this prophecy. This essay will explore the ambivalence of romantic unity through the figure of sexual difference and will argue that Blake offers a way of understanding the relation of difference positively—that is, not as a relation between two self-identical terms, and not as a relation within some pre-differential unity, but as a difference that dynamically sustains each term in relation. This understanding of positive difference has recently been articulated in feminist theory, most specifically in the work of Luce Irigaray. Irigaray's work is exemplary of the post-enlightenment tradition within which Blake was also writing. Both Blake and Irigaray seek autonomy and freedom from imposed authority, but both also seek to temper or chasten this autonomy by arguing that the dynamic existence of a self can only be achieved in an ethical relation. As ethical, this relation must be more than just a mirror of one's self; the other must be a different self. This is why sexual difference is a crucial figure for defining a romantic, as opposed to enlightenment, unity. If we are to conceive of a politics that recognizes others, and not just those who can be included within a fraternity of brothers all possessing the same reason, laws and desires, then we need to think of different subjects. The "other" must be both other than myself but also recognizable as other. How do we preclude recognition from returning all otherness to the "same dull round"? To be a different subject one must be recognizable as a subject (and not an inert, passive and determined object), but one must also be recognisable (and therefore risk being included within the same). According to Irigaray the relation of sexual difference offers just this possibility (Ethics 5). Perhaps this is why, from Blake to D. H. Lawrence and contemporary feminism, it is sexual difference that represents the possibility of thinking a relation of difference that does not fall back into a static unity.

Recent assessments of the contemporary critical terrain have opened with the question of romantic unity, and its relation to self-becoming. According to Andrew Bowie, for example, our current zeal for post-structuralism might be tempered if we were to realize that debates regarding the limits of knowledge and representation were already played out in the romantic tradition. Furthermore, Bowie argues that the romantics might offer a more valuable, ethical and politically enabling response to our textual condition. If it is the case that language and representation preclude any possibility of apocalyptic unity or return to self-presence, then we might follow two paths: we might celebrate fragmentation, disunity, disintegration, difference and anti-foundationism; or, as Bowie advocates, we might recognize unity or the absolute as a utopian possibility—not capable of being represented in language, but intimately through certain art forms (From Romanticism 299). This might help us to re-politicize high romanticism, for the initial canonization of romanticism concerned just this relation among unity, difference and political resolution—a relation that is given a unique reformulation in recent feminist theory and in Blake's use of images of sexual difference.

1 In The Politics of Friendship Jacques Derrida has explored this possibility of a post-enlightenment politics that extends beyond relations of recognition, knowledge and active inclusion; such a politics would consider all those effects, relations and events that exceed the determination of the subject. Such a politics would be affirmative by moving beyond the enlightenment paradigm of self-determination, for it would also be open to what exceeds the cognition of the present. This politics of the "perhaps," as Derrida calls it, might help us to make sense of Blake's utopian striving for a relation beyond the self and the present, alongside Blake's resistance to any resting point for this striving.

2 An earlier criticism of French post-structuralism was made by Peter Dews in Logics of Disintegration who, like Bowie, insisted on the specific value of the romantic theorization of utopian unity in opposition to the French passion for difference and "disintegration."

3 According to M. H. Abrams, romanticism proper emerges in 1795 when political unity is no longer sought, and resolutions are achieved through poetry and individual expression. And Marilyn Butler, as late as 1981, also argues for an "internalisation" of romantic striving after 1795 (although Butler is less concerned to establish any aesthetic merit per se in this depoliticization) (Romantics, Rebels 50).

4 According to Rosi Braidotti, for example, the problem with post-modern fragmentation is that it arrives just at that moment when women are forming their own subjectivity; the disintegration of the self is one final moment of a Cartesianism that refuses to recognize that there might be more than one general mode of becoming (Patterns of Dissonance). Similarly, while Blake resisted all those Urizenic images of a reason that had become one more tyrannical authority, he also lamented the fall of the self into complete disintegration.
Now there are three ways we might respond to this question regarding politics and unity. The first would be to challenge the supposed de-politicization of romantic poetry in its striving for integration. Not only have Jerome McGann and Marjorie Levinson questioned the construction of romanticism through the conventional canonization of the more inward or psychologically-oriented works; they have also provided politicized and historical readings of those poems that ostensibly seek spiritual rather than political unity. (On such a reading canonical romanticism would be an apparently conservative moment, awaiting its critical redemption through attention to its actual historical conditions.) The second possibility, along the lines offered by the quite different work of Andrew Bowie, Steven Goldsmith and others, would be to sustain the idea of a turn to aesthetic or formal problems in romantic unity, but argue that this aesthetics has a political and ethical force. There is, it is argued, a specifically poetic striving in romanticism, and one that is at odds with any achieved, or achievable, political unity. However, it is just this disjunction—between the aesthetic and the political—that has a liberating and ethical force. According to Andrew Bowie, art can intimate a unity that will take any political debate beyond its given terms of reference and meaning. For Steven Goldsmith, it is precisely the recognition that any apocalyptic unity must be represented or poetically envisioned that precludes the imposition of any final, single or totalitarian unity over the arena of different voices. For Geoffrey Hartman, the need to re-invigorate the romantic "retreat" from culture is more urgent than ever. In the face of a cultural studies industry that wishes to reduce the world to representation and simulacra, poetry foregrounds the difference between word and world. In so doing poetry warns against its own risks of narcissistic self-enclosure. On this picture, "spiritual" or "poetic" unities are not de-politicizations but utopian gestures that hold the political open to question.

One perceived problem with both these lines of approach is their failure to consider the politics of discussing unity and fragmentation in general; what if these were gender-specific motifs? What if the aims of re-integration were inherently masculinist, and what if the acceptance of an otherness that lay beyond the self characterized a feminine way of existing? The third negotiation of unity concerns not just the relation between political and spiritual resolutions but the figuration of these resolutions through gender. Here, the striving for unity—whether political or spiritual—is argued to be inherently masculinist. The figure of original unity that romanticism seeks to retrieve is a displacement of an original maternal plenitude. In order to emerge as a subject there must be some subject/object differentiation, and this difference is represented as the difference between a male identity and a female object. The first object is the mother; and so the subject emerges as other than maternal. (Masculinity would therefore be produced through objectification, autonomy and self-definition, while femininity would be nothing more than the ground or object against which the masculine defines itself.)

Understood pessimistically, this has disastrous consequences for women. Less capable of differentiating themselves from their maternal origin, women never attain full subjectivity. Understood positively, this diagnosis allows for a critical re-reading of romanticism and for an autonomous feminine aesthetic.

Anne K. Mellor's Romanticism and Gender, for example, subsumes Blake's theory of the feminine within a general romantic failure to recognize the otherness, or autonomy, of female experience. According to Mellor:

Blake's gender politics conform to those of the other Romantic poets: the male imagination can productively absorb the female body, but if the reverse occurs, as when Vala or the Female Will covers the body of Albion in her veil, the image is negatively equated with a fall into death and self-annihilation. (23)

Romanticism can be read as a sustained attempt to refigure the subject's maternal origin in the subject's own terms. And so all those images of unity would function to re-integrate a subject that must disavow its debt to the maternal origin from which it is necessarily alienated. This definition of Blake within a "Masculine Romanticism" is not unique to Mellor and is problematic for several reasons.

Mellor also makes a further claim. If women are less differentiated, more other-directed and less inclined to objectify the original (m)other, then their poetry will have less to do with self-definition and the reintegration of unity, and more to do with care, empathy and otherness. Mellor's argument thereby brings the issue of romantic unity in line with the question of sexual difference. Mellor articulates a common feminist objection to romanticism: "Masculine Romanticism" she argues "entails the elimination of Otherness" (27). Female romantics, on the other hand, "typically endorsed a commitment to a construction of subjectivity based on alterity" (3).

What needs to be noted, of course, is that Mellor's reliance on psychoanalytic theory is itself a reliance on romanticism; for Freud's theory regarding the yearning for a re-

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1 The psychoanalytic explanation of this process of identification and objectification is given in Nancy Chodorow's The Reproduction of Mothering, while the ethical implications of this theory are spelt out in Carol Gilligan's In a Different Voice, where Gilligan argues that the paradigm of moral autonomy is inadequate to explain women's specifically other-directed forms of ethics.

2 This is why, for example, the early work of Julia Kristeva argued that women would have difficulty acceding to the Symbolic order, while male avant-garde writers such as Joyce and Celine would have to be relied upon to re-negotiate the relation between identity and non-identity.

3 Other criticisms of romanticism along these lines are offered by Barbara A. Schapiro in The Romantic Mother and Marlon B. Ross in The Contours of Masculine Desire.
turn to maternal plenitude was itself an articulation of late
German romanticism. What I will argue here is that recent
feminist theory, and Blake’s use of sexual difference, provides
a challenge to this supposedly romantic elimination of differ­
ence. We need to question whether romanticism was a striv­
ing for unity and indifference, regardless of whether this striving
be interpreted as a liberating utopianism or a masculinist
narcissism. Blake offers not so much an answer to this ques­
tion as a reformulation, and one that can provide fruitful in­
terchange with recent issues in feminist and literary scholar­
ship. The argument for a specifically feminine mode of differ­
ence marked second-wave feminism, but a third-wave or “dif­
ference” feminism has moved beyond the opposition between
equality and difference. Whereas Mellor draws upon those psy­
choanalytic theories that explain the difference between mas­
culinity and femininity, more recent forms of feminism have
regarded this explanation as one-sided. The idea that mascu­
linity originally negates the feminine assumes an already-given
difference between male and female. But, as Irigaray has ar­
gued, any such difference is achieved through a process of dif­
ferentiation, and this process might be conceived differently—
not as negation but as a positive relation. Crucial to this argu­
ment is the figure, metaphor, fantasy or image of the natural
female origin. For Irigaray, the subject traditionally emerges
as other-than some presence; only with the positing of an ob­
ject is the subject able to define himself as actively self-rep­
resenting (Speculum 182). The standard figure for this original
object is the maternal origin. This original unity has been
fantasized through figures of sexual difference. But what if
the subject were to relate to another subject, and not just to
objectivity? Transforming thought would demand refurging
female difference—no longer as inert original presence but as
itself capable of its own becoming (Irigaray, I Love). This would
mean that a critique of the natural, eternal feminine would be
achieved, not by reversing the hierarchy and asserting the value
of women as passive and less autonomous, but by imagining
a different form of difference. Now longer a subject/object dis­
tinction, there might be two modes of subject. (In Blake’s
terms, the female nature that is seen as alien, natural and im­
mutable will be transformed by recognizing that any self is
already achieved in relation to another self. This self will be
neither one’s own spectral image, nor an objectified other.
Just what this new mode of self would be is explored through
a relation of sexual difference.) The “feminine” is at once the
image that has underpinnned masculine self-representation and
a figure whose redemption will open reason to its disavowed
dependence. As Irigaray has argued, it is only sexual differ­
ence—two subjects whose recognition of each other goes be­
yond reflection—that can open an ethics. Blake, I will argue,
presents one complex form of what such an ethics might be.
We might see Blake, then, as an exception to a romanticism
that has, from Mary Shelley to Mellor, been diagnosed as nar­
cissistic and hubristic in its striving for totality.

II. Blake and Sexual Difference

In order to be critical of the loss of sexual difference Blake
did not need to anticipate the romantic narcissism that
Mellor and others have diagnosed; he needed only to look
back to Milton’s divorce tracts. In these prose works Milton
argued that a man’s wife should not be his corporeal chattel
but be, rather, a “spiritual helpmeet.” Just as God created
human beings free so they could properly reflect back his
divinity, so a Christian wife should reflect God’s own image
in her husband. Women are not other; they differ from men
only in degree. They may be associated with a realm of alterity
(the body, sexuality, visual attractiveness) but a true Chris­
tian wife likens towards her husband in order that she may
reflect back his divine goodness. Milton was quite clear that
the feminine should play the subordinate role within a dist­
inct hierarchy: “Who can be ignorant that woman was cre­
ated, for man, and not man for woman” (Complete Prose
Works 2: 344). But he was also critical of any image of the
feminine that would not reflect masculine glory: “man is
not to hold her as a servant, but receives her into a part of
that empire which god proclaims him to, though not equally,
yet largely as his own image and glory” (CPW 2: 589).

Blake clearly rejects the Miltonic conception of gender
whereby the feminine is the same as the masculine in kind
and differs only in degree. Contrary to the standard femi­
nist critique of Blake, Blake stresses the significance of gen­
der alterity. The centrality which Blake grants the concept
of sexual difference is evidenced in the culmination of Jeru­
salem where the union between the male (Albion) and his fe­
nale emanation (Jerusalem) is the condition for the possi­
bility of regaining human paradise. While such an apothe­
osis can be interpreted as an annihilation of the feminine it
also can be read as a celebration of sexual difference. Determin­
ing whether the feminine is either complementary or
subservient at the conclusion of Blake’s epics would there­
fore be central to the feminist critique of romantic narcis­
sism as it relates to Blake. What renders Blake’s project dif­
ferrrent from yet one more mobilization of the feminine to
resuscitate a flagging masculine subject is the ambivalent
status of his final unity. For Blake presents more than just a
retrieval of the female for a completed masculine subject;
redemption is achieved through the recognition of two terms
that are essentially related, yet never fully unified or inte­
grated.

There is also a double movement in Blake whereby sexual
difference is both a symbol and symptom of alienation as
well as the means for redemption. Throughout his prophetic
books Blake sees the division between male and female as a
consequence of the fall from eternal unity. In the opening of
the first book of Milton Los attempts to give Urizen definite
form. As Urizen takes on a biological and limited body Los
becomes enslaved to the finitude of his creation: “Terrified
Los stood in the Abyss & his immortal limbs / Greed deadly
pale; he became what he beheld” (Milton 3: 28-29, E 97). As Los moves toward this fallen form, sexual differentiation occurs: “he wept over it, he cherish’d it / In deadly sickening pain: till separated into a Female pale” (Milton 3: 32-33, E 97). After the emanation of the female form there emerges “a Male Form howling in Jealousy” (Milton 3: 36, E 97). The “Jealousy” of this male form is important for the subtlety of Blake’s argument. When sexual difference is constituted through opposition or conflict it is symptomatic of the general fall into disunity. Blake’s alien female emanations—Vala, Rahab and Tirzah—are external, objectified and threateningly independent to their male counterparts. However, it by no means follows that Blake supports the idea of a primordial and eternal androgyny to which human existence should return. Nor is it self-evident that for Blake feminine “otherness” should be subsumed within the masculine “same.” Indeed Blake negotiates a subtle distinction between the narcissistic assimilation of otherness and a dynamic relation of recognition of otherness. Albion’s emanation, Jerusalem, is a more benign female form because, though different, she complements, fulfills and recognizes male selfhood while chastening the masculine will to autonomy and “self-righteousness.” At one level she can be read as a domesticated and internalized feminine. But she can also be seen as a subtle critique of the masculine terror of female “Otherness”—the entirely alien femininity of Vala, Rahab and Tirzah. These negative female figures represent not an independent or autonomous femininity but a masculine projection of female alterity—hence their connection with other ideological constructs such as Nature and Religion. The total denial of sexual difference can be as pernicious as the other extreme: the elevation of gender distinctions into two totally independent and warring opposites. In the prophetic books all qualities have their place in the eternal “man” including masculinity and femininity. In this respect Blake’s Albion is “man” in the generic sense insofar as he represents humanity, and this tendency to universalize the masculine is always present in Blake’s work. But Blake also exploits the fact that Albion is specifically “man” insofar as he needs to reinclude his female emanation; it is this aspect of Blake’s figuring of gender which articulates a freedom, ethics and autonomy that also sustains an essential recognition of alterity. Humanity has been “man” because it has rejected its integrated and original femininity (Jerusalem) and externalized and elevated an independent and dominating female form (Vala). Nature, the feminine and spirituality have been set against the autonomous self; this is why these forms become tyrannical in Science, “harrlots” and Religion. It is the externalization and objectification of these forms which results in despair and terror. Just as Blake’s figure of Urizen represents a human projection of an externalised deity, so the alien “female will” is the feminine as figured by a fallen and alienated (masculine) consciousness. In The Book of Urizen Blake anticipates the emergence of the female form that he describes at greater length in Milton:

9. All Eternity shudderd at sight  
Of the first female now separate  
Pale as a cloud of snow  
Waving before the face of Los

10. Wonder, awe, fear astonishment,  
Petrify the eternal myriads;  
At the first female form now separate

They call’d her Pity, and fled

(Urizen 18-19: 9-15 & 1, E 78)

The female form here embodies pity—a quality which Blake saw as valuable in its place but also as a threatening element of the patronizing and domineering spirit of Christian charity. Significantly, this female form elicits wonder and becomes capable of the idolization we see later in Vala. Los attempts to embrace the female but she controls and dominates him through denial. Significantly, Blake located the doctrine of denial not in any feminine essence, but in the ideology of religion which exploited certain representations of the feminine:

But Los saw the Female & pitied  
He embrac’d her, she wept, she refus’d  
In perverse and cruel delight  
She fled from his arms, yet he follow’d

(Urizen 19: 10-13, E 79)

However, Blake’s female figures are not seen as threatening because of their bodily charm, but because of the gen-

9 The clearest defence of androgyny as an ideal in Blake’s poetry is offered by Diane Long Hoeveler in Romantic Androgyny.

10 Again Blake challenges the Miltonic theory of gender. Adam in Paradise Lost falls because of Eve’s “too heavenly form”; the feminine is thereby associated with the physical and visual aspects of experience. In Blake the feminine is threatening only from a certain (fallen) way of seeing.
eral human process of externalizing and idolizing what should really be seen as inward and human. Significantly, Blake is also critical of the Miltonic idea of woman as man's own image. When woman serves merely as an external reflection of male selfhood, solipsism as well as alienation occurs. Los does not see an other self in a relationship of mutual recognition but his own divided likeness:

Eternity shudders when they saw,  
Man begetting his likeness,  
On his own divided image.  

(Urizen 19: 14-16, E 79)

It is in such passages as the above that Blake most clearly attacks romantic narcissism. The feminine should not be the "other of the same," a mere reflection of the creator's own self, or as Shelley put it in "Alastor" "a prototype of his conception." In Visions of the Daughters of Albion Blake had already pointed out the hypocrisy of this doctrine of the woman being a reflection of masculine glory. After Oothoon has been raped by Bromion she internalizes his punishing doctrine and becomes self-condemnatory as she sees herself as an inadequate reflection of Theotormon:

I call with holy voice! kings of the sounding air,  
Rend away this defiled bosom that I may reflect.  
The image of Theotormon on my transparent pure breast.

The Eagles at her call descend & rend their bleeding prey;  
Theotormon severely smiles. her soul reflects the smile;  
(VDA 2: 14-18, E 46)

But Oothoon does not remain reflectively subservient to Theotormon and eventually points out the contradiction of Theotormon's self-righteous accusations: "How can I be defiled when I reflect thy image pure?" (VDA 3: 16, E 47).

Clearly, as well as repudiating the idolized and externalized "feminine" Blake also rejects the conceptualization of sexual difference along lines of similarity and "reflection." In fact the loss of the particularity of sexual difference is symptomatic and symbolic of a loss of identity in general. This is evidenced in Blake's use of the term "hermaphroditic" in a highly pejorative sense. In Milton Blake lists the cycle of churches and refers to them as "Giants mighty Hermaphroditic" (Milton 37[41]: 37, E 138). As Blake continues the list and includes the central figures who have united religion with statehood he emphasizes the loss of sexual difference:

... these are the Female-Males  
A Male within a Female hid as in an Ark & Curtains,  
Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Paul, Constantine,  
Charlemaine

Luther, these seven are the Male-Females, the Dragon Forms  
Religion hid in War, a Dragon red & hidden Harlot  
(Milton 37[41]: 39-43, E 138)

In this passage Blake associates the loss of gender contraries with the political appropriation of the spiritual. In so doing he demonstrates the ways in which a valuable aspect of experience (either spirituality or gender) can be represented as alien and therefore oppressive. Blake's list of names, including Constantine and Charlemaine, signifies the decline of Christianity into imperialism, the formation of a state religion. The rhetoric of concealment ("hid ... Curtains ... hidden") emphasises the extent to which the experience has been deformed by its political externalization. An absence of sexual difference ("Female-Males") is the feature of the "Dragon Forms" which construct a femininity which is not autonomously other but a sexuality harnessed to Church ideology. The confusion of sexual difference is at the heart of the fall of religion into statehood. It is when the spiritually redemptive capacity of sexual difference is externalized and made political that authentic difference is annihilated.

There appears to be a contradiction between Blake's lament of the loss of sexual difference in the "Female-Male" of state religion and his frequently expressed idea that gender differentiation occurs with the fall of the self into divinity. This can be clarified by seeing that the idea of a "fall" into sexual difference refers, not to difference per se, but to the alienation of masculinity from femininity—in seeing the feminine as thoroughly external to a universalized masculinity. If the feminine is simply outside or different from the masculine, then this will result in what Hegel referred to as "indifferent" difference: where the self-identity of a thing has nothing to do with its difference from other things (Difference 108). But if difference is understood as essential to autonomy and identity, then masculinity and femininity will require each other's difference in order to be. This might be why Irigaray invokes Hegel's idea of the concrete universal as crucial for the process of recognition; my identity or specificity depends upon recognizing the specificity of an other (I Love 144). This also makes sense of the ambivalent figure of the feminine in Blake who, like Hegel, was responding critically to the enlightenment assertions of identity, autonomy and self-determination. If otherness is regarded as simply external to my being, then it will be alien, negative and threatening. But if otherness—in all its difference—is what sustains identity, then we will need to recognize any seemingly negative other as at one with the self—not unified in a ground of indifference, but related through a sustained dynamic of difference. So, in Milton, we are warned of the "female space" which would set itself outside experience and limit the capacities of perception: "The nature of a Female Space is this: it shrinks the Organs / Of Life till they become Finite & Itself seems Infinite" (Milton 10[11]: 6-7, E 104).
Here Blake uses the word "female" adjectivally to describe what is external to experience, but he also exploits the sense in which what is constituted as feminine has, historically, been marginalized and excluded. By recognizing this, we can see why Vala is united with the concept of nature. For Blake both nature and the feminine are valuable when seen as humanized and integrated with the imagination; but when either femininity or nature is elevated above human experience (as in either the "nature" of science or the femininity of virgin cults) they can limit and impoverish existence. Blake unites his theory of gender with his general ontological claim that what appears to condition and determine experience is merely experience alienated from itself. Thus Blake's character Vala unites both external nature and external femininity. In Milton Ololon calls the theorists of natural religion "feminine" because their concept of nature is external and independent of experience just as the "feminine" has been externalized. The Deists have reduced the world to an alien, uniform substance. They are therefore no better than the traditional Christians who have set up and worshipped an other-worldly and alienated God. In both cases there is an oppressive exteriority (Nature/God) that is figured as feminine insofar as it is radically exterior, becoming a "Newtonian Phantasm":

> Are those who contemn Religion & seek to annihilate it
> Become in their Femin[in]e portions the causes & promoters
> Of these Religions, how is this thing? this Newtonian Phantasm
> This Voltaire & Rousseau: this Hume & Gibbon & Bolingbroke
> This Natural Religion!...

*(Milton 40[46]: 9-13, E 141)*

### III. Positive Difference and Redemption

Unlike the enlightenment Deists Blake posits a world of interactive difference rather than lawful and stable uniformity. For Blake sexual difference has a truly redemptive capacity. Because the history of Western thought has been a history of the isolated "selfhood," Blake sees the extension of the self to include alterity as the condition for the possibility of renewal. (This "inclusion" would refigure the concept of self and would problematize any clear boundary between identity and otherness; and this would be what distinguishes Blake's position both from androgyny and Jungian arguments for an anima. Renewal will be achieved, not through a unity that contains two terms, but in a constant dynamic between two continually differentiating moments.) Because the primary mode of alterity for Blake is sexual alterity, the union of masculine selfhood with its female emanation becomes the symbol for the regaining of human plenitude. Insofar as Blake uses the concept of the "feminine" as a metaphor for alienated otherness in general it is possible to understand all his supposedly "misogynist" statements (which criticize the feminine) as actually grounded in the historical observation that what we experience as the feminine is an alienated and perverted construction of patriarchal culture. Phrases such as "cruel delight," "female will" and "harlot" have their origin in a system of the projection of certain qualities and doctrines onto the feminine. This is most clear in Blake's use of the word "harlot," which in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* clearly refers to the fallen condition of the speaker. When this word is used again in more opaque contexts, alongside terms such as the "female will," it should lead us as readers to be careful of immediately attributing such misogynist intentions to Blake himself. The retrieval of alienated femininity represented by the "female will" lies not in eradicating sexual difference but in transforming the opposition from one of mutual exclusion to mutual recognition. Consequently, Blake seeks both to maintain the particular integrity and value of the feminine and to unite both masculinity and femininity within the eternal human form. Blake's inclusion of the feminine within human experience, as the culmination of *Jerusalem*, completes a process of internalization that began in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* with its critique of the forgetting of the human origins of religion.

In *Milton*, Milton's molding of Urizen in clay reincludes and subordinates the faculty of reason to the imagination. Indeed, the epic in general is concerned with overcoming alienated transcendence in various forms: spirituality externalized as religion, experience externalized as nature, and femininity externalized as the emanation. Milton descends from eternity, becomes embodied, encounters Urizen and in so doing enables a retrieval of his female emanation. In *The Four Zoas* these themes are also present but Vala, as a symbol of nature, provides a figure for the possible renewal of the alienated physical world. In "Night the Fifth" Vala is described as "the lovely form / That drew the body of Man from heaven into this dark Abyss" *(FZ 5, p. 59: 1-2, E 340)*. She is the alluring quality of nature which can lead to a forgetting of the spiritual character of human existence where nature is seen as independent to human experience. The discourse of the sciences, like the ideology of the feminine, has served to alienate human experience from itself. The characters in *The Four Zoas* desperately fight against the discourse of empiricism. After Albion has handed over power to Urizen, a world is built with "golden compasses, the quadrant & the rule & balance" *(FZ 2, p. 24: 12, E 314)*. In response to Enion's jealousy of Tharmas's display of pity towards Jerusalem, Tharmas laments Enion's dissection of his soul:

> Why wilt thou Examine every little fibre of my soul
> Spreading them out before the Sun like Stalks of flax to dry

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Tharmas imagines Enion as a natural being: “Sometimes I think thou art a flower expanding / Sometimes I think thou art fruit breaking from its bud” (FZ 1. p. 4: 41-42, E 302). He sees himself, however, as a scientific entity: “I am like an atom / A Nothing left in darkness yet I am an identity” (FZ 1. p. 4: 43-44, E 302). The division between Tharmas and Enion symbolizes the division between man/science and woman/nature. Natural feminine being separated from masculinity and viewed as independent becomes Vala the cruel nature goddess.

Although Vala in *The Four Zoas* represents a frightening and alien form of nature, Blake still accords her a place in the original unity from which the eternal man fell. Enitharmon narrates the “Song of Vala” in which she describes how “Luvah and Vala woke & flew up from the Human Heart / Into the Brain” (FZ 1. p. 10: 11-12, E 305). The use of the word “Brain” is significant, already showing how a Cartesian notion of mind as “thinking stuff” (*res cogitans*) creates just the sort of dichotomy that divides male reason from female nature. But nature or Vala, viewed from an expanded point of view that can encompass difference, is part of the total unity of existence; it is only when elevated above the imagination that she can become enslaving.

While Vala represents nature and its renewal in *The Four Zoas*, she is also important in the process of reunification because of her femininity. Although she is the “female will” of *The Four Zoas*, the process of reintegrating the feminine is central to the narrative of this and Blake’s later prophecies. The horror of the “Spectres of the Dead” in “Night the Seventh” is a consequence of their being without their female counterparts, thus precluding their possibility of vision: “Each Male formed without a counterpart without a centering vision” (FZ 7. p. 87: 30, E 369). Vala as a representation of alienated female will and independent nature is then joined by Jerusalem. The emergence of Jerusalem occurs after Enitharmon has woven bodies for the spectres; this process is described as “humanising” (FZ 8. p. 101: 46, E 374). It is only after the embodiment of the male spectral self that the retrieval of the female emanation can occur. In this sense, the hallmarks of romantic masculinism—narcissistic self-preservation and a spiritualization of self—are seen as impediments to redemption. Los and Enitharmon together create a form for human life, “a Vast family wondrous in beauty & love” (FZ 8. p. 103: 37, E 376). Immediately after this Enitharmon names and acknowledges Jerusalem:

> And Enitharmon nam’d the Female Jerusalem the holy \> Wondring she saw the Lamb of God within Jerusalems Veil \> The divine Vision seen within the innmost deep recess \> Of fair Jerusalems bosom in a gently beaming fire

With the appearance of Jerusalem, the body is no longer dark and Satanic, but a created and imaginative body woven by Enitharmon. More importantly, the atomization of the individual self is overcome with the recognition of the transcendence of the “Universal hand.” Jerusalem, the agent of this moment of redemption becomes the site against which a war of sexual difference is conducted:

> The war roard round Jerusalems Gates it took a hide­ous form \> Seen in the agregate a Vast Hermaphroditic form \> Heavd like an Earthquake labring with convulsive groans \> Intolerable at length an awful wonder burst \> From the Hermaphroditic bosom Satan he was namd Son of Perdition terrible his form dishumanizd mon­strous \> A male without a female counterpart a howling fiend \> For[r]lorn of Eden & repugnant to the forms of life \> Yet hiding the shadowy female Vala in an ark Curtains

> (FZ 8. p. 104: 19-28, E 377)

Blake uses the figure of Satan elsewhere (for example, the Bard’s Song of Milton) to represent the impulse towards an annihilation of identity and particularity. Here, Satan as an “Hermaphroditic form” is a figure of the primary loss of difference—the difference of gender. He becomes the warlike “female hid within male” by concealing Vala. This con-
"cealment" or "hiddenness" expresses itself in external nature and idolatry; hence the hermaphroditic character of Satan is associated with a "dishumanized" form. But the "hiddenness" or mystery of Vala is overcome when the Lamb of God descends through Jerusalem's gates (FZ 8, p. 104: 30-35, E 378). Vala herself is later redeemed in "Night the Ninth." As Albion awakes he gives Luvah and Vala their rightful place in the human form (FZ 9, p. 126: 5-10, E 395). After this has been achieved Vala, united with Luvah, emerges from a pastoral landscape and acknowledges to Luvah the vegetative sleep which has consumed her past:

Come forth O Vala from the grass & from the silent Dew Rise from the dews of death for the Eternal Man is Risen She rises among flowers & looks toward the Eastern clearness She walks yea runs her feet are wing'd on the tops of the bending grass Her garments rejoice in the vocal wind & her hair glistens with dew She answer'd thus Whose voice is this in the voice of the nourishing air In the spirit of the morning awaking the Soul from its grassy bed Where dost thou dwell for it is thee I seek & but for thee I must have slept Eternally nor have felt the dew of thy morning

(FZ 9, pp. 126-27: 31-37 &1-2, E 395-96)

Following this image of Vala's resurrection, Vala conducts a dialogue with the sun. She at first accuses the sun: "O be thou blotted out thou Sun that rais'dest me to trouble" (FZ 9, p. 127: 20, E 396). But after being reproved by the sun Vala begins an ode which praises the sun and natural harmony in general:

Rise up O Sun most glorious minister & light of day Flow on ye gentle airs & bear the voice of my rejoicing Wave freshly clear waters flowing around the tender grass And thou sweet smelling ground put forth thy life in fruits & flowers Follow me O flocks & hear me sing my rapturous Song I will cause my voice to be heard on the clouds that glitter in the sun I will call & who shall answer me I will sing who shall reply For from my pleasant hills behold the living living springs Running among my green pastures delighting among my trees I am not here alone my flocks you are my brethren And you birds that sing & adorn the sky you are my sisters

(FZ 9, p. 128: 4-14, E 397)

Vala, no longer a nature goddess, is now more like the Christian shepherd. Her discourse is no longer that of individual will but of reciprocity, brotherhood (and sisterhood?) Vala's overcoming of her own selfhood prefigures the conclusion of "Night the Ninth" where the importance of the recognition of others, rather than individualism, is proclaimed by the Eternals:

In families we see our shadows born. & thence we know That Man subsists by Brotherhood & Universal Love We fall on one anothers necks more closely we embrace Not for ourselves but for the Eternal family we live Man liveth not by Self alone but in his brothers face Each shall behold the Eternal Father & love & joy abound

(FZ 9, p. 133: 21-26, E 402)

The importance of sexual difference to the fall lies in Blake's interpretation of the fallen state as self-division. The emanation emerges before the separation of the spectre. Antagonistic sexual opposition is the first stage towards self-disintegration. The pathology of this type of sexual difference is made clear by Urizen who likens Ahania to Vala, the archetype of female will, as he casts her out:

Saying Art thou also become like Vala. thus I cast thee out Shall the feminine indolent bliss, the indulgent self of weariness The passive idle sleep the enormous night & darkness of Death Set herself up to give her laws to the active masculine virtue Thou little diminutive portion that darst be a counterpart Thy passivity thy laws of obedience & insincerity Are my abhorrence. Wherefore has thou taken that fair form Whence is this power given to thee! once thou wast in my breast A sluggish current of dim waters.

(FZ 3, p. 43: 5-13, E 328-29)

Urizen's yearning for a past when Ahania was not a counterpart but a "diminutive portion" recalls the Miltonic idea of hierarchical subordination, where Ahania would be a necessary but inferior aspect of Urizen's masculine self. Blake demonstrates the futility of this model of sexual difference; it is the self-enclosed and domineering Urizen who demands subordination. Because Urizen perceives himself as pure
masculine activity, feminine passivity can only be a threat; even in his supposedly unified past Ahania's passivity is likened to a "sluggish current.'' Urizen cannot envision a sexual difference of equal contraries; he even adopts a perverted form of the Miltonic trope of the feminine self as a reflection of the masculine superior: "Reflecting all my indolence my weakness & my death" (FZ 3 p. 43: 18, E 329). As we have seen, this metaphor of reflection is subverted in Visions of the Daughters of Albion where Oothoon challenges Theotormon's subordination with the rejoinder: "How can I be defiled when I reflect thy image pure?" (VDA 3: 16, E 47). The problem with Urizen's attitude towards sexual difference is the same as with his attitude towards being in general. Reason must always totalize, define and assimilate that which it examines. Urizen's assertion that Ahania is a diminutive portion of his existence is all part of his "self-closed" universe which cannot acknowledge others or otherness.

IV. Conclusion

While recognizing the importance of alterity and thereby challenging the enlightenment doctrine of the self-authoring subject, Blake also saw the importance of interaction with the other. An entirely alienated femininity is merely a further consequence of the masculinist narcissism that demands its own reflection; all that falls outside the realm of this masculine "same" would be a chaotic and oppressive feminine exteriority. In order to acknowledge the integrity of the other it is essential that the other forms part of what it means to be human. It is this humanizing of gender contraries that represents one more aspect of Blake's challenge to the universalizing masculinist humanism of the enlightenment.

Rather than simply affirm the passive side of the male/female hierarchy—a hierarchy that has underpinned the enlightenment notion of a subject set over against nature—Blake's poetry imagines an ethical relation between the sexes, where what is other than the self is neither a mirroring self nor an object but a different dynamic of self. Blake argues for an affirmative, rather than negating, relation between spirit and body, male and female, the past and the future, and the present and utopia. Otherness, figured through the two sexes, is therefore an ethical recognition of that which exceeds the self. What Blake's romanticism offers is an articulation of ethical difference and integration, in opposition to what has been described as a history of logocentrism (where one mode of being or "logic" has represented and determined being in general). This romanticism is a striving beyond political unity, precisely because it sustains a perpetual question in relation to that unity, a question of what exceeds representation, selfhood, knowledge and determination. But for Blake this "beyond" is not the empty and negative beyond of what exceeds the limit of one's self; it is the specific, desiring, embodied and different becoming of the other sex.

This is not to argue, then, that we ought to simply include women in romanticism as it is already defined, and reject the notion put forward by Mellor that male and female writers write differently. Rather, romanticism itself opens the question of the boundaries between self and other, and the crucial figuration of sexual difference in the production of these boundaries. Romanticism thus paves the way for later movements, such as psychoanalysis and post-structuralist feminism, that will challenge any supposedly self-evident definition or limit of the subject. It is not that there are pre-given male and female selves who are then expressed (Mellor) or figured (Fox) in romantic poetry. Romantic poetry is an exploration of the self and its constitutive figures, fantasies and metaphors of sexual difference. In the case of Blake, this refusal to decide the nature or boundary of sexual difference is clearly evidenced by his continual criticism of any sexual dichotomy that has fallen into a clear self/other divide; for it is sexual difference that is most resistant to resolution in his work. As Irigaray shows in Speculum of the Other Woman, it is not the avowed intention (or sexism) of a philosopher that is central for a critical reading, for it is at the level of the "imaginary" that texts are produced and work. All those Western metaphysical ideas of matter, presence, passivity and foundation are, Irigaray demonstrates, only conceivable through an originating fantasy that figures an active masculine reason set over against a passive feminine nature. (This is not to argue that thought is corrupted by images, but that thought is given through the opening of certain images.) Irigaray's radical ethics, like Blake's poetry, therefore employs a double strategy: first, begin by mimicking all those sexually determined figures that have represented what it is to think. (For Blake, Urizen is the very personification of reason, thus showing how a supposedly abstract universal quality has a quite specific body and sex); second, refigure what it means to think by imagining new types of difference. This explains the open-endedness of

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12 The term "logocentrism" is crucial to Jacques Derrida's critique of Western metaphysics, a tradition that Derrida sees as being determined by a project of returning all that is to a present, identical and unified logic of the same. See, in particular, "Tympan" in Margins of Philosophy.

13 This is certainly the suggestion of Elizabeth Fay's summary of the relation between romanticism and feminism. Fay concludes her brief history by noting the presence of typically romantic themes in women writers of the period (400).

14 This would mean taking criticism beyond the sex/gender distinction, a distinction that separates the natural biological body from its cultural representation (Wolfson 385). For, as Blake so clearly showed, it is only through representational processes, such as poetry, that dichotomies such as that of biology and culture or sex and gender are effected.

15 This non-resolution is noted by both Kaplan and Moskal, although both regard this sustained difference as a sign of Blake's sexism.
Blake's prophecies, and the continual motif of a redemption from images and systems that then reifies into yet one more system. Blake's maintenance of sexual difference is neither, as Mellor argues, yet one more typically masculinist incorporation of otherness, nor a sustained hierarchy (Kaplan). Perhaps, like so many feminists after him, Blake saw sexual difference as a question and a project, and not as a category by which the politics of texts could be judged in advance.

Works Cited
William Bryan, Another
Anti-Swedenborgian Visionary
Engraver of 1789

BY DAVID WORRALL

In my essay "Blake and 1790s Plebeian Radical Culture" published in Blake in the Nineties (Clark and Worrall, 1999), I referred to a letter written by one "WBrian" to which I attributed the date of 12 March 1789 and added that it was intercepted and discussed by the British Government's Privy Council on 13 December 1789. The text of this letter in the Privy Council papers deposited in the Public Record Office, Kew, is now reproduced in full below (illus. 1). Around the time of Blake in the Nineties's production, Dr. Jon Mee of the University of Oxford suggested to me that its author might be William Bryan of the Avignon Society, a group of European illuminists active in the late 1780s. Although I had missed the references, Bryan had already been discussed in Morton Paley's The Continuing City (1983 [130-31]), Clarke Garrett's Respectable Folly (1975) and, much earlier, Robert Southey's Letters from England (1807). With Blake in the Nineties already beyond the proof stage and, with no absolutely firm means of connecting "WBrian" with William Bryan, I decided to leave my comments as they stood. As an avid researcher of fairly obscure London radicals and artisans I knew that, in their particular culture, the spelling of names in contemporary manuscripts is a scholarly minefield. Fathers and sons frequently shared first names and sometimes transmitted political and theological beliefs, wholesale, down the generations to the confusion of modern scholarship. A variant spelling of the last name, plus only the evidence of an initial letter of the forename, left too many hostages to fortune. In the end, I did not feel inclined to commit myself in print and so Blake in the Nineties went to press with "WBrian" remaining unidentified. However, I now have information which corroborates Mee's identification and requires both a correction and expansion of details I gave in Blake in the Nineties.

The basis for calling Bryan's letter to the attention of readers of BIQ and Blake in the Nineties is that William Bryan, like William Blake, was an ex-Swedenborgian visionary engraver who lived in London during 1789 and who experienced a vision while working at his rolling press. In addition, the lodging of his letter among Privy Council papers in 1789 is evidence of the significance attached to illuminist organizations some months before the appearance of the better known allegations laid out in Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790). Finally, in the light of Joe Viscomi's hypothesis of a four-plate anti-Swedenborgian core for The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (Viscomi, 1997, 1998, 1999), the contents of Bryan's letter provide a remarkable social and theological context for Viscomi's conjectural Ur-Marriage, although I know of no empirical evidence to suggest Blake ever knew, read or met William Bryan.

There are two material corrections to the account given in my essay "Blake and 1790s Plebeian Radical Culture." The first is that the letter is dated "12 Month 13 1789," that is "13 December 1789," and not the date given in Blake in the Nineties. In other words, contrary to what I said in my essay, there is no particular significance to be attached to a connection between the date of Bryan's letter and William and Catherine Blake's signing of the Great East Cheap Swedishborgian conference register in April 1789. Inexplicably, I had noted the date as "12 March" having mis-read the manuscript and ignored the "13." I plead stupidity, but at that time I did not appreciate that both William Bryan, and Bryan's friend John Wright, habitually employed various circumlocutions in order to avoid the Gregorian calendar.

In summary, "WBrian" can now be identified with certainty as William Bryan, a copper plate printer and bookseller who worked from No. 51 Upper Mary-le-bone Street. Bryan's occupation as a copper plate printer meant that although his main work would routinely be in printing from plates already finished by another engraver, he would also have engraving skills himself. Indeed, in his account of this period Bryan specifically states that he was able to work at "writing, engraving, printing, &c." (Bryan 1795 [29]). If he was at all typical of other copper plate printers, Bryan would use these skills to produce items such as share certificates, invitations, trade cards and the general stationery business of London's commercial and artistic life. Paradoxically, although copper plate printers probably did not have a training in engraving of the rigour Blake experienced under Basire, they were outnumbered by engravers in the ratio of about five to one (Maxted 1977). In other words, in respect to their trades, Bryan was a much rarer London bird than Blake.

Upper Mary-le-bone Street near Cavendish Square to the north of Oxford Street was a minor center of contemporary progressive religious and political activity. Down the road, on the same side at No. 7, lived Thomas Clio Rickman, later a member of the London Corresponding Society (LCS), the

2 Southey (1807), Letter LXVIII.
3 For an example of this happening, see Worrall (1997).

The production of Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job (1826) involved negotiations with two copper plate printers with Blake and John Linnell suddenly switching to the cheaper of the two as the project neared its conclusion (Lindberg 1973 [27n121]).
friend and biographer of Tom Paine and the publisher of Paine's controversial Address to the Addressers (1792). More remarkably, at least by late 1790, three doors down from Bryan at No. 45 lived the eminent Swedenborgian, Carl Bernhard Wadström. Pushing outwards Bryan's social circle a little further, his close friend the carpenter John Wright attended worship with the East Cheap Swedenborgians in 1788, a gathering place William and Catherine Blake also visited in April 1789 (Wright 1794 [4]). Both Wright and Bryan, following allegedly independent visions in early 1789, journeyed to Avignon, France, to meet up with the European illuminists who called themselves the Society of Avignon and stayed there until around September 1789 when they both returned to London. Later on, both men became followers of Richard Brothers and wrote pamphlet testimonies to him which recalled in some detail the events of 1789, John Wright in A Revealed Knowledge Of Some Things That Will Speedily Be Fulfilled In The World, Communicated To A Number Of Christians, Brought Together At Avignon (1794), and William Bryan in A Testimony of the Spirit of Truth, Concerning Richard Brothers (1795).

The empirical basis for identifying the "WBrian" of 1789 with William Bryan comes from textual evidence in Wright's book of 1794. As a part of his recollection of their time in Avignon, Wright printed extracts from journals and notes which he and Bryan had made there back in 1789, giving them the overall heading of "Remarkable prophecies revealed to the spiritual society at Avignon" (Wright 1794 [36]). Wright does not distinguish who-wrote-what but, rather, implies that keeping these journals was a venture which had their joint participation. Crucially, Wright's Revealed Knowledge of 1794 quotes almost word-for-word a passage which also occurs in Bryan's letter held by the Privy Council since late 1789:

[I am] ...the angel of the Eternal who am sent before the face of the Lamb to sound the trumpet on the mountains of Babylon to make known to the nations that the God of Heaven will soon come to the gates of the earth, to change the face of the world; & to manifest his power & glory. (PRO PC 1/18/19, 13 December 1789)

The ANGEL of the ETERNAL who stands before the face of the LAMB to sound the trumpet upon the mountains of BABYLON; to advertise the nations, that the GOD of Heaven will soon arise at the gates of the earth to change the face of the world, to manifest his power and his GLORY. (Wright 1794 [40])

Bryan's letter was deposited in official government records for 1789. It therefore has an archaeological precision in terms of evidence for its dating; all Privy Council business for 1789 was simply gathered into one bundle of documents and tied up with string. The spelling of Bryan's name as "WBrian," with an "i" instead of a "y," is something of a mystery since Bryan appears to have been connected with a printing family of that name (and spelling) in Bristol. It may be the case that the letter deposited in the PRO is a copy made by a government scribe who mistook the spelling because he was writing it at the end of his task of copying. The document is not the folded, addressed, envelope into which many, if not most, contemporary letters were formed. Nevertheless, during Richard Brothers's interrogation by the Privy Council in 1795, Brothers was asked about his connection with Bryan and Wright. There are two copies of the interrogation, one in rough and one a finished, "clean" copy. The rough copy shows that the scribe attending the interrogation wrote Bryan's name the first time with a "y" and the next time with an "i." The "clean" copy gives "Bryan" correctly. Of course, in a fashion similar to some modern people, Bryan may simply have been as playful with the spelling of his own name as he was with the names of the month. I have not yet come across an authenticated example of Bryan's handwriting.

The letter's place in the Privy Council archive for 1789 is both more and less straightforward than the brief account I gave in Blake in the Nineties. The rest of the bundle of papers comprise an otherwise fairly hum-drum collection of reports on grain stores, American corn, notes on militia returns and, earlier in the year, drafts of thanksgiving proclamations for George III's recovery from "madness." Of course, the Privy Council in the late eighteenth-century was much more important than that body is now, approximating in stature and composition to today's Cabinet. During 1789 the King sometimes attended its meetings but by the early 1790s this appears to have become less common. In 1794 a group of 10 or so Privy Council members, including William Pitt, directly interrogated the LCS treason trial defendants, including Thomas Spence who was arrested under the Suspension of Habeas Corpus and freed without charge when the LCS trials collapsed. At the time of the Privy Council's interrogation of Richard Brothers in 1795, it appears to have combined its usual mixed judicial/political role with that of psychiatric medical board.

There is no record of a Privy Council meeting after the date of Bryan's letter in December 1789 when all documentation appertaining to that year's Privy Council business was filed. Also, contrary to what I may have implied in Blake in

5 Charles Bernard Wadström, In the month of April, 1788 ... (1790). On Wadström, see Paley (1979) and, more recently, Rubenstein and Townsend (1998).
6 Southey (1807) reprints parts of these journals, although not the extract reproduced here.
...By a part of this letter to my brother, I am informed that it is thy desire, I should explain in writing wherein Emanuel Swedenborg has erred. I remember mentioning to thee, that he had made it in 6 parts, which is certainly true, since it was revealed to our society by an immediate communications with Heaven, and in the proper time he fully explained it made public. But then we were not inclined. It has been revealed respecting Emanuel Swedenborg, by the very beings who had communicated with him, that for a long time he was faithful in recording the revelations they gave, which contained nothing but truths. But owing to his own divination, not thoroughly understanding them, or wanting to explain them to others, he has sold it to many volumes that, which un混合 with his own, would have made one volume only, a volume that, both for the present & approaching times, the most valuable treasure among public works, except the Bible.

It pleases the Lord also to command certain men to go to him, to tell him his error, though he knows that he is the man. And also the same communications, with himself, unfortunately for E.B. all his orders he would not believe, because it did not please the Lord to communicate it to him by the mediators of his angels, which prove opened a door for the great terror of mankind to deceive him also, which much of his latter writing are mixed with revelations from that source. For the satisfaction of those who would understand, who find that in his writings there is much truth, with which they are much pleased & delighted, I am permitted to say that a time will come when they will be given pure & unmodified.

I was a lover of the truth. I found in his writings a great I love them, but I could not help always seeing in them some manifest contradictions of also that they are in some places opposed the Holy Scriptures, every part of them on which the laws of God, our much love is expressed as good, as also he may be believed in saying that there will be a new church, though he hath not spoken truth in all that he has said on that subject.

The Lord.
The Lord is preparing those whom he chooses out of all nations,硬化
all people on the face of the earth, to bring forward his new church
which he himself will guide and govern, which it is revealed shall
be in our days; to which purpose I am permitted to transcribe
the following words of the angel Gabriel:

"I am Gabriel, the angel of the heavenly, who am sent
before the face of the Lamb, to make known to the nations that the God of Heaven shall
soon come to the gates of the earth, to change the face of the earth, to
manifest his power, glory. He has raised the standard against the
inhabitants of the earth, the ages have not much longer to linger, for
the accomplishment of his promises, if they will not turn to other
generations, his justice. I repeat it unto you, O, O. Nations;
the heavens call the times, the times that walked in the shadows
are days of darkness, without light. Without strength is coming to
change the face of the world. To begin his new reign, the time is
near wherein the promises will be accomplished. The heavens shall
flow in large streams. That the enemies of God may submit no longer,
that the true religion may be known all over the world, prepare
ourselves, do not cease to pray, and do not fear anything from the
calamities which are to happen, for you will not experience them.
We pray you, continue united, youthful.

My friend has my permission to communicate the above, to as
many as he chooses, of being the bearer of these words, that
all my fellow beings, may be warned of the near approach of that time
which is to free them, but for lighter life, to manifest on earth the
Son of Man, his glorious kingdom, or else death and condemnation in the
manifestation of the Divine in the State.

May God grant to all a lot, fortunate in him, as my students desire a
work, it will be so with all those who by giving their wills to the
God, refusing the world, whose life a worldly become united a youthful
in God. - From thy friend, Mortan"
the Nineties, there is no direct evidence that the letter was actually discussed by the Privy Council. However, because Privy Council minutes were irregularly kept and do not always provide either a full or systematic record of documentation received, or business evidently transacted, Privy Council consideration is not precluded although such discussion may have existed on a less formal basis. Letters are sometimes included in Privy Council records, but usually as solicited reports. Of course, the interception of private letters throughout the period 1790-1830 was completely routine: I have myself read hundreds of such examples. Some, but not all, of the intercepted or controversial documents sent up for perusal at Privy Council level would first have come through the body now known as the Home Office. However, my cursory search through Home Office documents for 1789 does not reveal any obvious context for Privy Council interest in ex-Swedenborgian visionaries.

There is one startling possibility which should be tentatively considered: that there was a Swedenborgian in the Privy Council. Marsha Keith Schuchard (1992) has already written about Benedict Chastanier's role in early 1780s London illuminist, freemason and Swedenborgian circles but there are further details to add. In February 1781 a letter and printed prospectus from Chastanier, trawling for support to publish Swedenborg's works, was received into—of all places—the War Office. In the context of this file, the most obvious recipient was Lord Amherst whose role as commander-in-chief extended over British naval forces as well as the army in India. By 1789 Amherst was a member of the Privy Council and attended its meeting on 4th November of that year. His motive for bringing forward any Swedenborg material he had in his possession would, I guess, be an over-riding loyalty to the King plus an urge to give full disclosure. Whoever bridged the link between War Office and Privy Council—if such a thing happened—the existence of these documents about Swedenborg in their respective government archives is a matter of fact.

In my essay I also suggested that the primary reason why the Privy Council bothered at all with Bryan's strange letter was because of its reference to how "Human Blood will flow in large streams, that the enemies of God may subsist no longer & that the true religion may be known all over the world." I said that this combined veiled threats of religious violence, extremism and domestic unrest. While this conjecture is still valid, knowledge of Bryan's identity and his links with the Society of Avignon now highlights an apparently casual phrase in the text of his letter: "I remember mentioning to thee that he [Swedenborg] had erred in 6 points, which is certainly true, since it was revealed to our society by an immediate communication with Heaven" (my italics). Given the general anxieties about illuminism evident in Burke's Reflections, plus the French background of the Avignon Society in the Revolutionary year, the letter's interception is a considerable indicator of how seriously government viewed visionaries in general and international prophetic organizations in particular. More specifically, our knowledge of the length of Bryan's stay at Avignon (between February and September 1789) provides a remarkable coincidence about the date of his own disillusionment with Swedenborg (revealed to him at Avignon) and the probable date of Blake's similar disillusionment expressed in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell pls. 21-24, which I assume must have happened between April 1789 (when the Blakes' signed the Swedenborgian register) and the Marriage copy F date of 1790.

However, perhaps the aspect of William Bryan's life providing the closest parallels with Blake are the circumstances of the vision which prompted him to go to Avignon in the first place. Bryan's account is fully detailed about the intimate relationship between his experience of prophetic vision and its incidence in the process of printing from copper plates:

The 23d of the month called January, 1789, in the morning, having made all things ready for my work, which was then copper-plate printing, I found a stop in my mind to go on with it. Waiting a little, I took some paper to wet for another plate, but found the same stop: then I perceived that it was of the Lord. (Bryan 1795 [21])

Bryan's description implies that he had been working on a copper plate—possibly etching, probably printing from it—before discarding it and turning to print from another plate which he already had ready. Bryan must then have positioned the plate in the rolling press, made ready his wetting trough, and prepared to begin printing off. It is at this point, with the wetted paper gripped in his fingers, that he had the vi-

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8 PRO War Office 34/130.175, 176; letter 16 February 1781 from Benedict Chastanier; enclosure, B[enedict].C[chastanier], . Prospectus pour La Publication de Quelques Traictes Theologiques, oriinairement ecrits en Latin, Par le feu, Emanuel Baron de Swedenborg ... Par seu Nicholas de La Pierre.

9 PRO PC 1/18/19, minutes, 4th November 1789.

10 A further possibility is the agency of the alchemist, freemason and soldier, General Charles Rainsford (Schuchard 1992). Although I have not examined the Rainsford papers in the British Library Department of Manuscripts, the catalogue indicates that (at least in the early 1780s), Rainsford's military duties meant that he sometimes corresponded with Lord Amherst and that he filed reports back to the War Office. On at least two occasions (but in 1797), Rainsford also corresponded with Privy Council member the Duke of Portland (drawing to Portland's attention suggested "Precautions in Case of an Alarm in London," Portland Correspondence, University of Nottingham Library, C 4/5, C 4/6, 28th February 1797).

sion telling him to meet up with John Wright and for both of them to leave immediately for France. Like William Blake, Bryan's personal history of visionary experiences went back to when he was four years old (Bryan 1795 [15]) but, of course, it is the parallels with the emphasis on the engraving and printing processes found in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, in addition to Bryan's repudiation of Swedenborg in 1789, which will be of greatest interest to Blakeans. 13

Like Blake, who exhibited paintings and sold illuminated books as well as doing commercial engraving, Bryan found it necessary to supplement his jobs in the engraving trade with an allied business he could run from his home. The augmentation and migration across a range of skills was typical of contemporary artisans. 14 The necessity for flexibility and cultural mobility in Blake's working life was essentially no different from that of other artisans. In the mid 1780s, Bryan acted with two or three other vendors to sell Robert Hindmarsh's printings of Swedenborg's A Summary View of the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem Church (1785), The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem concerning the Sacred Scripture (1786) The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem concerning the Lord (1786), and The Doctrine of Life for the New Jerusalem (1786). Bryan's bookselling of Swedenborg provides a firm foundation for his claim in his letter to have once been "a lover of the truths I found in his writings." Bryan's involvement with Hindmarsh's Swedenborg printing project also provides a possible context for The Marriage's "Printing house in Hell" (pl. 15, E 40) or, at least, it moves one London engraver—although not Blake—closer to the "Printing house" stage in the production of Swedenborg's writings.

Also suggestive of a possible immediate context for The Marriage is Bryan's enigmatic claim that the nature of Swedenborg's "6" errors "will in it's proper time be fully explained & made public, till then we dare not declare it." Bryan's coy timidity about going "public" on Swedenborg's doctrinal or visionary failings contrasts with Blake's vow in The Marriage that "the world shall have" "The Bible of Hell" "whether they will or no" (pl. 24, E 44). Reluctant or deferred revelations were also a characteristic of Richard Brothers's writings and so may not be unusual at this time although an exact understanding of the contemporary cultural significance of these spiritual registers remains elusive. Nevertheless, it seems right to conclude that Blake's differences from Bryan should be encountered within an expectation that there might also be proximities, at least in their employment of a common rhetorical lexicon.

On his return to London in September 1789, Bryan tried to resume trading as a copper plate printer but found employment hard to come by, even though he later claimed his work had been "approved ... by the best engravers:" 15

Notwithstanding my abilities as a copper-plate printer had been approved of by the best engravers, and I had before been entrusted with the best work to do, I could not now even get the commonest. I passed almost two years in this way, sometimes a month, or two months, and had not anything to do; sometimes a job of writing, engraving, printing, &c. would engage me a few weeks... (Bryan 1795 [29])

The "best" engraver most likely to have known Bryan was Blake's acquaintance the 1794 LCS treason trial witness, William Sharp, who was also a fastidious disciple of Richard Brothers around 1795, the time when Wright and Bryan were also devotees and writing their testimonies (Paley 1973 pl. 66). In a revealing transition which is typical of the piecemeal lives of contemporary artisans, finding no engraving work Bryan turned to what might best be described as "prophetic healing," opening "a shop as a druggist and vendor[sic] of the patent medicines, at the same time dispensing as an apothecary, but on a different plan" (Bryan 1795 [29]). 16 Bryan's "different plan" was to use his prophetic powers as an aid to diagnosis, a calling suggested to him by an earlier training in medicine as well as by the noticeably physiological nature of his visionary experiences:

By his Holy Spirit I have at times been favoured to feel so much of that love as to enter into a sympathy of feeling with my patient, so that I could describe every symptom of their disease from feeling it in my own body; and such has been the mercy of the Lord, that it has instantly been communicated to my mind what to give, and I have even been ordered to say to them,"this medicine will certainly cure you, by such or such a time you will be well," and this has accordingly happened. (Bryan 1795 [30])

The social precedent amongst 1780s London visionaries was the painter Phillipe de Loutherbourg whose cures by Swedenborgian "influxes" at his home in Hammersmith Terrace were witnessed and affirmed in print by his female follower, Mary Pratt (1789). 17 Bryan's experiential relation-

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13 For an extended discussion of engraving imagery in The Marriage, see Viscomi (1999).
14 The Spencean activist and pamphleteer Thomas Evans was, at various times, a print colourer, coffee house keeper, baker and braces maker (PRO Treasury Solicitor 11/689/2187,12 and 14 March 1798; McCalman [1988]; Worrall [1997]).
15 The exact month of their return is given in Wright (1794 [20]).
16 I have not located the whereabouts of this shop which Bryan must have opened sometime around late 1791. Brothers, in March 1795, thought Bryan and Wright were both living at 48, Dorset Street, Manchester Square, Marylebone, which was Wright's home when he himself apparently turned from carpentry to bookselling, PRO PC 1/28/61; 5th March 1795.
17 Pratt (1789). For other contemporary networks of radicalism, religious enthusiasm and alternative medicine, see McCalman (1998).
ship between life in the engraving trade and in prophetic medicine provides a further context for *The Marriage's* "infern(al)" corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and *medicinal* ... displaying the infinite which was hid" (pl.14, E 39, my italics).

I am not attempting here to define a direct transmission route of influence between Blake and Bryan but merely trying to indicate how extensively their lives overlapped by virtue of their moment, occupation, location and spiritual life. Ultimately, the differences between the two men are as revealing as their similarities. Blake's reactions to his own visions or spiritual beliefs were not as extreme in their results or consequences as Bryan's. After his workplace vision, Bryan left London immediately, in the depths of winter, to make his way to Avignon, leaving behind him his wife Betty who, days before, had experienced the death of their infant (Bryan 1795 [20]). Also, before touching briefly (like Blake) on the Swedenborgians, Bryan had had a disjointed, unsatisfactory, spiritual life being by his own account barely tolerated and then "disowned" by the Quakers in late 1788 or early January 1789, very much on the eve of his "Avignon" vision (Bryan 1795 [19]). The physiological symptoms of Bryan's visions are also more noticeable than Blake's: "In my infancy, when I was only four years old, I was frequently favoured with a knowledge of the Divine Goodness in a sensible manner, having very near access in prayer, and feeling my whole body thrill with the enjoyment of God" (Bryan 1795 [15]). These experiences were evidently so vivid to Bryan that, as I have detailed above, he was confident enough to turn them into a career. With Blake, the physiological symptoms are noticeable but, by comparison, much less radical: "Guide thou my hand which trembles exceedingly upon the rock of ages, / While I write of the building of Golgonooza" (Jerusalem 5: 23-24, E 147). Professionally, Blake was also much more successful than Bryan. Bryan's attempts to follow the career of copper plate printer and bookseller had to be abandoned and he does not appear to have returned to the book trade although it may very well be that attachment to the cause of Richard Brothers gave him a degree of self-validation.

Although I have suggested here and in *Blake in the Nineties* that the example of Bryan considerably widens our knowledge of the sort of spiritual communities within which he and Blake are likely to have co-existed, there is a further piece of evidence from this period which must be weighed as indicating a significant context for *The Marriage*. One of the implications of finding a part of Bryan's letter repeated in Wright's *Revealed Knowledge* of 1794 means that, remarkably, some of the prophetic journals and notes printed in Wright's book must indeed have been written—just as Wright claims—in 1789. Wright and Bryan appear to have colluded in recording the visionary experiences they had in Avignon. Chief amongst these "Avignon" writings are 10 pages of "Sentences. Moral Maxims, and Spiritual Instructions, extracted out of Answers from HEAVEN" published in *A Revealed Knowledge* (Wright 1794 [48-58]). Now that these "Answers from HEAVEN" can, on a good balance of documentary probability, be authenticated back to 1789, they make a remarkable list of aphorisms to set against Blake's "Proverbs of Hell" (pl. 7, E 35-38). I reprint some of them here:

Too much confidence blinds us, and pride leads us astray, and precipitates us into the abyss, because the truth flies from us. One ray of light is not the entire light. A wise man is silent when he ought to be so. The night was before the day, the day is before the night. (48)

Preserve thyself from thyself, that the serpent of lies, may not stifle before thee the Eagle of truth and light. (49)

Time has its measure[:] its measure is wisdom, and wisdom belongs to GOD. The path of Glory, is the love of GOD; that of wisdom is simplicity. (50)

Confidence is the principal [sic] of life. (51)

He who does not sow in the field of the promises of the ETERNAL, will not there reap of his gifts. To be just, become simple; to become a new man, become a child; the paths of obedience are those of simplicity. The compass of wisdom is above the level of the world. Follow the bent, follow the desires to be the child of promise, and leave corruption to run into the sepulchre of the old man. (52)

He who gives all, wills all. Confidence chases fear, for fear brings trouble with it, and troubles in their return bring disgust. (53)

Anxiety drives away wisdom. Remember that in seeking thine own glory, GOD himself wills to be glorified. Tread under thy feet the prudence of men. (54)

Heaven explains itself sufficiently when it inspires. (55)

Innocence and simplicity transform man into an angel of light. Simplicity seeks no bye paths, and knows how to escape them. (57)

The just with confidence runs over the ground in simplicity without sifting the road. (58)\[18\]

\[18\] A slightly different selection is provided by Southey in *Letters from England* (1807).
Scholars will wish to make their own minds up about the proximities, if any, between the rhetorical patterns of "Answers from HEAVEN" and "Proverbs of Hell." Both sets can now, with some confidence, be dated to 1789-90. Both claim to be of visionary extraction and were written by a visionary engraver, a visionary carpenter and a visionary copper plate printer/bookseller. Remarkably, by mid 1789, all three men had flirted with Swedenborgianism.

There is much else which might be said about John Wright and William Bryan, their relationship with Richard Brothers, the political implications of their collaborations and the history of radical prophetic culture in 1790s London. Wherever one looks, this culture was wider and more complex in its social organization than the example of Blake indicates when taken in isolation. Otherwise, who would have thought that there would be two ex-Swedenborgian visionaries intimately connected with the engraving trade who both lived in London in 1789 and shared the initials "W.B."

Public Record Office, Kew, Privy Council/18/19. [// = page break in original]

Respected Friend, London 12 Month 13 1789

By a part of thy letter to thy Brother I am informed that it is thy desire, I should explain in writing wherein Emanuel Swedenborg has erred. I remember mentioning to thee that he had erred in 6 points, which is certainly true, since it was revealed to our society by an immediate communication with Heaven, & will in its proper time be fully explained & made public, till then we dare not declare it. It has been revealed respecting Emanuel Swedenborg & by those very beings who had communicated with him, that for a long time he was faithful in recording the revelations they gave, & which contained nothing but truth, but erring in his own ideas, not thoroughly understanding them, & wanting to explain them to others, he has swelled out to many volumes that, which unmixt with his own, would have made one volume only, & would have been (both for the present & approaching time) the most invaluable treasure ever published in the world except the Bible.

It pleased the Lord also to command a certain man to go to him & Tell him his error though he knew that he (the man) had also the same communications with himself unfortunately for E.S. & all his readers he would not believe, because it did not please the Lord to communicate it to him by the medium of his Angels, which pride opened a door for the grand deceiver of mankind to deceive[ sic ] him also, & much of his latter writings are mixed with revelations from that source. For the satisfaction of those well inclined minds who find that in his writings there is much truth, with which they are much taken & delighted, I am permitted to say that a time will come, when they will be given pure & unmixt.

I was a lover of the truths I found in his writings & still I love them, but I could not help always seeing in them some manifest contradictions & also that they did in some places oppose the Holy Scriptures every part of them in which the love of God & our neighbours is enforced is good, as also he may be believed in saying that there will be a new church though he hath not spoken truth in all that he has said on that subject The Lord

The Lord is preparing those whom he chuses and of all Nations, Kindred all people on the face of the earth, to bring forward his new church which he himself will guide direct & govern & which it is revealed to us shall be in our days, to which purpose I am permitted to transcribe the following words of the Angell Gabriell

"I am (said Gabriel) the angel of the Eternal who am sent before the face of the Lamb to sound the trumpet on the mountains of Babylon to make known to the nations that the God of Heaven will soon come to the gates of the earth, to change the face of the world; & to manifest his power & glory, he has raised the standard against the inhabitants of the earth, the ages have not much longer to linger, for the accomplishment of his promises, & they will not carry to other generations his justice—I repeat it unto you. O,O,O Nations the Eternal calls the times, & the time that walks in the shadow over days of darkness, without light, & without strength is coming to change the face of the world & to begin his new reign, the time is near wherein the promises will be accomplished, the Human Blood will flow in large streams, that the enemies of God may subsist no longer & that the true religion may be known all over the world, prepare yourselves, do not cease to pray and do not fear any thing from the calamities which are to happen for you will not experience them provided you continue united & faithful.

My Friend has my permission to communicate the above to as many as he chuses, it being the hearty prayer of my mind, that all my fellow beings, may be warned of the near approach of that time which is to fix their lot for light & life, to manifest on earth the Lord of life & his glorious kingdom, or else death & darkness in the manifestation of the Devils in the Hell

May God grant to all a lot & portion in him, is my ardent desire & wish, & it will be so with all those who by giving their will so to the

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good & refusing the evil chuse life & thereby become united & faithful to God. — I am thy friend W Brian

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William Michael Rossetti's "Annotated Lists of Blake's Paintings, Drawings and Engravings," added as an appendix to Alexander Gilchrist's The Life of William Blake, 1836, and revised for the second edition of 1880, are invaluable in listing Blake's works when they were still in the hands of a relatively small number of owners, and in helping identify particular works through the almost naive specificity of some of his descriptions. However, unless the work is actually dated (and not even then in every case), Rossetti rarely gives any indication as to the period of a work, nor of its connection to any specific series of designs or set of illustrations. Remarks such as "A sketch for a design afterwards executed" is tantalizing to say the least (1863, p. 247, list 2, no. 78, and 1880, p. 266, list 2, no. 103; this drawing, listed as untraced in my catalogue, Martin Butlin, The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake, 1981, pp. 455-56, no. 610, has still not been identified). Hence it is not altogether unforgivable that the drawing entitled by Rossetti "The Last Trumpet" (illus.: see cover) should have been listed by me as a possible illustration to Robert Blair's The Grave, "c.

MINUTE PARTICULARS

A Blake Drawing Rediscovered and Redated

BY MARTIN BUTLIN

William Michael Rossetti's "Annotated Lists of Blake's Paintings, Drawings and Engravings," added as an appendix to Alexander Gilchrist's The Life of William Blake, 1836, and revised for the second edition of 1880, are invaluable in listing Blake's works when they were still in the hands of a relatively small number of owners, and in helping identify particular works through the almost naive specificity of some of his descriptions. However, unless the work is actually dated (and not even then in every case), Rossetti rarely gives any indication as to the period of a work, nor of its connection to any specific series of designs or set of illustrations. Remarks such as "A sketch for a design afterwards executed" is tantalizing to say the least (1863, p. 247, list 2, no. 78, and 1880, p. 266, list 2, no. 103; this drawing, listed as untraced in my catalogue, Martin Butlin, The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake, 1981, pp. 455-56, no. 610, has still not been identified). Hence it is not altogether unforgivable that the drawing entitled by Rossetti "The Last Trumpet" (illus.: see cover) should have been listed by me as a possible illustration to [Robert] Blair's The Grave, "c.
2 Sketches for Hayley's *Ballads*, and other works, c. 1802-03. Pencil, 8 1/16 x 8 3/8 in. (20.4 x 21.2 cm). Newly recorded verso of Butlin #617. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's, London.


However, a comparison between the British Museum drawing and Rossetti's description had already demonstrated that Robertson's identification was incorrect, the most specific part of Rossetti's description failing to be matched in the drawing: "An Angel in the upper mid-plane of the design is blowing the trumpet, the tube of which comes forward in a conspicuous way. Souls, chiefly of women and children, are rising from the earth, and received by angels" (Rossetti 1863, p. 248, list 2, no. 86, and 1880, p. 266, list 2, no. 112; Robertson 1907, p. 473, list 2, no. 86; emphasis mine). The trumpet in the British Museum drawing is unmistakably facing more or less directly downwards, but in the drawing here illustrated it does come forward in a conspicuous way.

This drawing, for sight and information of which I am indebted to Henry Wemyss of Sotheby’s, fits Rossetti’s description exactly and is clearly one of that large group of pen and wash drawings to be dated to the early 1780s; in particular, the heads of the resurrected souls are very close to those of Joseph's brethren in the drawing for the watercolor of *Joseph Making Himself Known to His Brethren* exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1785 (see B 159 recto and verso; the finished work, in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, is B 157). The drawing is probably, therefore, from late in the group, about 1785 and, as if in justification of my misidentification, may be linked in subject to two illustrations to *The Grave* not of 1805 but of c. 1780-85, *The Counsellor, King, Warrior, Mother and Child* (not in Rossetti; B 136, pl. 153) and the *Burial Scene* entitled by Rossetti "Young burying Narcissa (?)" and related by him to two lines from Night 3 (1863, list 2, no. 102, and 1880, list 2, no. 130; B 137 recto, pl. 154). In any case, it is one of the strongest of this group of early drawings and deserves more than Rossetti's dismissive "A moderately good design, having no salient qualities of execution."

The drawing is on a sheet of paper 8 1/16 by 8 3/8 in. (20.4 x 21.2 cm) which has been folded slightly to the left of center. On the reverse (illus. 2) are a number of drawings, those which can be identified being probably related to Blake's illustrations to William Hayley's *Ballads* and in particular to the first edition of 1802-03 rather than to that of 1805. The agonized face in profile in the upper right-hand corner seems to be a sketch for the young man about to be saved from being eaten by a crocodile by the self sacrifice of his dog, used for the frontispiece to "The Dog" (David Bindman,
The Complete Graphic Works of William Blake, 1978, pl. 396). The head of the eagle, center left, was presumably done in connection with the frontispiece, and less directly the head-piece, to “The Eagle” (Bindman pls. 390, 391). The lion, for such it seems to be, particularly on account of its large claws, in the center right is not directly related to the depiction of the lion in “The Lion” (Bindman pl. 393) but could well be a study. In the upper left-hand corner of the drawing there are two distinct studies for a human right eye which call to mind the child in Blake’s frontispiece to B. J. Malkin’s A Father’s Memoirs of His Child, 1806, though it is impossible to make any specific identification.

The basic information in my catalogue entry seems to be correct given a misdating of some 20 years, with the addition to the provenance of the drawing of Iolo Aneurin Williams, the well-known collector of English drawings and watercolors, about which he wrote an important book, Early English Water-Colours, and Some Cognate Drawings by Artists Born Not Later Than 1785, published by The Connoisseur in 1952.

Whose Head?
BY HANS-ULRICH MOHRING

Translating “A Vision of the Last Judgment” into German, and working with the editions of Blake’s works by David Erdman (1988) and Geoffrey Keynes (1985), I came upon three words that didn’t seem to make sense. Consider the following passage (E 558/K 609): “He is Albion our Ancestor patriarch of the Atlantic Continent whose History Preceded that of the Hebrews & in whose Sleep or Chaos Creation began, [his Emanation or Wife is Jerusalem who is about to be receivd like the Bride of the] at their head the Aged Woman is Brittania the Wife of Albion Jerusalem is their Daughter little Infants creep out of the mould into the Green fields of the blessed . . .” The words “at their head” don’t relate to anyone. But placed before “little Infants” they would be part of a meaningful sentence.

Looking at David Erdman’s and Donald Moore’s facsimile edition of The Notebook of William Blake (rev. ed. 1977), we see (N 81) that Blake continued the inserted sentence “He is Albion . . .” down the right margin with “& in whose Sleep or Chaos Creation began.” Then he wrote “his Emanation or Wife is Jerusalem,” while he must have meant the following “at their head” to link up with the main text “little Infants creep . . .” He later amended the short remark about the Emanation with “who is about to be receivd like the Bride of the,” but then, obviously having changed his mind, he erased both remark and addendum and replaced them with the line written upside down at the top of the page “the Aged Woman is Brittania[c]a the Wife of Albion Jerusalem is their Daughter.” This does not, however, alter the connection between “at their head” and “little Infants creep . . .”

We find this confirmed in the picture of “The Last Judgment” in the Rosenwald Collection (Butlin 645), where the Infants can be seen creeping out of the mould—“at their head,” i.e., Albion’s and Britannia’s. It seems to me that the placement of these three words in the text editions of Blake’s works needs to be corrected.

REVIEWS


Reviewed by CARL WOODRING

This book marks still another peak in Morton Paley’s studies of Blake, Coleridge, and other English poets and painters sublime and romantic. Although Paley knows enough about the subject to produce an encyclopedia or to qualify as one of James Thurber’s “get ready” men, Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry is a trim book with a compact argument. Taking apocalypse to be an uncovering of ultimate truths, with associated imagery of entrenched evil destructively removed; taking millenarian to refer specifically to the Second Coming of Christ; and considering the millennium as—for the Romantics—a less specifically defined final regenerate utopia of social or spiritual peace, Paley attests that the six major English Romantic poets all readily conceived works on apocalyptic revelation, but none found an unproblematic way to continue the narrative into utopian millennium.

An introduction surveys the pertinent biblical materials and such notable influences on the Romantics as Paradise Lost and Thomas Burnet’s Theory of the Earth. Early pages on Blake add the Swedenborgians, the notorious Richard Brothers, the lesser known Ralph Maher, and the provocation from Burke’s excoriation of Price’s tribute to the “false apocalypse” in France, with the lesser provocation of Malthus’s rebuttal to Godwin’s belief in progress. Thereafter, the book follows the main road of significant poems by the six major poets. The method is exegesis, line by line when needed, with attention to the figurative, thematic, and recurrent, such as plague, serpent, and chains, and to allusions explainable by historical context. For each work, early reviews are cited when informative.

Blake and Coleridge occupy the first half of the study, partly because they wrestled longest and hardest with the relation of Christianity to ultimate human destiny, partly
because they offer a full opportunity to relate prophetic and apocalyptic poetry to events in Britain and France between the fall of the Bastille and the fall of Napoleon. As if for convenience in giving Paley's argument a narrative dimension, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* treats apocalypse and millennium as simultaneous, with only the appendage, *A Song of Liberty*, containing closure in a millennial dawn. Paley suggests that Blake, after this beginning in a stasis of contraries, breaks off *The French Revolution* with Book the First because of "the sheer recalcitrance of history"; proposes that no millennium is realized in *America* because slavery had not ended; and shows that in *Europe* Orc remains intensely ambiguous because the cyclic interferes with linear movement toward the utopian (as if the apocalyptic from America had reached Europe without the shackles of slavery, but had joined the ancient cyclic dance there). In contrast with the refusal of political events to fulfill prophecy, which brought to the poetry an increase in war, famine, plague, and fire instead of a quiet millennium, Blake broke off *The Four Zoas*, not so much because events had remained uncooperative, but because he was blessed with a religious conversion (identified in 1965 by Jean Hagstrum). With so much to explain, and with so many insights into particular lines and particular tropes, the chapter will close without mention of Fuseli. By concentrating on poetry, on words, Paley provides in this fine book a counterpart to *The Apocalyptic Sublime* of 1986 on paintings.

Blake was ready in 1804 to apply in *Milton* his new vision. He renewed attention to Swedenborg, perhaps through Charles Augustus Tulk (who awakened Coleridge both to Swedenborg and to Blake's accomplishments), and gained new excitement from the electrical experiments, courage, and compassion of Thomas Birch. He could at last, to his own satisfaction, continue apocalypse into utopia. Here, Paley reminds the already anxious reader, Blake "continues to take both Milton and Wesley further than either would wish to go" (79). But the romantic project of celebrating a collective millennium has at this point been reduced to the union of Milton with the pre-pubescent Ololon, and simultaneously to domestic repose in the cottage of William and Catherine Blake. Romantic poetry provides this study with recurrent examples, as in *Milton*, of a thousand years indistinguishable from an infinite moment. One would not like to think it weariness from editing *Jerusalem* that accounts for the brevity of Paley's appraisal, and not until the chapter on Shelley, that "*Jerusalem* devotes only the last four of its 100 plates of text and design to the millennium" (270-71).

In the opening pages of chapter 2 on Coleridge, he carefully analyzes the relation of the preternatural to prophetic apocalypse in "The Destiny of Nations" and other early poetry. If Coleridge does not in the poems most widely read today concentrate on the Book of Revelation or on Belshazzar or other apocalyptic topics in the Book of Daniel, he spent a lifetime concerned with such cruxes. Paley explicates the resultant early poetry. Coleridge, struggling over the relation of public fact to poetic invention, as in "Religious Musings," like Blake casts contemporary events "in Prophetic and apocalyptic terms" (109); and like Blake, he encounters perverse resistance from events. Paley agrees with Thomas McFarland and others that the young rebel was much given to "the hysterical sublime." He notes that Coleridge makes his heroic female figures more active than Blake's but the poetic figure himself less active, "a Bardic celebrant, a seer of visions, a roving ambassador of Sensibility" (118). He notes that the private dell in Coleridge is sometimes millennial, even millenarian, but in other instances merely private.

The Napoleonic invasion of Switzerland curbed Coleridge's apocalyptic excesses into the moderated strophes of "France: an Ode" and into renunciation of the curses he had "prophesied" in "Ode on the Departing Year," but he reveled immediately in what Paley calls the "apocalyptic grotesque" of "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter," "The Devil's Thoughts" (with Southey), and the extravagantly hostile lampoon on Mackintosh, "The Two Round Spaces on the Tombstone." In an example of Paley's curbing of wit into mere truth, he observes that Coleridge in "Ode on the Departing Year," with its rejection of monarchs such as the "in-
satiate Hag” Catherine the Great, approaches the grotesque: “He may have intended an effect like Dante’s vision of Philip the Fair embracing the Whore of Babylon, but he sometimes achieved something closer to the caricatures of Gillray and Isaac Cruikshank” (127). Paley grants to Coleridge’s later marginalia and other prose jottings evidence of an interest in Revelation that he does not find in such later poems as “Limbo,” to which he gave attention in a wise book of 1996.

Acknowledging that the apocalyptic and millennial lend power to Wordsworth’s poems throughout his long career—and can be uncovered in nearly all his adumbrations of peaceful rural life—Paley concentrates on how the two states are related in The Prelude. He renders a sensitive account of the apocalyptic parable of the stone and the shell to Burnet, destruction by deluge, and the Last Man narratives; is informed on the chronology that assigns the last chapter to Keats creates an anti-climax. The two questions chiefly confronted are Keats’s interest in political ideas and events and the relation of the two abandoned Hyperion poems, the first a vision of progress, the second apocalyptic. To the thematic question—why no millennium?—Paley answers that a sequel to apocalypse as Keats presents it cannot be imagined. One can imagine a dedicated Keatsian finding the millennial elsewhere in Keats’s poetry unobstructed from least from interpretation, somewhat as one can imagine Victorianists becoming voluble if charged, as the Victorian poets are in the brief epilogue, with neglect of Revelation except in fictional wars of the worlds without the joy of millennium.

Before the anticlimax rises Shelley. Paley demonstrates the foreshadowing by Shelley’s apprentice works of the major poems to come. Queen Mab is “a rarity,” a “long millennial (not millenarian) poem” of slow growth toward perfection (225). A section on “Apocapolitics” studies the “rewriting” of Revelation in The Mask of Anarchy, with close attention to the title, the structure, the graphic images, the reversals of meaning, and the poet’s hesitant pointing toward a road from apocalypse to millennium. Within a series of perceptive comments, Paley proposes Mortimer’s Death on a Pale Horse as a better candidate than the possible Death on the Pale Horse of Benjamin West as pictorial source for Shelley’s Anarchy, “pale even to the lips,” on “a white horse, splashed with blood” (239). After the Masque, The Revolt of Islam serves largely to elucidate the heritage of images such as the serpent of revolution that links Blake, Coleridge, and Prometheus Unbound.

To Prometheus Unbound Paley devotes care just short of the reverential, for it “provides the most extensive treatment of the millennium to be written during the Romantic period” (253), “the most ambitious and least unsuccessful Romantic attempt to unite apocalypse and millennium” (275). He recognizes the simultaneity that allows the dawn of millennium before apocalypse has been fully realized (261), the amphibious’a annulling alternative to the ouroborous, and the cyclic that obstructs any assurance of sustained utopia. Although he does not go as far as some of us would in attributing to Asia the predominant power in attaining millennium, he declares Asia unlike Blake’s passive Jerusalem in initiating descent into the Cave of Demogorgon (261). He points more precisely than previous critics to the difficulties the “oratorio” of Act IV puts in the way of the more assured ending of Act III. A Shelleyan determined to explore beyond the reach of this book would give more space to Hellas.

Paley says nothing about the timeliness of his subject, but every student of Blake, Coleridge, The Prelude, Prometheus Unbound, and the Romantic period in England should avoid delay in studying this book, even if Clarendon’s price makes it easier to own in fantasy than in fact.


Reviewed by Nicholas M. Williams

In her introduction to this new volume of essays, Jackie DiSalvo sets a high standard for its contributors and for emerging Blake studies more generally. Surveying the work on Blake of the last 60 years, she describes the well-known agon between the Erdman camp of historicists and the Frye camp of literary mythographers, a struggle in some ways recapitulated, although now along national lines, by the current split between American textualists (Nelson Hilton, Donald Ault, Molly Anne Rothenberg and Steven Goldsmith are mentioned) and British historical contextualizers (Ian McCalman, E. P. Thompson, Jon Mee, David Worrall). What she calls for, and it’s a goal with which I’m broadly sympa-
thetic, is a mode of criticism which manages to read history into the fabric of Blake's texts, rather than using it as an illuminating backdrop. The framework she identifies for this project, while admitting that not all the contributors to the volume would necessarily endorse it, is a Bakhtinian (more particularly, a Voloshinovian) focus on heteroglossia and the struggle for the control of signs by particular social groups.

The test for a treatment of Blake, from this point of view, is whether it can use historical knowledge not merely to situate Blake's texts, to place them, but to activate them, and not merely for his time but, as DiSalvo is careful to point out, for ours as well.

Much the same point can be made by considering the relationship between the two abstract nouns in the title of the volume, nouns which, in the time-saving mentality of criticism on the run, are too often collapsed into each other. In a critical moment when the grand though empty gesture can sometimes rule the day, there's a familiar ring to the motto that "all History is Political" (the obverse is less frequently uttered). But the stakes of this juxtaposition become clearer when one considers the implications of bringing political frameworks to bear on a historical literary text. The Scylla and Charybdis of this critical venture are, on the one hand, assuming a too-easy political effectivity of a literary text, as if writing about revolution had the capacity to cause it (Andrew Lincoln's essay here is a particularly effective refutation of this position). On the other hand, though, one can certainly over-materialize politics as well, assuming that cultural expressions are mere ineffective epiphenomena of the truly determinative economic level. For a historical literary criticism, the result of such a conclusion is to reduce literature to a dead letter, politically inactive and left to the work of mere individualistic self-cultivation. The challenge DiSalvo has set for these essays, which the best of them meet, is to show the political effectivity of historical particularity or, to borrow an image from the brilliant twenty-first plate of Milton, to bind the sandal of the Vegetable World on Blake's left foot so that he might "walk forward thro' Eternity" (21:14, E 115). It is this double operation of historical binding and political movement that distinguishes the best of these essays, as I hope to make clear below.

The essays are divided into three untitled "parts" whose logic is not entirely clear (and not specified in the Introduction), but are further separated under six subheadings: "Blake and the Question of Revolution," "Blake and the Underground," "Art and Politics," "The French Revolution,' America,' and 'Europe,' "Blake, Empire and Slavery" and "Blake and Women." Also included are responses by Joseph Wittreich and Anne Mellor, to the first two and the last two sections respectively. As one might expect, given the focus of the collection, those works of Blake which make the most explicit reference to historical events come in for the most detailed treatment, although I must also note very interesting discussions of Jerusalem by James E. Swearingen and June Sturrock. A topic which runs like a leitmotif throughout the volume is the status of Blake's character Orc, and in particular the viability of Frye's influential critical construction of the "Orc cycle." One would expect this topic to be of concern in a politically themed collection, since it represents Frye's shot across the bow of Blake's political critics, identifying a disillusionment with revolution occurring fairly early in the poet's career. The invalidity of the Orc cycle is established most authoritatively in Christopher Z. Hobson's exhaustive treatment of Orc imagery in the opening essay, but the theme continues as an undercurrent through many of the essays. William Richey, for instance, suggests in his essay on America that, rather than reflecting Blake's misgivings about Orc's revolutionary energy, the poem refers obliquely to contemporaneous events in France in order to suggest that any violence in the new Republic is the fault of counter-revolutionary forces rather than the Jacobins. Although I can't quite accept this full vindication of America's Orc, these various treatments of the figure seem particularly useful in the way they raise crucial questions about the methods of interpreting Blake's imagery. Almost more important than Frye's assigning a non-revolutionary intention to Blake's imagery is the way he read imagistic parallels (in, for instance, the similar postures of Orc and Urizen in plates 8 and 10 of America) as necessarily implying semantic equivalence. These essays indicate that Blake's critics are coming up with more complex ways of reading his texts and images, in line with Swearingen's notion that each of Blake's characters "functions differently in different textual environments" (82). Even when a critic concludes that Blake really is suggesting an uncomfortable similarity between Orc and Urizen, as in Peter Otto's discussion of the many states of the frontispiece and title page of Europe, the way of handling the evidence is much more subtle than Frye's hasty assignments of single meaning. (Otto, it might be said, pushes his interpretations as far as they can go, until the reader is compelled to ask "Enough? or Too much?" as when he suggests that two faintly sketched women on the revised title page [see plate ii.c in Erdman's Illuminated Blake] represent "the opposing camps of Whore and Angel" [243]. But, in general, Otto gives the visual aspect of Blake's text the kind of detailed attention it has too rarely received.)

On a topic related to the Orc cycle, many of the essays also touch on what Steve Clark and David Worrall have called "the thesis of fracture," the notion that Blake undergoes a fundamental shift in focus which distinguishes his earlier explicitly political works from the fearlessly obscure late prophecies. In one of the least convincing essays in the volume, Eric V. Chandler restates the thesis of fracture as Blake's retreat from socially engaged literature to a dematerialized focus on imagination (and an elimination of all participants in the textual production process except Blake himself). Claiming that "Blake wants to establish the Bible as the heart of this new artistic production," Chandler identifies a "pro-
ducation-aesthetic" (a term borrowed from Paul Mann) in Blake that "prioritizes the mind," "giving over the possibility of producing any substantive changes in artists' real living conditions and thus playing into the hands of the counterrevolution" (71). In addition to its tendency to efface Blake's far from orthodox approach to the Bible (as discussed in Stephen C. Behrendt's contribution to the volume), Chandler's position works with a naive notion of the political effectivity of literature, seeming to take Blake to task for not achieving the revolution in print (one might just as well wonder how many despots are deposed by literary articles). But the parallel, though seemingly opposite, error is to assume the complete ineffectiveness of cultural production, as if thought played no role in historical change.

As if to answer these charges of political apostasy (although there's no indication that the authors have read each other's essays), Jon Mee and James Swearingen consider the effectivity of cultural production from two different directions, Mee continuing his superlative work of contextualizing Blake's visions while Swearingen offers the most theoretical account of Blake's visionary formulations in the volume. The central importance of Mee's work, for Blake studies and more generally, is in its dismantling of the still dominant opposition between religion and radicalism. Here, by way of a survey of the career of Richard "Citizen" Lee, Mee suggests the rich tradition of religious radicalism in the 1790s, frequently in tension with the more acknowledged radical tradition of Enlightenment thinkers such as those associated with Joseph Johnson. Rather than being a political rearguard in the radical movement, religious radicals often alienated their rational fellow-travelers specifically because their programs were more sweeping in their rejection of established authority. Mee does the necessary work of establishing the political valence of Blake's biblical imagery, as in his connecting the image of Nebuchadnezzar to satires of George III, and in his general identification of the political meaning of apocalyptic and prophetic discourses.

Swearingen's article works in a different vein, but it also serves to undermine Chandler's charges, since it suggests that the latter's notion of a "production-aesthetic" is far too general to account for Blake's detailed and varied accounts of artistic and social production. Swearingen offers a typology of production methods in Blake, taking in Urizen's construction of the Mundane Shell, Los's building of Golgonooza and the Eternals' figurative construction of a redeemed Jerusalem. Just as Mee stresses that religion can be radical, Swearingen shows that the visionary formulations of Jerusalem are themselves a political utterance. Readers will need to consult for themselves the details of Swearingen's account of Jerusalem, which culminates in a judgment that Blake here proposes "plurality as an end in itself" (90), but it suffices to say that he provides a very compelling political-theoretical framework for the startling innovations of Blake's last prophetic epic.

In addition to the contextual shading provided by Mee's description of apocalyptic culture in the 1790s, one might also note two other accounts of historical settings for Blake that haven't yet been fully appreciated. David Worrall's treatment of Blake's unusual portrait of "Mrs. Q." (Harriet Quintin, a mistress of the Prince Regent at the time of his ascent to the throne) again puts the lie to the thesis of fracture by suggesting the radical satire contained within this seemingly placid engraving. Martha Keith Schuchard, treating an earlier episode in the young George's career (his attempt in 1788-89 to have his father declared incompetent by reason of insanity), reveals Blake's and George's connections to an extensive Masonic network resistant to the reign of George III. If these accounts are, in some ways, more circumstantial than Mee's wide-ranging treatment, they nevertheless suggest important historical contexts for Blake's career.

Further contexts are suggested in other essays, with varying degrees of success. G. A. Rosso's treatment of the often overlooked dramatic fragment "King Edward the Third" (from Poetical Sketches) usefully places that work in satiric dialogue with Shakespeare's Henry V and with the tradition of Empire poetry, especially Whitehead, Churchill, and Chatterton. June Sturrock offers an intriguing connection between Blake's portraits of maniacal women (the Female Will) and counter-revolutionary figurations of the spirit of revolution as a libidinous cruel female (Burke is her main example). If many of the essays here serve to clear Blake of the charge of disillusionment with revolution (the Orc cycle), then Sturrock attempts to clear him of much of the misogyny often attributed to his concept of Female Will. She convincingly describes his inversion of the conservative image of the cruel woman: where Burke sees revolution and wild sexuality as the source of woman's evil, Blake instead associates his cruel woman with chastity and counter-revolution. Although Sturrock doesn't come right out and say it, her suggestion is that Blake's target in the concept of Female Will is not women so much as the conservative mentality which deploys them in its iconography.

Less satisfying is John Hutton's connection of Blake's Satanic imagery with a growing body of depictions of Satan in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The pictorial context doesn't really shed new light on Blake's anarchic use of this imagery. Catherine L. McClenahan's account of Blake's experiments with the gendering of various concepts and entities, while useful as a survey of a large body of work, doesn't really leave enough time to comment on any single work to great effect. Anne Rubenstein and Camilla Townsend's detailed treatment of John Stedman's Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition, Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam is more of a mixed bag. The treatment of Stedman's journal account of his time in South America and the revisions that account undergoes in being turned into a book (subject to the further editorial intrusions of Joseph Johnson) is quite interesting and well argued. Like the
volume's respondent, Anne Mellor, who is quite tough on this essay, I found the treatment of Blake's illustrations for the volume less convincing. But, at the same time, I can't agree with Mellor's assessment that the illustrations represent nothing more than Blake's complicity with Stedman. Particularly in her opinion of the well-known engraving of "Europe Supported by Africa and America" (not actually treated by Rubenstein and Townsend), whose "racism and sexism," according to Mellor, "are apparent" (352), it seems that more room needs to be left for a multivalent semiotics at work in this image.

I've left for final consideration two fine essays which significantly change our view of individual works and which will remain as required reading for their chosen texts of analysis. Harriet Kramer Linkin places the often overlooked Song of Innocence, "A Dream," within the context of what she calls the "maternity plot," the ideological idealization of motherhood which accompanies the rise of the middle class and its dominant mode of domesticity. Here again is an instance of a historical context read into a poetic text, for Linkin entirely changes the way we read the seemingly innocuous tale of the Emmet, the glow-worm and the beetle, and also the way we understand Blake's views on motherhood in Songs of Innocence. Her case needs to be read in its own careful detail, but I'll only hint that she offers a compelling account of what the Emmet might have been doing out on its own so late at night. Finally, Michael Ferber's account of the manifestly more difficult Europe must be added to the reading list of anyone who wants a better grip on this text. Ferber wisely directs his attention to the difficulties of the text itself, in its detailed negotiations with historical events and its literary past. Along the way, he offers new and compelling answers to questions such as, Why is Enitharmon dreaming? and Why does Newton blow the trump of the last doom? It will be difficult to comment on Europe in the future without reference to Ferber's authoritative treatment.


Reviewed by ANNE BIRIEN

François Piquet is a renowned scholar in France where he teaches English romanticism at Jean Moulin University, in Lyon. Among his publications that focus on Blake's poetics, Blake et le Sacré seems to be an elaboration of his doctoral dissertation of the same title (Clermont-Ferrand, 1981).

For Piquet, the belief that "everything that lives is holy" lies at the very source of Blake's poetic undertaking. This fundamental truth is frequently reasserted as a reminder of the responsibility that befalls the poet, who first needs to denounce the division of the creation that resulted in the subordination of human beings to a dead religious language informed by abstract and arbitrary categories. He also has to revive the language of prophecy, invoke the original power of the word and thus rid modern existence of the tragic errors provoked and maintained by the sacred. Eventually, he is required to highlight man's ability to redeem himself, and escape from the sacred through exertion of responsible freedom.

Yet, the reader cannot but face a difficulty: how can Blake praise the holiness of existence and abhor the manifestations of the sacred in modern life? His whole work strives to demonstrate that these two positions are not contradictory but that the first one calls for the other. It is essential for the reader to become aware of the danger entailed by a confusion of the holy and the sacred—which the poet holds responsible for much of modern corruption. The problematic of the sacred chosen by Piquet in Blake et le Sacré thus proves to be a very useful key to the understanding and unraveling of Blake's works.

Piquet opts for a diachronic study that could render the conscious evolution of the poet's sensibility regarding the sacred; for if Blake was positive that the key to human fulfillment resided in the recovery of holiness, he was aware of the difficulty of the task and still had to devise the means to attain his goal. Piquet realizes a very insightful study of the poet's major influences and of their incorporation into the canon; the failures of the Gnostics or Milton, for instance, are important to Blake in that they allow him to reflect on the pervasive presence and resilience of the sacred. However, I sometimes regretted that Piquet devotes too much space to the presentation of philosophical or theological theories instead of focusing on a closer analysis of Blake's poems—especially since he is just as thorough and acute when he abandons his theoretical style for a more poetic one, fraught with telling imagery.

The sacred is the common link between the fragmentation of individual psyche and a more collective awareness of historical fluctuations and ideological upheavals. Blake's crusade would, however, remain incomplete were it not accompanied by the creation of a new poetic form or medium able to combine energy and reason. His myth making does not so much aim at destroying religion altogether or at proposing another religion which would merely crown different figures of authority—since Christ is pictured as the ultimate savior of humanity. Rather, the artist casts a different light on Christianity, as René Girard did almost two centuries later when he composed a ground-breaking interpretation of the New Testament as anti-sacrificial; 1 for the Christian scholar the death of Christ interrupts the cycle of violence and abolishes the sacred installed by traditional religion. Piquet's biggest contribution lies in the parallel he...
draws between the works of the two authors: both defend a
religion in which the sacred plays no role. The sacred needs
not only to be altered but also to be dismantled, uprooted
as it were; yet, in order to do so it is necessary to understand
its source, workings and metamorphoses through a genealogy
of the sacred.

The first part of Piquet’s study focuses on Blake’s inter-
pretation and re-creation of Genesis as a genealogy of the
sacred. Holiness refers to the inherent nature of life and cre-
ation as an indivisible compound of contraries, whereas the
distinction between the profane and the sacred is a human
construction inherited from the Fall and denies the prin-
ciple of holiness. In Blake’s opinion this division has ruled
and restricted man’s existence for centuries by keeping him
on an historically bound path, leading away from the eternal
realm of Divine Humanity. Driven by a desire to restore
life to its original holiness, Blake engages on a visionary jour-
nancy against the constraints of the sacred—one manifestation
of which is religion.

Piquet insists that most of Blake’s poems are informed by
a double perspective (85). The historical one is dictated by a
theological tradition that professes a belief in a jealous God,
while the second places the narratives in the sphere of etern-
ity by recording the forgiving voices of visionaries who call
for the annihilation of religious institutions. The rift that
separates history and eternity materializes a dramatic ten-
sion between man’s alienation in the present world and his
liberation from the sacred in a prophetic future. Only
through vision and imagination can man exploit his ability
to recreate the world against the encroaching attacks of the
sacred and experience his primordial double nature as an
eternal and historical being. Imagination is a direct link to
God; and what is more, it is an act with God (46). Yet, this
mode of being has long been abandoned; poets and pro-
phets have been silenced and have learned to revere stability
and permanence.

In the prison of the sacred, chains are not easily broken;
individuals who escape its careful grip are irremediably
cought up by a tight and merciless net of authority (118),
petrified and used as staunch protectors of the religious
(133), or, in Piquet’s words, as ramparts of the sacred
“remparts du sacré” 369), which are turned into a para-
doxical display of force and of its limits. Once it is created
by man, the sacred becomes a simultaneous source of order
and disorder: it limits violence yet justifies a certain and
constrained use of it. Thus Orc can never be more than an
embryo of hope, a promise cut short. However, he has voiced
his revolt against the system before being lured back into
the historical cycle of violence, thus paving the way for other
prophetic figures.

For Blake, one necessary step towards redemption is the
acknowledgment by man of the coexistence of good and evil
in himself; both are as intricately linked as the events of the
Fall and the creation of man. Denying the “dark” side of

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human nature jeopardizes the overthrow of the sacred by slackening the necessary tension towards mercy. Blake incribes Jesus in a space determined by continuity and difference; his Christ never renounces his propensity to rebel against the satanic negation of evil and maintains his Divine Humanity by refusing to play the fatal game of the sacred. He alone can undo the divisions artfully created by religious and political powers. As the most human form of God, the junction point of historicity and eternity (166), he alone can free humanity and enable its progressive resurrection in Eternity (152). The challenge his very incarnation represents does not vanish but is made more blatant with his death: his self-sacrifice reveals how heavily religion relies on violence and arbitrary distinctions. While Orc's Poetic Genius had been subverted into anger and thirst for revenge and therefore only buttressed the edification of the sacred, Jesus manages to erase the consequences of the Fall by translating his Energy into Forgiveness.

In the second part of his essay Piquet looks at Blake's attempt to define the premises of a new order, outside the stronghold of the sacred, in recent poetic or theological enterprises. Blake and the Gnostics share the belief that redemption from the decaying state enforced by the sacred is possible through knowledge. They nevertheless diverge on both the nature and the means of attaining this knowledge. Blake contends that the roots of religion are to be found in the death of prophecies and their replacement with abstract reasoning—which the Gnostics have turned into an idol. Visionary imagination alone is capable of allaying the poet's phobia of dissolution of form (173): Los—inspired by the Divine Vision—starts building Golgonooza against the chaos of the infinite. However, unlike Christ, he is not the Divine Vision (362) and can merely hope to prepare the ground for the return to eternity. The power of prophecy merges the divine and the human; in an ultimate manifestation of Divine Forgiveness, it prevents man's fall from being complete.

In attempting to eradicate sin through stability and order, Urizen indulges in a satanic mistake: the reiteration of the myth of creation (201). The tyrant puts an end to man's relation to the divine by obscuring his original visionary faculty with the weaving of the net of religion (187). In his engraved illustrations to The Book of Job Blake depicts God's metamorphoses into a masked satanic Deity. As Piquet points out, Satan contributes to the hidden strength of the sacred by imposing his own will onto God (plate 5); on plate 11 it is no longer possible to tell the two figures apart. Only on plate 17, when God is joined by Jesus, does Satan relinquish his hold on Divinity (204). In other words, God's true reign can only begin when his humanity is confirmed, and the boundary between the sacred and the profane dissolves. For Piquet, it is not the spirit of Jesus that dies on the cross; rather it is the condemning God that has kept his creature at a distance thanks to an unwholesome pact with the Prince of Darkness (215). The Passion calls for the revival of Divine Humanity: not only man, but God himself is saved from abstraction.

In the fourth chapter, Piquet analyzes Blake's rehabilitation of the sublime; the poet wishes to rediscover its prophetic sources and cleanse it from the meaning it has unfortunately assumed as a metaphorical substitute for a Reasoning God. The Book of Urizen delineates the paradoxically increasing distance between man and God. While in the eighteenth century God's laws were accepted as known, they also served to keep people away from his being. When God ceases to participate directly in man's experience, the divine become indecipherable, distant and sacred. For Blake, however, nothing is ineffable; God is the non-other, the very manifestation of immanence.

Blake regards Sublime Art as a response to corrupt religion: it begins by urging a radical questioning of God's essence (his role as a legislator is undermined while his function as a creator comes back into the foreground, 222) and proves useful in deconstructing the sacred. Piquet characterizes the sublime as a creative energy gaining momentum each time God distances himself from man's experience; it operates as a warning against a colonization by the sacred. While sublimation is but the perversion and repression of sexuality, the sublime reveals that our body is what our senses perceive of our soul. It abolishes the distinction and hierarchy between the two. For Blake, the advent of true civilization corresponds to man's assertion of his divinity through the invention of a political and poetic form which combines the senses, reason, imagination and will.

Blake's Divine Order is based on a tension between mercy and judgment; therefore it is neither static nor hierarchical. The poet fears that Providence will be turned into predestination each time it operates against man's will (270). Blake accuses Milton of participating in the reinforcement of the sacred by committing several satanic mistakes, among which are the repression of evil's voice, the creation of exteriority, the division of the poetic and the political, and the confusion of individuals and states, of the sinner and his sin (276). In Milton, Blake expresses his staunch conviction that each individual needs to go through the phases of incarnation, passion and resurrection if the sacred is ever to be dismantled (291).

In the third part of his book, Piquet illuminates Blake's notion of holiness with Girard's conclusions on the sacrificial roots of the sacred. Cities play as central a role in Blake's construction of a visionary universe as in other myths and cultures. In the Bible, cities are always founded on murders and also prevent violence from spreading. Everything from cultures to the sacred begins and ends in cities: the construction of Jerusalem is the last act of divine history (300). God's city is the eschatological meeting point of nations; it exemplifies consciousness turned towards the world and no longer towards the self (305). Building a city in a fallen world—as Los does with Golgonooza—is bound to consolidate the sacred at first but may end in its overthrow.
The ambivalence of the circumscribed urban space—simultaneously blessed and cursed—echoes that of the sacred (source of order and disorder). The relationship between the two terms goes well beyond a formal analogy. Each is the source and consequence of the other, and each depends utterly upon the other. The city's survival requires sacrifice and sacerdotal power; the survival of the sacred needs a fixed point of reference acknowledged by a community. Violence is simultaneously the object of the law and its means of enforcement. Murder is then perceived as divine and necessary; it inaugurates a new sacred based on the collective murder of an expiatory victim (311). In the Bible violence is no longer concealed but made visible. Its order does not exclude crisis altogether; rather, it relies on a constant reinforcement of its authority through interdict and rituals. For Girard, these two elements precede the advent of a culture: they keep the sacred at a distance while ensuring that it is visible to the community. Sacrifice being thus legalized, self-destruction becomes forbidden and unnecessary. Through ritualized sacrifices, revenge is transferred to the higher power of God disguised in transcendence (334). As a result, man's responsibility in violence is concealed, and so is his ability to put an end to it.

The true role of religion is now unveiled: it keeps violence within controllable distance. Girard insists that the eighteenth-century ideal of a Natural Law was not only an illusion but also petrified man in a state of alleged innocence, an idea which reverberates throughout the Blakean canon. This error results in a heightened repression of human dual nature and the survival of a dehumanizing structure. Deprived of a dialectic which fosters forgiveness, man is bound to remain in the net of the sacred; he is then required to forsake his prophetic faculty and consent to turn violence against exterior enemies. With Jesus—born from and for forgiveness—divinity ceases to impose violence. Man's responsibility for the violence of the sacred can no longer be imputed to God.

Blake argues that Redemption is the work of man only; yet he is also convinced that Jesus was the only being capable of renewing a privileged relation to the divine. God for him was knowable in his son only (394), since the latter was neither profane nor sacred. Neither was he the product of a theological construction. What Blake resented in religion (Christianity as taught by theologians) was the veneration of a dead God rather than of the Divine Humanity. Girard's theory emphasizes the contradiction between Christianity and the classical idea of religion based on a separate sacred order. For him, incarnation is a definitive profanation of the sacred (401): God sacrifices himself, assumes man's misery until death in a formidable gesture of forgiveness. As Piquet points out Blake evolved towards a very similar perception. He had equated the crucifixion with the humiliation of man in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell but interprets it as a sign of self-sacrifice in Jerusalem.

According to Girard and Blake, Christ's death is a voluntary gesture of acceptance of the city's violence. With his blatantly unjust death—in which the sacred does not play any role—Jesus urges man to cease uniting around a sacred murder. It is now impossible to deny its workings within the urban space. The Son of God has shown the right approach to existence by focusing not on the sin but on the ability to forgive; imagination is concretely translated into forgiveness which in turn deprives the sacred of the fascination it exerted (416).

NEWSLETTER

CONFERENCE AT ESSEX

"Friendly Enemies: Blake and the Enlightenment," a conference on the inheritors and antagonists of modernity, was held at the University of Essex on 24-26 August, with keynote speakers Jon Mee, Anne Mellor, Joseph Viscomi, and J. Hillis Miller. The organizers plan to publish a book based on conference proceedings. For information contact Noreen Harburt, Centre for Theoretical Studies, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex CO4 3SQ UK. Email jorde@essex.ac.uk.

EXHIBITION AT THE TATE

From 9 November through 11 February the Tate Gallery is presenting an exhibition billed as "the first major exhibition of Blake's work in more than twenty years." It will include more than 200 works from private and public collections worldwide. The curators are Robin Hamlyn, Curator, Tate Collections, and Michael Phillips, University of York. For further information see the Tate web site: http://www.tate.org.uk.

SYMPOSIUM AT YORK

Interest is invited in a symposium on William Blake and the 1790s at the Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies at the University of York, 10-11 December, on the occasion of the Blake exhibition at the Tate Gallery opening in November 2000. Please write to John Barrell or Michael Phillips at the Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies, King's Manor, York, YO1 2EP, Great Britain, or email cmbl4@york.ac.uk.