Kazuya Okada on Blake's Imaginary Families
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ARTICLES

Ore under a Veil Revealed: Family Relationships and their Symbols in Europe and The Book of Urizen

BY KAZUYA OKADA

Introduction

Attention has often been drawn to the veil of Enitharmon (ills. 1a, 1b), representing her relationship to her child, Ore; and its symbolic importance to Blakean mythology is generally agreed upon. But the attendant discussion has produced several, often problematic, arguments. To understand the deeper significance of the imagery, we have to re-examine Ore’s figure in the light of a reconsideration of the traditional mythic sources which throw light upon the meanings of family relationships. These relationships, which provide Blakean mythology with their interlocking dimensions, in effect systematize his idiosyncratic cosmology. His mythology is activated especially by the interaction of certain names which are identified with each character: namely, Los as father figure, Enitharmon as mother, and Ore or Oothoon as child. Elucidating the significance of family relationships thus helps us realize how Blake’s proto-mythological framings are fundamentally based on certain family relationships, extending from the earlier works—such as America or Visions of the Daughters of Albion—all through to such later works as Vala, or The Four Zoas and Jerusalem. More important, perhaps, attention to these relationships can throw light upon transitional works, particularly, Europe and The Book of Urizen. Here in particular, the relationships, when more deeply analyzed, enable us to take a fresh look at Ore, to recognize Urizen with Jupiter as a greater father figure, Los with Vulcan as the father, or Enitharmon with Venus as the mother of Ore. I wish to argue here that this new light reveals the so far hidden position of Ore’s figure as the son between Vulcan and Jupiter, i.e., Cupid. It is not common to see a Cupid figure implied within the characterization of Ore; but it is my contention that this construction leads us to discover a more significant profundity which Blake intends in the figuration of Ore. The discussion will work towards the ultimate aim of encouraging Blake readers to reinterpret the creation of Ore as a challenge to

1 This essay was originally read at BARS (British Association for Romantic Studies) 6th International Residential Conference, Keele University, in the summer of 1999. I acknowledge with gratitude a grant from the English Literary Society of Japan which enabled me to give the presentation at the conference.

A rough sketch of the *Ancient of Days* in the Notebook is an original design of the frontispiece to *Europe* (illus. 2). The original sketch contains an inscription of five words, quoted within the following lines cited from the Prophecy:

... *who shall bind the infinite* with an eternal band,
To compass it with swaddling bands? and who shall cherish it
With milk and honey?

[E 61: italics mine?]

The act of "bind[ing] the infinite" or "compass[ing] it" has provoked several interpretations in the history of Blake studies. One major interpretation derives from the point of view which sees it as a biblical allusion to the charting out of the seven days of creation, i.e., a view which regards it as the depiction of "the Divine Circumscriber." Critics on the side of the latter prefer to depend on the following description of Urizen in chapter VII of *The Book of Urizen* as a supplementary citation: "...formed golden compasses / And began to explore the Abyss" (E 81).

Although the act of encompassing has long been thus understood in conceptual terms, in the following discussion I want to draw the point of emphasis, at least at first, away from this to the question of the form of the compasses as an iconic symbol. To collate the various instances of the form, a subject seemingly oft noticed but little investigated, will illustrate with fresh clarity how a degree of repressive authoritarianism is elaborated within Blake's connotative vocabulary.

To try to understand the elaboration more deeply, let us examine Blake's illustration to Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (illus. 3; later used as the plate representing Night the Fifth of *The Four Zoas*). This illustration seems to allude to the holy family. However, we may explain the parent figures, especially the father figure shown in an encompassing gesture, as Blake's ironical protest against the repressive nurture of infants.

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2 *The Notebook of William Blake* 96.
3 Blake texts are quoted from the Erdman edition, cited as E followed by the page numbers.
As for the image of encompassing the infant, we may well remember that the image of compasses itself is a well known signifier in the iconography of the Christian tradition; when God as creator is compared to a carpenter, the image of compasses can represent him in the role of designer or builder of the world, and the meanings of the icon are in this same tradition, further elaborated to identify Christ as a carpenter. Interestingly, this development of the Christian connotation of the image can help explicate some of Blake's illustrations of the biblical stories, such as, for example, *The Christ Child Asleep on the Cross* (illus. 4a). In the illustration, the Christ child is sleeping on a cross beside a scaffolding of timber, and just next to the cross a set-square is placed which seems to be emphasized by another pair of compasses leaning against the woodwork. The importance of this compasses icon gains in emphasis through his additional use of the shape in another illustration on the same theme (illus. 4b). In this illustration Joseph holds the compasses over the Christ child. We can decode this image conventionally, i.e., as an implied prefiguring of the Child's future as the one
who will create the world of love; but, on the other hand, it might also be understood skeptically, for Blake uses the form of compasses to connote a disapproval of restrictive authority, which can be seen, for example, in Christ's resentment against such authority in his future ministry. Such a skeptical interpretation seems warranted when we look at another piece of biblical illustration by Blake entitled The Woman Taken in Adultery (illus. 5), where Christ is shown in a stooping posture, and his hand in a gesture of compassing. Traditionally Christ is simply writing on the floor, but this gesture may be seen to imply Christ's ironical criticism of the fleeing crowd behind him, in that they are only compassing others, as well as themselves, within a repressive morality. We should emphasize that the shape of the compasses here signifies Christ's resentment against Urizenic power.

Curiously, this kind of emphasis on the image of compasses as denoting circumscribing authority may be deepened and enhanced by considering Blake's illustrations of the nativity. These offer confirmation of ironic interpretations of the imagery through the repeated appearance of the shape of compasses in the six illustrations to Milton's On the Morning of Christ's Nativity. One advocate of such a reading is Michael Tolley, through whose research we are in a better position to appreciate Blake's ironical attitude towards the Miltonic understanding of the infant Christ (145). Tolley's interpretation is as follows:

... throughout Europe we find Blake looking very closely at Milton's Hymn [On the Morning of Christ's Nativity] and it is not going too far to say that Europe is primarily a reworking of Milton's poem. (119)

If, with this explication in mind, we assume that Blake here ironically indict this type of Miltonic-Newtonic creator, we can go on to recollect Milton's account concerning God's use of "the golden compasses . . . to circumscribe / This Universe and all created things." Once we can register Blake's resentment against the Miltonic notion of a rational great-father (creator figure), one to be regarded in the light of a confining and repressive power, we can be more confident in detecting the irony ingeniously implied by the compasses-like shape of the roof of the stable depicted in the illustrations of the series (illus. 6a and 6b).

A consciousness of this irony enables us now to take a fresh look at the frontispiece of Europe (illus. 2), where we might consider the form of the cloud as suggesting a womb from which a potential infant might just have been given birth and whom Urizen is now compassing. This possibility may lead us further to identify the infinity, i.e., the unseen object below the compasses, with Orc as the potential infant. However, an Orc whose symbolic meanings extend beyond those connoted by the image of Christ leads us to further investigation of, in particular, the role of Los and Enitharmon as Orc's parents as well as reproducers of the Urizenic power of confinement; and this is the topic to which I now turn.

Parents: Los and Enitharmon

The Greek oupi^eiv ("to limit"), from which Kathleen Raine and others prefer to derive the name of Urizen, may precisely summarize his character, a circumscriber. That Los as a father of Orc cooperates with Urizen so as to reinforce the confinement initiated by him is discernible, for example, in the last illustration of Jerusalem (illus. 7), where Los holds compasses-like tongs in his left hand. In fact, we might better characterize Los by designating him as a sustainer, or a reproducer, of Urizenic domination, since, as this plate shows, Los seems to be trusted with the charge of confining Orc. The hammer in the other hand, for use in

5 The Woman Taken in Adultery. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Parents: Los and Enitharmon

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5 As for this illustration, George Goyder includes in his explanation: "the compasses of rational thought . . . symbolising the two ideals of love and truth, united and reconciled in Christ's sacrifice"; and David Bindman suggests that "the compasses in this work . . . may also indicate that Christ's death is to be at the hands of Reason in the form of the Law of Solomon" (cited in Butlin's The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake 2: 328).

6 Paradise Lost, VII, 225-27.

7 See Tolley's helpful argument, though my ultimate argument is different from this opinion: "The birth of Christ represented the crucial challenge to Urizen's compasses" (119).

8 See Damon 419.

9 This is in contrast to The Book of Urizen, where "Urizen explored his dens/ Mountain, moor, & wilderness / With a globe of fire lighting his journey/ A fearful journey, annoyed/ By Cruel enormities . . ." (E 81).
binding Orc in chains on the mountain, emphasizes his character as a blacksmith.10

In the same plate appears another supporter of Urizen, Enitharmon, who is a mother figure of Orc. She is shown unwinding the “aching fibres of Los” (E 247),11 who seems bound up in what looks very much like a version of the concealing veil, whose function is depicted in the illustration of plate 4 of Europe (illus. 1a), where it has the purpose of concealing Orc.12 As the statement of the nameless shadowy female implies—she is a vague figure of Oothoon, the other rebellious child of Los and Enitharmon—Enitharmon is another figure of confinement: “Ah mother Enitharmon! / Stamp not with solid form . . . ,” “thou dost stamp them with a signet.”13 In addition to the veil, Enitharmon as an authoritative figure commands the use of a net so as to enforce greater restrictions.

... tell the human race that Woman's Love is Sin:
That an Eternal life awaits the worms of sixty winters
In an allegorical abode where existence hath never come:
Forbid all Joy, & from her childhood shall the little female
Spread nets in every secret path.

[E 62, italics mine]

These nets may be identical with the ones described in Europe with which Urizen is endowed in addition to his compasses, i.e., “the Net of Urizen” (E 83).

In this section we have mainly investigated the relationships between the parents of Orc and Urizen. In retrospect, we can now identify Urizen with Jupiter, and Los with Vulcan as a blacksmith, and in consequence we may go some way to acknowledging the further identification of Enitharmon with Venus as the wife of Vulcan. These identifications, re-

10 The serpent temple illustrated in the background suggests by implication the idea that a blighting (and also blighted) system is sustained by the priestcraft of authoritarian regimentation. As for the serpent temple, cf. Dörriecker 273-74; Mee 92-97.
11 Cf. Erdman's The Illuminated Blake 379.
12 As for the argument as to whether she is concealing or revealing Orc in this plate, see Dörriecker 269-70; Erdman's The Illuminated Blake 162; and Chayes 218 (“Above him [Orc], kneeling on a cloud, a nude woman who is probably Enitharmon leans forward in a sweeping gesture and lifts a cloth to reveal him”). Beer reproduces a Raphael Madonna and compares it to the plate, describing the Christ child under the veil as “[t]he Jesus who has been veiled by the Church” (Beer 374 and plates 53, 54).
13 See also a similar image in Visions of the Daughters of Albion: “Stamp with my signet are the swarthy children of the sun” (E 46). The description of her as a dominant queen figure, “Now comes the night of Enitharmon's joy” (E 62), may be associated with the annotation of Swedenborg's Divine Love, “When the fallacies of darkness are in the circumference they cast a bound about the infinite” [E 604, italics mine]. Cf. Tolley 119.
viewed through the various family relationships in the myth, may lead us to infer that "Orc their son is Cupid." It is not usual to see a Cupid figure implied within the characterization of Orc, but to argue this construction will lead us to discover the more significant profundity which Blake intends in the figure of Orc as the child of Vulcan-Venus parents.

The Creation of Orc; or the Restoration of Cupid Revealed

Knowledge of contextual discourse is naturally requisite for any critical argument, but here I want to focus on one topic among others raised by the figure of Cupid, or the story of Cupid (or Eros) and Psyche. Although significant meanings for the topic have been adduced by various critics, such as, Irene Chayes and Erdman, I shall argue the assumption that Blake may have intended to restore to Cupid some of his original meanings when creating the figure of Orc.

Interestingly, the plate entitled “Aged Ignorance,” one of Blake’s illustrations of The Gates of Paradise (illus. 8), can serve to introduce the theme. In the design, the aged Urizen-like figure is depicted in an attempt to cut Cupid’s wings. The glasses on his blind eyes seem to emphasize his “ignorance” in a kind of ironical inversion of the conventional notion of “the blind Cupid.” Yet, we come to recognize that this illustration ought more properly to be contextualized within the contemporary discourse of “the selling of Cupid,” or the captivated Cupid (illus. 9a and 9b). Henry Fuseli’s illustration of the theme (illus. 9c) exemplifies this discourse, and is important in reference to Blake, for Fuseli inspired and enlightened Blake as an artist as well as an engraver. Evidence that Blake was in fact conscious of this discourse can be found in his design for Cumberland’s Thoughts on Outline, where the discourse itself seems to be betraying its own implied recognition of an oppressive captivity figured in terms of the inverted state of Eros being bound (illus. 10), rather than simply showing the poet-engraver’s rendering of the story.

This significant image of a child restrained from flying, which is embodied in the discourse of the captivated Cupid, stimulates a curious reading of the “Preludium” plate.

As for this contemporary discourse, cf. Rosenblum 3-9.

Certainly, it should not be forgotten that there is another possible identification of Orc with Prometheus.
For Children The Gates of Paradise, pl. 13: "Aged Ignorance." Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

to The Book of Urizen (illus. 11). Although some critics want to see "an idealized image of the family" in this design, it seems obvious that the mother figure looks quite severe and the child looks worried, or rather held captive. This mother figure, or an Entharmonian mother, with her restricting gesture, might be read to represent parents who educate their children in conventional morality, or transmit taboos to the young, and can be seen engaged in the economy of another relevant contextual discourse: that of the idealized marriage, as has been observed by Marilyn Butler. The inscription, "Teach these Souls to Fly," on the headpiece, produced as a separate plate for A Small Book of Designs, should be considered as an ironical statement of Blake's resentment of repressive parentage. In a poem in which we can appropriately identify the birth of Orc, Blake depicts the reluctance of an infant to enter the world from which it immediately struggles to escape:

My mother groan'd! my father wept—
Into the dangerous world I leapt:
Helpless, naked, piping loud:
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my father's hands
Striving against my swaddling bands,
Bound and weary, I thought best
To suck upon my mother's breast.

(E 28, italics mine)

8 For example, Mitchell, Blake's Composite Art 144 and Essick 133.
9 Butler 132-33.


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In addition to the apparent similarity on a visual level (see the design of the plate [illus. 12]), we should note that the description of the struggling infant includes the image of a band, i.e., "my swaddling bands," an image which has already been examined above; "[w]ho shall bind the infinite with an eternal band? / To compass it with swaddling bands?"

It is not Blake's ultimate aim to allow an infant "[t]o sulk upon [her] breast." What the discourse of captivity involves is an implied recognition that the infant, as a representative of fragile and weak existence, has no choice except to live as an obedient child. Yet, this is what is problematic from the point of the rebellious child, who is expected to overthrow such an oppressive authority. Being obedient to the economy of endlessly reproducing the Urizenic family of restriction will only result in repeating the cycle of domestic repression. Blake's is a protest, therefore, against this dominant economy of circularity in which no progress can ever be made.\(^{20}\) Then the question must be asked; how is the infant to attain to a symbolic power sufficiently formidable to escape, or more precisely, to overthrow the system?

I would like to go back to the icon of compasses positioned over the infant. Among the six designs for Milton's "Nativity Ode," one plate, entitled The Flight of Moloch, presents us with the child who leaps out of the furnace as if marching through a cathedral window whose upper portion echoes the compasses shape (illus. 13). In the original text the infant is supposed to die according to the story of the sacrifice to Moloch ("that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Moloch"\(^{21}\)). Here, Paine; "natural' feelings were contrasted "to the aristocratic perversion of the family into an artificial system of power relationships" (202). The anguish of the nameless shadowy female, who can be considered as an Oothoon-like figure, i.e., another rebellious child of Los and Enitharmon, is significantly related to this economy of consumption—"Consumed and consuming! / Then why shouldst thou accursed my mother bring me into life?", or "O mother Enitharmon, wilt thou bring forth other sons? / To cause my name to vanish, that my place may not be found" (E 60).
Blake’s invention may be regarded as intending to imply the creation of a new and formidable type of infant. It might not be going too far to identify this infant with Orc, as Jean Hagstrum does in his discussion of this plate.  

My assumption is that the characterization of Vulcan as Los is reinforced as a result of Blake’s aspiration to create a formidable infant, though the image of compasses might have been a more important factor in enhancing this aspect. For we can well imagine Blake to have been acquainted with the original significance of Cupid, as the child of Vulcan and Venus, in some versions of ancient mythology. As a possible engraver of Jacob Bryant’s A New System, or An Analysis of Ancient Mythology, Blake would likely have been in a position to observe a reworking of the mythologies. This would permit us to suppose that he welcomed the original version of the God of Love, whose figure seems capable of being revitalized as an appropriately subversive force, and who is a child of Vulcan the compasses-tong holder. Bryant phrases his rediscovery in the following way:

... they [the Greek] gave him a material bow, with the addition of a quiver and arrows. Being furnished with these implements of mischief he was supposed to be the bane of the world. ... This was different from his original character. He is styled by Plato ... a mighty God: it is said ... That Eros was the cause of the greatest blessings to mankind. The bows of Apollo and of Diana, were, I believe, formed from the same original. [italics original]

Orc as a redeemed Cupid has the potentiality to break the conventional forms of oppression. His subversive aspect, whose most often noted feature is the serpent figure, is now brought to a further level of profundity as revealed by a reconsideration of family relationships.

Although these figures of Orc as Cupid are not immediately visible in his poetry—they must rather be deduced from within contextual discourses—once we can conceive the possibility of this interpretation, we will find, at the level of the poetry’s deep structure, the richest connotations of the Orc figure, which complicate and extend the original significance of Cupid. For instance, when we realize that the word “Eros” becomes “rose” by rearranging the letters of the word, the altered significance of the redeemed figure of Cupid / Eros requires as a consequence a thorough re-reading of Blake’s works. This is because the anagram must prompt readers to reinvestigate the still-enigmatic image of the sick rose in relation to the sick Cupid who is degraded in the discourse of the Psyche story, and which may in this way have been intended as a contextual symbol of the repressed emotion of love. More curiously still, in the Notebook, c. 1791-92, just prior to the sick rose poem, there occurs another in which “Love” is winged. Of course, winged Love can easily represent Cupid. The lines are as follows:

Love...
Always is to joy inclined.
Lawless, winged and unconfined,
And breaks all chains from every mind.

Here, intriguingly, “winged” “Love” is described as “lawless,” which can be seen to have political implications if we agree to trace the Cupid-Orc figure in the figure of “Love.” Orc may well represent the contextual revolutionary ethos.

21 2 Kings 23: 10.
24 Bryant 2: 345. It should be noticed that the same part is cited by Erasmus Darwin in the context of the notion that “the ancient God of love was of much higher dignity than the modern Cupid. He was the first that came out of the great egg of night” in The Botanic Garden: Part I. The Economy of Vegetation, 3rd ed. (London, 1795) 56.
25 In his illustrations, nevertheless, there are some designs which clearly includes Cupid figures.
26 Stevenson 158-59.
and Blake may equally well be expressing his radicalism by way of the refiguring of Cupid. My assumption here, which I recognize needs further demonstration, is that "Unconfined Love" can share the same foundation as the figure of the unconfined Orc, and that for Blake the emotional emancipation of Love could be equated with the emancipation of the human spirit from political repression. I hope, however, that this discourse of liberty, seen in the light I have demonstrated here, will lead to a recognition of the deeper levels of significance within Blake's entire mythology, since Orc, hitherto veiled in Blake studies as an original figure of Cupid, now stands revealed as the subversive figure of Love, a breaker of psychic and, by implication, social chains.

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The Book of Ahania: A Metatext

BY HATSUKO NIIMI

The three books etched by Blake in 1794-95, namely The Book of Urizen, The Book of Ahania and The Book of Los have been considered by many critics to be a sequence of parodies or satires on the Pentateuch; David W. Lindsay, Leslie Tannenbaum and Stephen C. Behrendt maintain that they constitute Blake's Bible of Hell, intended to revise and challenge the received Bible of Heaven, while Harold Bloom and Leslie Tannenbaum and Stephen C. Behrendt maintain that they constitute Blake's Bible of Hell, intended to revise and challenge the received Bible of Heaven. Finally, David Worrall, in his edition of the three books, which appeared in 1995 and is the most recent, groups them together and refers to them as the Urizen Books; he considers the trilogy to be "an expression of Blake's scepticism about his age's politicization of scriptural authority" (153). This corresponds to Jon Mee's claim that "Blake is constantly seeking to break down the notion of scripture as monolithic authority" (14); his primary assumption is that Blake's "rhetorical practices" (2) in the 1790s can be construed better and differently, if put in the context of the controversy over the French Revolution. Worrall examines the extent to which Blake was affected by the political and religious debates in progress in London during this decade: disputes which intensified and grew more dangerous for those suspected of sedition, when England declared war against France in 1793, and Thomas Paine's The Age of Reason was published in 1794-95. Worrall defines the Urizen Books, written in the years of "Pitt's Terror" (12), as Blake's "most politically interventionist works" (19) and gives particular attention to his Muggletonian sympathies and his connection with one of his contemporaries, the radical ant Clericalist, Thomas Spence. It may, then, be an invitation to consider the role alloted to the female character, Enitharmon, in its peculiar merit and significance. But to read The Book of Ahania closely encourages us, I believe, to see it as unique in its ability to shed light on Blake's ideas concerning writing or literacy, as opposed to speaking or orality, and consequently on his view of the text, or the book, in general.

One of the distinctive features of this work, in contrast with Urizen and Los, is the role allotted to the female character. In Urizen, Enitharmon is presented by means of description as a figure giving birth to Orc, and weeping over her son chained to a rock, but at no point does she speak for herself. Similarly, Los consists entirely of the recollections of its narrator, Eno, apart from the six lines which introduce her, but Eno does not tell her own story. Yet Ahania, whose plight is described in the opening chapter of the book named after her, begins to speak for herself in the fifth and last chapter: her lamentation for the prelapsarian state of her union with Urizen occupies almost the whole of this chapter, and is therefore given great prominence. This fact, together with the content of her speech, suggests that the events connected with Urizen and Fuzon, which are related in the first four chapters, are, like her own situation, capable of being interpreted in a new way: in the context of linguistic activity, with its various moral, historical and ideological connotations.

Jon Mee, who considers the three books to be "Blake's critique of the Bible" (162), refers, in his discussion of Urizen, to Blake's making use of "an antithesis between written and oral forms" (103), and characterizes the former as oppressive and the latter as liberated. His argument includes a consideration of the status of Blake's own writing in his chosen medium of illuminated printing. Although Mee is only concerned with the opposition between the druid-priest Urizen and bard-prophets like Orc and Los, I think this sort of opposition exists also in Ahania, in the contrast between Urizen who "wrote / In silence his book of iron" (pl. 4:63-64) and Ahania, "his parted soul" (pl. 3:32), and in the relationship between Urizen and Fuzon, whose corpse "Urizen nail'd" on the topmost stem of "the accursed Tree of Mystery" (pl. 5:6-8). Urizen is depicted as the murderer of his rebellious son and a producer of written books, but he remains silent throughout the book, except for four lines addressed to his bow. Fuzon, a character who resembles Orc, denounces Urizen in four lines which occur early in chapter 1, just before he attempts to assassinate him: in chapter 2 he utters one line of exultation when he thinks he has succeeded; otherwise he also remains silent. In striking contrast, Ahania shows herself capable of prolonged eloquence in the concluding chapter, as she speaks of her love for Urizen and her vision of the past, her fervor unaffected by her sense of the futility of her appeal.

The purpose of this paper is to interpret Ahania as a metatext, concerned with conflicting and antagonistic linguistic realities, represented by the activities of these three characters. First, Ahania's speech will be discussed, with reference to Saussure's distinction between parole and langue and Walter J. Ong's analysis of orality and literacy. My argument is that Ahania is an instance of parole, which is "active

1 Worrall's assertion that the Books were written "against a background of an authoritative and repressive culture" (15) is cogently illustrated in his discussion of Ahania, which he situates in the contemporary print culture of political caricature (157-59), and in his analysis of its endpiece design (162-63).

2 All quotations from The Book of Ahania are from The Urizen Books edited by David Worrall (London: The William Blake Trust/The Tate Gallery, 1995). Subsequent references to the text will be designated by the plate number, followed by the lines in parentheses, as in (Pl. 3: 1-5).
In chapter 1 of *Ahania*, the heroine represents the soul, or emanation of Urizen, divided from him after Fuzon's attack on his "cold loins" has caused him to discard her as sin: she is said to move as "the moon anguishd circles the earth," for she is under the control of Urizen; as "a faint shadow" and the "mother of Pestilence," she is bound to revolve round him, "Unseen, un-bodied, unknown." She becomes a voiceless figure, associated with disease and death, the victim of Urizen's suppression and hatred, as well as an invisible and amorphous being. Except for the first six lines, which describe her formless presence, chapter 5 consists first of her lamentation over her miserable separation and alienation from Urizen; secondly, of her unwearyed questionings of his rejection, aloofness and rigidity, and finally, of her frank and impassioned recollections of her glorious past, sharing sexual and mental joy, beauty and freedom with Urizen.

Although at the beginning of the work, Ahania is said to be his "parted soul," in the final chapter, she can be said to be a representation of either wisdom (Bloom 176), or pleasure (Paley 30), or desire (Worrall 185), according to the aspect of her supplication which is seen as predominant. She is also relational and interpersonal, with "the mutualism of selflessness" (Behrendt 147); she has care and compassion for others, as well as resistance to the dualism and universalization which characterise abstract thinking (Cox 160). As regards style, she uses pictorial and concrete images and introduces into the poem a "new speed and flexibility" (Lindsay 146). Ahania is described as wandering and floating, as well as weeping and chanting "on the verge / Of Non-entity," which indicates the extent to which her exiled condition can vary.

It is obvious that her role is primarily that of a speaker: a protagonist whose medium is language. More specifically, she is endowed with the functions of parole and orality, or oral culture. I would like to demonstrate this by referring first to Saussure's conception of parole, as expounded in his third course of lectures on general linguistics (1910-11). He distinguishes two kinds of parole: "The use of faculties in general for linguistic purposes (phonation, etc.)" and "individual use of the language code to express individual thought" (70a); this last function of parole, which is the source of all change in a language, is of crucial importance in linguistic activity. He further indicates the interdependency between parole and langue:

There is nothing in the language which has not entered (directly or indirectly) through speech, that is through the sum total of words perceived, and conversely no speech is possible before the development of this product called the language, which supplies the individual with the elements for the composition of his speech. (71a)
In contrast to langue, which is constructed structure, parole is constructing structure; parole is regulated by the collective knowledge of langue, which in turn is to be reformed through the individual activity of parole. David Holdcroft lists six comparable characteristics shared by the two, according to Saussure's account: parole is individual, contingent, has an active role, is designed, is not conventional, and provides a heterogeneous subject matter which is studied by different disciplines, whereas langue is social, essential, has no active individual role, is not designed, but conventional, and provides a homogeneous subject matter to be studied as a branch of social psychology (21). By quoting Saussure's statement that "Each change is launched by a certain number of individuals before it is accepted for general use," Holdcroft emphasizes that "parole is needed to explain not only how langue is constituted as a stable system in a community, but also how changes occur in it" (33).

Ong, who recognizes the primacy of parole (oral speech) in Saussure's classifications, has given further consideration to the respective spheres of the oral and the literate. It is relevant to draw on his argument in order to clarify certain aspects of the function of language in a community. He states:

...oral cultures must conceptualize and verbalize all their knowledge with more or less close reference to the human lifeworld, assimilating the alien, objective world to the more immediate, familiar interaction of human beings. (42)

Orality "situates knowledge within a context of struggle," engaging "others in verbal and intellectual combat" (44); "Primary orality fosters personality structures that in certain ways are more communal and externalized, less introspective than those common among literates. Oral communication unites people in groups" (69). He also points out that "Oral man is not so likely to think of words as 'signs,' quiescent visual phenomena," but as "constantly moving, but by flight, which is a powerful form of movement, and one lifting the flier free of the ordinary, gross, heavy, 'objective' world" (77). It is necessary to see these characteristics of oral cultures in contrast with those of writing cultures, and I would like to discuss this topic later in part 2, in connection with Urizen's role as a writer. But the immediate relevance of Ong's account of the distinctive features of oral cultures to my argument concerning Ahania, consists in his claim that they spring from direct contacts with the living world, from a strong interest in differences between the self and others, and from a consequent wish to become involved with others, by setting up personal relationships. Finally, his suggestion that language is seen as flexible and mobile by speakers in an oral culture, is particularly relevant to my interpretation of this character.

In chapter 5 of Ahania, we can detect in the descriptions of her state and in her own utterances various elements which remind us of the aspects of parole and orality to which I have drawn attention:

Her voice was heard, but no form
Had she; but her tears from clouds
Eternal fell round the Tree

It is noticeable that her existence is verbal, yet has no fixed form. It has therefore one quality essential to orality: so has her unrestricted power to feel sorrow and compassion for the pain and suffering of others. In addition, her passionate yearning for Urizen and her continuing sense of his merit and superiority, are repeatedly suggested by her actions and words:

And the voice cried: Ah Urizen! Love!
Flower of morning! I weep on the verge
On Non-entity; how wide the Abyss
Between Ahania and thee!

The significance of her invisibility as well as the danger that she will become extinct, separated from Urizen, will be discussed later, but the point to notice here is that, in spite of his hardness and cruel rejection of her, she never fails to show care and love for him, unable to see his initial brightness and magnificence as lost, and seeking to reestablish their unity. Memory is also an important element in orality (Ong 19). Worrall states that Ahania's solitary lament "is presented as the most dubious authentification of Urizen" (153) and thinks her "irrevocable loss of Urizen's presence might itself be a misremembered recollection of a paradisaical joy which never happened" (155). It is, however, hard to discover any grounds in her speech for this interpretation. Her plea is earnest and pressing, vividly recalling his "bright presence" (5:63). Her intense and continuous plea for change is vain, which makes her appeal pathetic, but no less authentic.

Ahania's most individual and unconventional characteristics are very evident in her vision of her former blissful intercourse with Urizen, and in her vindication of the passion and fulfilment of their love as her recollections proceed. She is eager to "awake my king in the morn! / To embrace Ahanian joy / On the breadth of his open bosom" (6:10-12) and looks back to the time:

When he gave my happy soul
To the sons of eternal joy:
When he took the daughters of life
Into my chambers of love:
When I found babes of bliss on my beds.
And bosoms of milk in my chambers
Fill'd with eternal seed
O! eternal births sung round Ahania
In interchange sweet of their joys.

(6:15-23)
She dwells with passionate affirmation on the unique world of unrestrained desire, sexual joy and consequent fertility, which she shared with Urizen: she is referring to "the eternal exchange of the joys of love freely given and received in a sexual embrace" (Tannenbaum 246). Lindsay, emphasizing the fact that "the human integrity and creativity of an unfallen mind" are portrayed in this section, indicates that the "golden age here is remembered as one of free and confident energy, of delight unrestricted by possessiveness, of abundance and unfettered generosity" (147). Ahania recalls the sense of belonging to a unified whole, which she experienced when she and Urizen were together and in harmony. She expresses herself in fluid and prolific images, which contrast strongly with Urizenic categorization and demarcation. She is not uttering a prophetic vision, but recreating an experienced world of life and love. She is a daring believer in her own vision of the past, though she does not know how to reclaim it, and it is the fervor of her belief that gives her speech its individuality.

The generosity of maternal love, the willingness to forgive natural to a liberal mind, and the urge to recover the unstinted reciprocity of a sexual and personal relationship are all demonstrated in Ahania's speech, and all correspond to the characteristics of parole and orality. It will deepen our understanding of this speech, from a linguistic viewpoint, if we consider the feminine ethics it implies, which also share some of the qualities of parole and orality. In her study of Michel Foucault and feminism, Lois McNay examines the feminine critique of rationality, stating that in contrast to an abstract, masculine ethics of justice, "a feminist ethics is based on a responsiveness to others and a respect for the particular which leads to moral concerns connected to providing care, preventing harm and maintaining relationships" (92). In her discussion of Carole Gilligan's "particular ethics," which is "based more on caring and interpersonal relations" (93), she explicates Gilligan's view of women's moral judgments, which are "more contextual and more immersed in the details of relationships and narrative (the 'particular other')" (93). This ethics of care is certainly to be found in Ahania's attitude to Urizen and in the pity for Fuzon which the opening lines of chapter 5 attribute to her. Her longing for the restoration of broken relationships is central to her character. As Anne K. Mellor points out, Blake's "feminine ethics" is developed fully in later prophetic books, especially in Jerusalem, in his creation of "Emanations" which "are clearly maternal and valued for their feminine capacities for sympathy and empathy" (21). But in Ahania, the heroine's speech and her implied characteristics do not only arise from a moral outlook which anticipates postmodern feminine ethics. They also reveal her commitment to a far more amorphous and generous love relationship. She places a strong emphasis on the primacy of physicality, sexually based difference, and the capacity for reform. Being unseen, unbodied and unknown to fallen Urizen, and asking insistently for change and for a close personal bond, as she gives full vent to her innermost sorrow and joy, she embodies speech, or Saussurean parole, though this parole is received or approved by no one, as it reaches out towards a reciprocal relationship which has been lost.

If it is appropriate to regard Ahania as representing parole and orality, what are the roles of Urizen and Fuzon in terms of linguistic activity? And especially what is the meaning of Ahania's solitary and rejected situation in the context of language? It is again relevant to examine Saussure's concept of parole in contrast to langue, and Ong's differentiation of orality and literacy as opposing principles; it will enable us to see that Urizen is possessed of some attributes of langue and the function of writing. In The Book of Ahania, he is depicted chiefly as the crucificer of Fuzon and as a writer of books, seated on the rock enclosed by the Tree of Mystery.

As we have seen, Ong stresses the primacy of orality and suggests that writing was a very late development in human history" (83). Moreover, writing "separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for 'objectivity', in the sense of personal disengagement or distancing" (46). He offers a four-point summary of Plato's view of writing: it is inhuman and thing-like; it destroys memory; it creates an unresponsive text; it is passive (79). Ong also points out "the deadness of the text, its removal from the living human lifeworld, its rigid visual fixity," though this "assures its endurance and its potential for being resurrected into limitless living contexts by a potentially infinite number of living readers" (81). In comparison with spoken words, writing entails "the reduction of dynamic sound to quiescent space, the separation of the word from living present" (82). Moreover, the writer of a text is alone and writing is "a solipsistic operation" (101), but it "makes possible the great introspective religious traditions such as Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam" and all of which have "sacred texts" (105). These characteristics of writing illuminate various aspects of Urizen as a writer and his writings.

Before he is attacked by Fuzon's "sounding beam" (pl. 3:27), Urizen had been "shrunk away / From Eternals":

... he sat on a rock
Barren; a rock which himself
From redounding fancies had petrified

Soon shot the pained root

---

4 Cox discusses Ahania's attempt to "try to picture the state of undivided yet related wholeness that existed before Urizen began his revolutionary career" and suggests that her "pictorializations are vaguely bordered, expandable things that resist both sharp division and dogmatic universalization" (160).
Of Mystery under his heel:
It grew a thick tree; he wrote
In silence his book of iron:

(pl. 4:56-64)

What is suggestive here is the simultaneity of the growing of the mystery tree with Urizen's writing of the book of iron, as well as his association with the rock. Almost all the critics of this work identify Urizen with Jehovah, and Fuzon with Moses, or Christ; other suggestions have been Satan, St. Sebastian and Robespierre. His role in Ahania certainly has apparent allusions to the last four books of the Pentateuch, and to the Atonement. But Urizen is absorbed in the production of religious texts which are essentially concerned with mystery. Moreover, the rapid enlargement of the Tree of Mystery clearly means that its leaves are multiplying, and there is a possible punning allusion to the multiplying leaves of Urizen's book, which suggests that his role as a writer will lead to his becoming a despot, increasing in power and isolation as the tree increases.

The tree developing into a forest is seen as symbolizing several things: “the network of Church-and-State religion” (Paley 32); “the restrictions he placed on intellectual freedom” (Lindsay 145); “the establishment of the priesthood of the Levites” (Tannenbaum 233); “the psychic origin of Urizen's repressive institutions” (Webster 171); “Urizenic state religion” (Mee 102). These interpretations of the Tree of Mystery enable us to see in it one of the attributes of writing which has been distinguished by Ong: its tendency to encourage the establishment and perpetuation of rigid and fixed “sacred texts,” through the medium of priestcraft or of institutions like churches of state religion, even though the original code might have taken shape in the immediacy of care and love.

In this sense, the book of iron is the Bible of Heaven, and as he writes it, Urizen is “compassed round / And high roofed over with trees” (pl. 4:69-70); he is incapable of seeing through the world of appearances, though possessing the power to demand sacrifice and subjection. The rock, the thick tree and the book of iron, which are associated with the earth and resistant to change, are his instruments for the enforcement of his written law and for the infliction of cruel punishment, creating “An endless labyrinth of woe” (pl. 5:4). He represents the established power, the guardian and promoter of “the deadness of the text”. He can also be said to be an embodiment, after his own fashion, of Saussure's langue, the constructed structure of the social code, which is developed and made durable by “the collective intelligence” (Saussure 71a), so widely different from the individual wills which are responsible for parole; in Urizen's case, of course, the difference has become extreme, and the code a tyranny.

As stated in my introduction, Jon Mee draws our attention to “an antithesis between written and oral forms” when referring to Urizen, who is “associated with the process of transcription and the written law”; he also suggests that “One obvious implication of these metal books is the inflexibility of the political and psychological order Urizen sponsors,” while the “struggle against the iron authority of Urizen's written laws is often figured in terms of orality” (103). Mee cites as examples Orc in America and The Book of Urizen and Los in The Song of Los. My argument is that in The Book of Ahania, orality is represented by the heroine, though her voice occasions no hint of change on the part of Urizen, who embodies the system of langue; her speech fails to receive its “collective approval.”

Another common factor shared by interpretations of Ahania is the assumption that Fuzon is the hero of the poem, as a rebellious spirit. His revolt against his father, and consequent crucifixion, presented in the first two chapters, have obvious biblical associations, recognized, as noted above, by most critics. Paley, however, sees Fuzon rather differently: “Fuzon as the Energy principle, the element of fire, is the force within man that will redeem him from the bondage of Urizen's repressing law” (28). Webster and Cox construe Fuzon as representing impulse or passion. His “beautiful visage, his tresses, / That gave light to the morning of heaven” (pl. 4:41-42) are just what Ahania once enjoyed admiring in Urizen.

When Fuzon attacks Urizen in chapter 1, he already sees his father as “this Demon of smoke,” spreading the deceiving vapor of a joyless religion, and demanding worship. Fuzon calls him:

... this abstract non-entity
This cloudy God scanted on waters
Now seen, now obscur'd; King of sorrow (?)

(pl. 3:11-13)

Fuzon refuses to worship him, and “in a fiery flame” of wrath throws “The howling Globe” which lengthens into “a hungry beam” (pl. 3:18-19). His beam of desire is encountered by Urizen's disk of abstract geometry, which constitutes the shield of reason. Fuzon's attempt at parricide undeniably entails a sexual assault, “The cold loins of Urizen dividing” (pl. 3:29) and this is clear also from Urizen's reaction: “Dire shriek'd his invisible Lust” (30). The result is that Ahania is divided from Urizen, who casts her away; as Bloom says, “Urizen rejects his sexuality, and dismisses his female counterpart as Sin” (177). Webster suggests that “Urizen's opposing shield, forged in "mills" of logic, functions, like the curtains in Urizen, to distance dangerous impulses by denying both hungry sexuality and aggression” (169).

Tannenbaum, for example, suggests that “Fuzon-Moses represents the passion for justice, the spirit of righteousness that quickly extends its vitality as it takes the form of doctrines, laws, and codes of living” (226-27).
It is clear, I think, that Fuzon is the projection of Urizen's sexual and rebellious impulses. In chapter 2, the parent's retaliation starts, which is the beginning of the process by which Urizen endeavors to repress his eros. The detailed procedures by which he prepares his weapon are significant: his bow is the "Bow of the clouds of secrecy" (pl. 4:26) and his arrow is a "poisoned rock" (24); the son is struck down and killed by the rock. The development of Urizen's character in chapter 3 reveals that it is "the rock of the Law," which serves "as a negation of an arrow of desire" (Bloom 179). Lindsay also offers an interpretation of this assault, suggesting that "the spirit of rebellion is struck down by the moral law" (145). It is not difficult to see why Urizen's nailing of his son's corpse to the Tree of Mystery is seen by many critics as an unmistakable parody of the Atonement, but it is more difficult to be sure, even approximately, of the significance of Fuzon's declaration in chapter 2 "I am God. said he, the eldest of things!" (pl. 4:38) To one critic, it suggests that "the rebel has become the tyrant" (Tannenbaum 226); to another that "By proclaiming his omnipotence, Fuzon breathes new life into the Urizenic system" (Mee 194).

It is possible to suggest an explanation, in terms of the linguistic analogy, of Fuzon's boastful claim, and I will attempt this after a further brief discussion of the part he plays in Ahania. It would be reasonable to expect to find some illumination of his second speech in chapter 4, but it is the most enigmatic of the five chapters. It could conceivably be a continuation of the atonement of Fuzon, or a stage in Urizen's own gradual degradation, or in his ossification of the fluid lava of life and energy. Lindsay is, as far as I know, the only critic who makes any extensive comment on this chapter: he says of the "white Lake" (pl. 5:14), "By his withdrawal from eternal liberty, Urizen transmuted his active powers into inertia and chill frustration" (146); with regard to Fuzon's body, he comments that it is displayed as "an advertisement for suffering," and believes it is meant to suggest that "the first inventing of religion confined humanity within the physical body, so this consolidation of clerical privilege reduces man to a still more earth-bound existence and further hardens the bony prison of his brain" (146). The second consequence of Urizenic rule, which Lindsay mentions here, is of course an allusion to chapter 4, verse 8.

Lindsay's explication, though a little schematic, offers an interesting summary of the power struggle with which the poem is concerned: "the rational intellect is by the destructive violence of its own offspring wrenched apart from intellectual joy" (144). His exegesis suggests that as Urizen represents repressive reason and law, Ahania represents intellectual pleasure and Fuzon passion and lust; reason is destined to negate every emotional, sexual or mental joy and fulfilment. More might be said about Ahania, but it seems clear that Fuzon does indeed represent a vehement assertion of the claims of unashamed sexual impulse: his castration of his father is an instinctive attack on passionless and repressed sexual activity; the "cold loins" of Urizen and his "invisible Lust." It seems reasonable to conclude that Urizen's elimination of his son and his female counterpart and his attempt to perpetuate his logocentric rule signify a victory of reason over eros and pathos.

It is clear that a situation of this kind can arise with respect to the need to find an appropriate language, which may exist in any single human being, or in any community. Writing, speech, and the nascent language impulses which arise from the need to claim fulfilment for sexual impulse, can become involved in a three-sided struggle, each urge to self-expression trying to assert its own primacy over the others, but not in the hope of winning interactive responses. Hostility or rejection may continue, in so far as difference and the existence of other functions are denied. The lava of meanings, or the signified, latent in the internal world of sexuality and emotion, and in contacts with the external world, is struggling to achieve entrance into the solid universe of language, and could bring about an alteration in its system if it could do so. But a writing culture, too reliant on unchangeable texts, cannot accommodate this direct assertion of eros, and orality or parole cries in vain for the moments of interaction with the literarv or langue, and for assimilation into it.

Fuzon's ominous second speech is explicable, if he represents both impatient sexual passion, demanding its right to reject repression and hypocritical control, and nascent language impulse, determined to challenge tyrannical control by the langue. When he makes his attempt at assassination, he is renouncing his legitimate means of promotion through the parole, in which he was already beginning to be at home, as his first speech shows. In attempting to obtain forced entrance to the langue, by violent assault, he deprives himself of the support of parole, and of the vestigial chance that he might change the langue by right of kinship and by traditional non-destructive modifications. So it is understandable that as to his attack, his confidence should contract into hollow swagger, and his command of speech should be equal only to a crude adolescent assertion of supremacy, which reveals that his rebellion was self-defeating: this was not the way to deal with Urizen.

Thus the three characters, Urizen, Ahania and Fuzon could be said to have become isolated in their separate spheres, unable to influence each other constructively because all normal interaction has been halted. Emotion welling up to become language has to encounter negation by the accumulated knowledge of the written. This has repressed the challenge and entreaty of speech, which would ordinarily be the means of shaping nascent language impulses, and providing their means of gaining access in the language. The following diagram shows what each of the characters represents.
If there is no normal interaction, the three forms of language activity remain closed off from each other, as in the diagram. My second diagram shows a normal interaction operating without rejection and hostility.

1 Nascent speech impulses welling up to become language
2 Innovations seeking collective approval
3 Acceptance for general use
4 Encouragement to become articulate

The last seven lines of Ahania's speech effectively convey the stagnant state of language which ensues, when the reciprocal interchange is arrested:

Cruel jealousy! selfish fear!
Self-destroying: how can delight,
Renew in these chains of darkness
Where bones of beasts are strown
On the bleak and snowy mountains
Where bones from the birth are buried
Before they see the light.

(pl. 6:41-47)

The "bones of beasts" suggest the refuse or carcasses of words which have failed to become langue, and the last four lines indicate that language is at an impasse, where sexual energy and love are denied their right to be born either as langue or parole: this is the work of Urizen, the writer of the iron books, who is trying to create a universe of death, and to abstract everything from "the all-creative Imagination" (Tannenbaum 248). Bloom states that in Ahania "Few images, even in Blake, are grimmer than that final vision of infanticide" (180). It is also true to say with Lindsay that "this is the most negative of Blake's major poems since Tiriel" (144), for if its linguistic implications are accepted, there is little sign of a positive intercourse. But it must be remembered that this is Ahania's comment on the situations not necessarily Blake's last word.

III

Blake's designs for Ahania do much to clarify the meaning of the text, especially as regards the linguistic function of Ahania and Urizen, and will next be examined. Then with reference to Jerome J. McGann's idea of an indeterminate text, I would like to consider the significance of Los in this work, and finally to deduce Blake's view of written texts and printing in relation to oral culture. My investigation of these questions will be concerned with reading The Book of Ahania as a metatext, relevant to Blake's method of book production.

It is a distinctive visual feature of the three Urizen books that they "mostly mimic the layout of the Authorized Version, double columns divided into chapter and verse" (Mee 162). But the two memorable images of Ahania on the frontispiece and on the titlepage respectively reinforce the theme of language and text. The first shows her in an attitude of protest and supplication, as she is "about to be 'siez'd on his [Urizen's] mountains of Jealousy" after the castration of Urizen's "cold loins" by his son Fuzon" (Worrall 160). This Ahania strongly contrasts with the figure on the titlepage, who is depicted as "still flying but (the direction of her hair tells us ) descending obliquely" (Worrall 161), with a worried expression on her face. These two contrary states of Ahania, one earthbound and the other free from the ground, correspond well with those conveyed in the text. The figure on the titlepage illustrates the role of oral speech or "winged words," and her pathetic facial expression emphasizes her suffering under "the iron authority of Urizen's written laws" (Mee 104), which means either that parole is denied entry into langue, forced to keep circling around aimlessly, or that liberated speech is repulsed by oppressive writing (Mee 104).

The Ahania of the frontispiece, who is the character in chapter 5 before her final expulsion, suggests that orality is being deprived of the opportunity to express love and care. It also illustrates the rigid control exercised by Urizen or the written language, shut up in its own sphere. As for the design on the last plate, it has been generally agreed that it "depicts severed heads and mangled limbs, leavings of the guillotine" (Paley 33), but in terms of the linguistic interpretation I am suggesting, it may depict the body of Fuzon finally murdered, the wreckage of the pre-literal state of eros or energy demanding to be a component of language, but savagely broken into pieces by the drive towards fixed written texts which result from exclusive and empirical thinking.

The coordination between text and designs vindicates my belief that Blake is describing in Ahania a language situation in which pre-language chaos and oral speech are for-
ibly suppressed by the written; if nothing is done, this situation is going to bring about the prohibition of freedom of expression at a political level, as well as in artistic creation, and the negation of free love and sex. But Blake seems to imply, while symbolizing this state of linguistic turmoil, that his own composite art offers a solution, and in order to discuss this possibility it is necessary to consider the concept of an indeterminate text proposed by McGann and Mee.

McGann regards The Book of Urizen as Blake's indeterminate text, claiming that Dr. Alexander Geddes's work showed Blake "not only that many texts of the Bible of Heaven existed, but also that those texts exhibited lacunae and redundancies within and between themselves" (323). He believes that Blake's reading of Geddes encouraged him to rewrite the Bible by interpolating material into his version which seems incongruous with the surrounding text. But although there are two passages in Ahania which unexpectedly introduce Los and could be said to resemble interpolations, there is no evidence that they are insertions. Los first appears in chapter 1, verse 9, retrieving "the fiery beam of Fuzon"; he "siez'd it and beat it in a mass / With the body of the sun." In chapter 4, verse 5 he appears again, in lines which refer to his exertions in Urizen chapter 4, when this demon was beginning the process of acquiring a semblance of the human form, and Los was laboring to fetter him into this shape. We are told, this time, that having "forg'd nets of iron around," Los "threw them around the bones." These fragmentary descriptions of Los's characteristic task of beating and forging, which represents Blake's idea of imaginative creation, are a reminder of what he was trying to do himself. The passages in question are not really out of place: the first shows Los conserving the passion of anger and sexual aggression and amalgamating it with the sun, and the second shows him laboring to ensure that Urizen is confined within an identifiable body: both are imaginative and resourceful actions. If his readers were reminded of interpolations in the biblical text (as they might have been, in view of the fact, noted above, that all three of the Urizen books mimic the lay-out of the Authorized Version), they could only have noted the contrast between the pointless mystification caused by such a practice, in this text venerated by a writing culture, and the effect of Blake's own apparent digressions. Blake was repudiating the repetition of identical words on printed pages and attempting to avoid producing texts which looked determinate and final: his aim was to create new perspectives by an activity similar to parole.

To believe that this is the case is to wish to consider Blake's own illuminated printing. In his comparative view of writing, manuscript, and print, Ong states "typographic control typically impresses more by its tidiness and inevitability: the lines perfectly regular, all justified on the right side, everything coming out even visually," and that the print is "an insistent world of cold, non-human, facts" (122); on the other hand, manuscript culture, he argues, preserves "a feeling for a book as a kind of utterance, an occurrence in the course of conversation, rather than as an object" (125). Moreover print "encourages a sense of closure, a sense that what is found in a text has been finalized, has reached a state of completion," and "encloses thought in thousands of copies of a work of exactly the same visual and physical consistency" (132). The most important point of difference is that the "printed text is supposed to represent the words of an author in definitive or 'final' form," while manuscripts were in dialogue with the world outside their own borders. They remained closer to the give-and-take of oral expression" (132).

The closeness of Blake's manuscripts to oral expression is pointed out by Mee in a similar vein:

Blake operates with a notion of writing as containing both positive and negative potentialities. He seeks a writing that retains the fluidity of the voice; that seeks the status of "poetic tales" rather than "forms of worship"...Blake sought to achieve a means of literary production that was fluid and operated against the notion of the single authoritative Word .... (105-06)

In other words, Blake is trying to avert the fixation or standardization of his books, and to keep the fiery vitality, passion and freedom of the living voice, which has its source in the individual will. Metaphorically speaking, Blake aims to maintain Ahania's orality as far as possible and to assimilate Fuzon's violent impulses. In a sense, Blake's artistic creation has a recurring nature, which does not proceed from repeating the same dull round, but from eternally recreating the prime eros and pathos. The fact that the germ of all change is first found in speaking has already been discussed in this essay, but speech, through the activity of various individuals, seeks to constitute literate culture, by continually modifying the established system. The production of his etched plates means that Blake was trying to open up a new perspective on the world by situating the plates at the point of intersection of orality and literacy, so that they maintain the fluid reciprocity between parole and langue, which is to lead to a change and renewal of language.

Blake's other attempt to avoid the inflexibility of a written text is his "double printing method" (Mee 106); his books were etched on copper plates and then printed on paper, which "allowed him to insert differences at each stage of production. Changes were always available to Blake in transcribing copy-text to plate and in the process of transferring plate to paper.... His books always went beyond the state of Urizen's books of metals, that is, the copper-plate, and each of the final states varied one from the other so none could claim the status of scriptural authority" (Mee 106). This constant flight from establishing one single final version of his text helps to establish, as far as possible, an impression of indeterminacy, as I have said. His creative principle is to
attain a mutual infiltration of parole and langue and consequent linguistic activation, thus resisting political, religious and intellectual oppression, or sterility and obscurantism.

_The Book of Ahania_ provides an example of the state of linguistic activity under the autocratic reign of the written; the voice of change is suppressed. As I suggested at the beginning of this article, Blake was drawing attention to his own view of printing and the printed text; he was, in addition, criticizing the contribution made to a dangerous situation by automatic deference to the biblical text. He believed that the danger could be counteracted: to read Blake's illuminated books is to be well aware not only of his unique "printing" method but of his metatextual concept of writing. Behrendt states that the "reading activity Blake advocates is one of dismantling, of uncovering, of removing the semantic and intellectual garments and displaying the pristine, naked eternal truth that is everywhere the primary objective of his art" and the reading "must be a subversive activity whose processes are corrosive to the authority both of text and of the acts and principles embodied in that text" (127). As Blake's corrosive acid removes surfaces and allows the truth to stand out, his texts, with the convergence of the oral and the written, make us question the validity of the language situation of our own time and our methods of linguistic expression and communication, so much controlled by institutional customs, rules and prejudices. They demonstrate a way of achieving freedom from coercion, discrimination and suppression in almost every human activity and society, by their endless effort to flee from finalization.

Works Cited


**REVIEWS**


Reviewed by MARY LYNN JOHNSON
of written qualifying examinations, and elevated "literature" from the written word in general to a special category of highly imaginative works produced by gifted individual authors in a tightly restricted range of genres—all at a time when the newly united British nation was shaping, through writing, a sense of its collective identity. The densely compressed introduction, "The Argument: Writing as a New Technology" (best re-read as a coda), forces into conceptual proximity the loosely parallel historical strands of the book's four main sections—disciplinarity, professionalism, "novelism" (the subordination of writing to the newly-recognized literary genre of the novel) and gender—all considered as developing in tandem with, and partially in response to, the increasing dominance of print culture. By the end of the period, according to Siskin, "writing" had ceased to be experienced as unruly and threatening and had come to seem familiar, safe, manageable, and even natural, along lines analogous to our own adjustments to the much faster rate of change in contemporary communications technologies.

Siskin does not claim to present "an absolute theory of how writing works" but rather "a description of some of the work that writing did do" (10) to impose order and manage growth at a time when its forms, purposes, and participants were multiplying as wildly as Internet interactions are now. Part of this "work" was a self-reflective criticism of writing itself that permeated all literary genres. Siskin cautions that the academic literary studies, insofar as they perpetuate such romantic-value-laden distinctions as the one between critical (inferior) and creative (superior) forms of writing, fail to consider that "what we take now to be secondary may have functioned, back then, as a primary condition and product of the act of writing itself, as long as that act was still experienced as new" (25). By repositioning "Literature" (which he spells with a capital L to call attention to its comparatively recent "higher" meaning) within "a materialist history of writing" (7), Siskin hopes to "reconceive literary study by mixing different kinds of data into it" (23), as he had begun to do in his The Historicity of Romantic Discourse (1988). His "relentlessly combinatory" (15) method breaches received distinctions, especially that between "creative" and ordinary utilitarian writing, and interweaves critical commentary on familiar and unfamiliar texts with data and insights from such varied disciplines as sociology, pedagogy, communication studies, law, and of course history. These ad-hoc mixtures, he says, are neither "haphazard combinations" nor formulas to be applied to all cases; they are to be judged by how well they "help make sense of the current proliferation of descriptions of contemporary change" (211) in an age of proliferating electronic media, declining print culture, and self-chosen alterity.

Criticism of a thesis as complex and far-reaching as this one, developed from hundreds of period vignettes alternating with contemporaneous media-prompted reflections on American academic and popular culture, cannot be accomplished within a single field of study, nor can it be conducted intelligibly without citation of a great many more secondary sources than is customary in a book review. Siskin likens the "thrill of interdisciplinarity" to bungee jumping: "flying free of certain constraints while staying solidly tethered to the platform of one's own discipline" (72), even at the risk of smacking into that discipline on the rebound. With "culture" as the super-flexible tether, he zooms and boings among his four principal topics with such velocity that facts, assertions, and speculations whiz by in a blur. Is the perceived superiority of mental labor, above physical labor, really datable to 1700-1830 (24)? Can silent reading, which is subsumed under the shorthand term "writing," be presumed (without discussion) to be a post-Gutenberg skill (2, 31), despite vigorous challenges over the last 20 years from biblical and classical scholars as well as the medievalist Paul Henry Saenger, whose 1982 essay has recently been incorporated into his Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading (1997)? Is it fair to say that by 1830 "courses in English Literature" were being taught "in English universities" and "a section of school" could be known as the English department (12), if only one university, the newly founded University College of London, and only one school (in Belfast) are cited? Granted that such eighteenth-century developments as increased mechanization of the printing process, mass marketing, and enforcement of the copyright law encouraged the proliferation of writing and associated changes in personal and social behavior, should "writing" in this period be considered a "new technology" (3, 31)? In six of the nine chapters, some of the choppy (or perhaps deliberately nonlinear) exposition may result from adaptation of previously published work in journals and essay collections devoted to romanticism, eighteenth-century studies, the novel, and Austen and feminism—only a tiny sampling of Siskin's research interests. The thrill of following so many heterogeneous juxtapositions and quickie generalizations soon becomes distracting (bungee jumping is not much of a spectator sport), yet to wish that fewer subjects had been considered in greater depth would be to reimpose upon the author the very disciplinary limits he seeks to escape.

Both the provocations and the provocativeness of Siskin's cross-disciplinary leaps are intensified by his organizational strategy, which produces forward movement in a multi-stranded, doubling-back spiral. Because early sections rely on sketchy adumbrations of matters to be developed more fully in later sections, the reader is always in medias res, constantly struggling with the work of reading, and grateful for footnotes beginning "My point here is . . . ." As with Mandelbrot's fractals, intricate patterns are generated from the breakdown of progressively smaller units into still smaller parts containing the same structural elements in miniature. For example, in the first and longest section, "Disciplinarity: The Political Economy of Knowledge," all three chapters—
"Writing Havoc," "Engendering Disciplinarity" and "Scottish Philosophy and English Literature"—touch in one way or another upon the book's four main themes of disciplinarity, professionalism, literature, and gender. These three chapters, like the six that follow, are in turn subdivided into at least three smaller parts, making 29 in all (not counting the six sub-units of "The Argument"), many of which contain microcosmic elements of the parent chapters. This is evident already in the first chapter, "Writing Havoc," which consists of "Writing and Madness," concerning poetry; "Pens and Periods," concerning gender; "Productivity and Proper Subjects," concerning disciplines; and "Disciplinarity and the Middle Class," concerning present-day socioeconomic and political classifications.

Within the fractal units, as within the book as a whole, disparate materials are linked partly by analogy, partly by contemporaneity, partly by reference to the controlling thesis. The first unit of "Writing Havoc," "Writing and Madness," sets up Pope's "Epistle to Arbuthnot" and Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence" as a "chrono­nogical framework for focusing on the chapter's central issue: writing's capacity to wreak what Hume called 'havoc' on itself and its users" (this explanatory statement [38] is from the second unit; the discussion of Hume [49-50] appears in the third unit); within this framework, society's concern shifts "from the potentially disruptive power of the technology of writing to the possibly disrupted personalities of the people who wrote" (34). For Pope, hordes of crazed, overproductive writers are leechlike annoyances and threats to the social order; for Wordsworth, 70 years later, mental illness is an occupational hazard to be warded off by emulating in his own vocation the leech-gatherer's perseverance in his task, thus turning his crisis in poetic development into the subject, in turn, of yet more writing. With the once out-of-control technology of writing now subjected to "disciplinarian and professional ends" (38), Wordsworth's commitment to poetry as a professional discipline has come to define his personal identity and his value to society. The next section, "Pens and Periods," undertakes to make up for the incompleteness of the patriarchal Pope-Wordsworth paradigm by putting forward an alternative pair of period-framing texts: Anne Finch's mixed-genre preface to the folio manuscript of her poems (c. 1702) and excerpts from "A Tour to the Glaciers of Savoy" (1796) by someone who wrote as "Eliza." Here the similarities are more important than the differences: both poets "adjust[ed] to the obstacles they faced as women by acquiescing to limits in ways that made those limits occasions, sooner or later, for more writing" (40). For Siskin's purposes, it does not matter that Anne, later Countess of Winchilsea, was recognized as a poet not only by Wordsworth but by some of her most prominent male contemporaries, or that "Eliza," in the rollicking anapests of a comic epistolary travelogue addressed to a male friend, only playfully acknowledges her friend's artistic prowess. Siskin's point is that both of these female-identified writers declare themselves deficient in poetic talent; both defer to more gifted male poets; both choose to limit themselves to lesser subjects or forms; both make their self-imposed limits the subject of pieces of writing; and together they exemplify "a gendered pattern demonstrably common to women writers but certainly not restricted to them (or them to it): proliferation through limitation" (42).

The notion of proliferation through limitation forms the bridge to the next section, "Productivity and Proper Subjects," which argues that "exertions of control for the sake of growth . . . helped to effect the large-scale behavior we call disciplinarity" (43). The Wordsworthian turn toward "internalization" served to generate more (and more disciplined) writing on narrower and deeper subjects, but it also led to the separation and downgrading of unproductive or useless studies. Here the exemplary text is from Marx and Engels's The German Ideology (1846; published 1932)—a bit beyond the study's cut-off date and geographical range, but useful as "a means of articulating . . . the work of writing" because it so memorably presents the "new criterion of productivity—specifically the capacity to produce progress" (42). In this text Marx and Engels attack idealist philosophy as the intellectual equivalent of onanism, as opposed to "study of the actual world," which is analogous to productive sexual love. Citing Henry Abelove's "now infamous" 1989 article in Genders, "Some Speculations on the History of Sexual Intercourse during the Long Eighteenth Century in England," Siskin notes that Marx and Engels's assumed sexual norm "turns out to be a statistical and thus historical phenomenon" (45); Abelove attributes the increase in fertility to "a remarkable increase in the incidence of cross-sex genital intercourse" and speculates that "nonreproductive sexual behaviors" (as well as other "behaviors, customs, usages which are judged to be nonproductive," such as being idle on weekdays) must have come under "extraordinary negative pressure." The result, according to Siskin, was "a sweeping reorganization and reconstruction of the human according to the criterion of productivity, including—and, in many ways, transpiring through—the increasingly important behavior of writing" (43), especially in eighteenth-century discourses on political economy and in such developments in natural history as Priestley's "systematic historicizing of experience, discovery, and theory" (48) and establishment of a research agenda for future investigators in The History and Present State of Electricity (1767), as noted by Charles Bazerman in Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science (1988).

"Productivity and Proper Subjects" ends with a discussion of the concluding pages of Hume's Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (1748)—sparsely quoted—as a milestone in establishing limits for disciplined inquiry. Because the final paragraph of this treatise supplies the second
word of the chapter title, "Writing Havoc," and because allusions to "havoc" as a product of "writing" recur throughout the book, the passage is worthy of detailed attention. In Siskin’s summation, Hume wrought havoc by insisting skeptically on narrowness and limitation—not as caps to, but as the enabling conditions of, productivity: disciplines made narrow could become deep and thus serve to induce and control the proliferation of writing and knowledge. Cast in that form, these newly differentiated kinds of knowledge, as with social classes, could then be made subject to arguments about their relative productive value: the distinction of kind between a dominant philosophy and its subordinate branches collapsed and was replaced with a new hierarchy of degrees—degrees of productivity. (52)

In context, however, it is clear that Hume’s restrictions on inquiry concern philosophical investigations only, not inquiry in general. Having pointed out the destructive effects of "excessive skepticism," Hume identifies two species of "mitigated skepticism, which may be of advantage to mankind": one is to awaken "dogmatical reasoners" to an awareness of "the strange infirmities of human understanding, even in its most perfect state," thus diminishing "their fond opinion of themselves" and encouraging "a degree of doubt, and caution, and modesty" which "ought forever to accompany a just reasoner"; the other is "the limitation of our inquiries to such subjects as are best adapted to the narrow capacity of human understanding," while "leaving the more sublime topics to the embellishment of poets and orators, or to the arts of priests and politicians." Relying as they must on the limited faculty of reason, as opposed to the unfettered powers of the imagination, philosophers should concentrate on common life, using either "the more perfect species" of abstract reasoning concerning quantity and number (the only proper "objects of the abstract sciences or of demonstration") or the lesser species of experimental reasoning concerning matters of fact and existence, as tested by experience of cause-effect relationships. This lesser species is "the foundation of moral reasoning" and of many of what we would now call the natural and social sciences. For philosophers, borderline studies involving reason are off limits: for example, although theological study has a foundation in reason, as supported by experience, "its best and most solid foundation is faith and divine revelation," while morals and criticism (e.g., judgments of beauty) "are not so properly objects of the understanding as of taste and sentiment." Hume, then, freely acknowledges the legitimacy of studies other than philosophy and the employment of faculties other than reason; his final paragraph proposes principled skepticism as an acid test for detecting worthless books of philosophy, not worthless books in general:

When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume of divinity and school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity and number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.

Siskin insists on reading Hume’s finale more broadly as a rejection of “all volumes that do not concern either ‘quantity or number,’ on the one hand, or experiential reasoning on human ‘existence,’ on the other” (52). By establishing this division, he argues, Hume “helped to institute our now familiar distinction between the sciences and the humanities” (52). This division forms the link to the chapter’s final unit, “Disciplinarity and the Middle Class,” which credits Marx and Engels with making disciplinary change “a prerequisite for larger-scale institutional and social change” and Hume with contributing, through his writings, to both kinds of change. Siskin suggests that “Humean havoc,” or the reslicing of the body of knowledge into new disciplinary categories, “is now our institutions” (50), so that nowadays “if one wants to produce institutional havoc by challenging what is proper—propriety and property—then, like Marx and Engels, one must struggle with the force of disciplinary difference” (51). Thus it is not surprising that “today’s havoc” in the academic world, in the face of disciplinary realignments, middle-class tax revolts, and threats to humanities funding, “is occurring at another moment of technological change” (53). Commandeered as the governing metaphor for “Writing Havoc,” Hume’s image of library-wrecking is powerful, even irresistible. So why not just say so? It is not necessary to distort Hume’s text to appropriate his image for other purposes; a straightforward acknowledgment of the broader application would only have strengthened this chapter.

Throughout The Work of Writing, but especially in section two, "Professionalism: The Poetics of Labor,” Siskin has interesting things to say about the shifting meanings of “work.” He relates the invention of the “deep, developmental self” (106)—a romantic (or Wordsworthian) invention—to a “rewriting” of the concept of work that altered it “from that which a true gentleman does not have to do, to the primary activity informing adult identity” (107). The myth of vocation “made work more than necessary: it made work desirable—and necessary for personal happiness” (107). Siskin notes that the adjective “professional,” along with the differentiating term “amateur,” entered the language at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries; before that time, “profession” meant simply “known employment” and “professional behavior had been idealized as the behavior of gentlemen” (108); afterward, codes of professional conduct had to be developed as the new way of writing about work “rearranged the rela-
tionships among—and the functions of—character, identity, status, work, money, education, property, and propriety" (109). One of the surprises of this section is that both of its chapters employ literary genres as explanatory devices to suggest that the proliferation of writing "not only helped to occasion through limitation the re-forming of knowledge into disciplines—including Literature as the disciplinary home of writing itself—it also altered work, enabling and valorizing newly specialized forms of intellectual labor" (104). "The Georgic at Work" goes so far as to describe "writing in the form of the georgic" as a "crucial tool in the making of modern professionalism" (120) because in dignifying hard work as "the proper mode for nation building and the affirmation of personal and civic virtue" (119) and in "naturalizing what it articulated," it became "the means by which the work of writing itself came to be seen as a potentially heroic activity" (120), with the key texts being Dryden's translation of Virgil, the "prose georgics" of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, and Wordsworth's *The Prelude*. The balancing chapter, "The Lyricization of Labor," seeks to connect the historical development of the lyric to other developments of the same period: the recategorization of work into higher and lower orders on the basis of age, skill, character, and gender, and the reorganization of knowledge into disciplines "that fostered narrow but deep subjects such as Literature" (133). Here Siskin is careful to stop well short of a cause-and-effect claim that lyrics actually produced changes in the form of labor; instead, "the work of writing, and how writing worked, changed in the same kinds of ways in which other kinds of work changed" (146). With specialization as the link, Siskin finds broad social significance in the lyric's movement from a mixed, experimental form employed early in the century by many different kinds of writers of both sexes to its glorification later in the period, by the romantics, as the most "literary" form of literature, the most intensely poetic form of poetry, a form of expression so exalted that it could be attempted only by the most gifted and sensitive poets (all male): "Without claiming causation, we can find in the lyric—and in its fate (i.e., in whose hands it ended up)—ways to make sense of contemporaneous regroupings of knowledge and labor" (146). Regrettably, however, Siskin turns away from poetics to find silly slogans for these changes: "Bring home the bacon"—from by-employments to occupation; 'Whistle while you work'—from combinations to trade unions; and 'Look Ma, no hands!'—the advent of mental labor" (135).

Siskin begins the section on "Novelism: Literature in the History of Writing" by pointing out a striking incongruity: standard accounts of the "rise" of the novel, which peak with Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, and Sterne, give short shrift to the last two decades of the century, just when the publication rate of new novels (and other genres as well) shot up to unprecedented heights. Making use of figures tracking both the general economy and print markets, from sources as varied as Anthony J. Little, *Deceleration in the Eighteenth-Cen-

Behind the rise of the novel in the last decades of the century is a record of what we now call 'the rise of the middle class'. The break in the authorship of novels comes as a result of the development of the novel as a mass-market genre. The rise of the novel was marked by a shift in the status of the novel from a form of literature that was seen as 'reading matter' to one that was seen as 'work'. This shift in status is reflected in the changing patronage of the novel, from the aristocratic and the middle class to the working class. The rise of the novel was also marked by a shift in the focus of the novel from the individual to the collective, from the private to the public. This shift in focus is reflected in the changing subject matter of the novel, from the personal to the social, from the individual to the group. The rise of the novel was also marked by a shift in the form of the novel, from the long narrative to the short story, from the novel to the magazine. This shift in form is reflected in the changing distribution of the novel, from the book to the periodical, from the novel to the magazine.

Siskin into a sustained consideration of Austen's relation to the discipline in which her work is studied. Back in the second chapter, "Engendering Disciplinarity," Siskin had ar-

The fourth section, "Gender: The Great Forgetting," zeroes in on an overriding concern of the study: how did women participate in the proliferation of writing, and: how were women affected by it, and why has so much of their participation been forgotten? The question of why one writer in particular, Jane Austen, has not only been remembered but has become part of the curriculum in English literature leads Siskin into a sustained consideration of Austen's relation to the discipline in which her work is studied. Back in the second chapter, "Engendering Disciplinarity," Siskin had ar-
gued that modern disciplinarity "was not first constituted and then later altered by gender difference" but rather has "functioned from its inception to articulate and enact those differences" (55), beginning with eighteenth-century writings on education. Depth and narrowness, formerly cultivated as the alternative private sphere of studious women like Mary Astell, guided the selective pruning of writing in the reorganization of knowledge, work, and printed matter into higher and lower-status disciplines, professions, and literary genres—all of which worked to the advantage of men. Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), which identifies literary genres—all of which worked to the advantage of men with the sublime and women with the beautiful, accelerated this reorganization of knowledge through "the celebration of intellectual labor, the specialization of that labor into increasingly distinct and thus potentially deep fields, and the construction and accessing of that distinctive depth through specialized uses of words" (70-71). (The weird notion that Longinus and Burke championed the sublime as a means of combating indolence and "making men work" is underpinned with drastically out-of-context quotations.) As these specialized divisions of labor became a "proliferation-through-limitation strategy," "culture" replaced "the sublime" as "the inclusive rubric for what had been legitimated" (71), making lines of division between disciplines appear to be natural while unintentionally perpetuating gender-related hierarchies. Culture became the eventual domain of the discipline of English literature, as taught and studied by academic professionals. Within this discipline, Austen has always been an anomaly: an early-canonized woman writer whose achievement in her genre (as considered in studies of the "rise" of the novel) resists categorization with that of Fielding and Richardson in one century or with Scott and Dickens in another—and now, when "Literature" has been knocked off its pedestal and swept into cultural studies, one who defies categorization as a feminist and challenges the disciplinary identity of all who try to classify her.

The case of Austen is instructive. Because Siskin gives sustained attention to Austen's situation and anchors his exploratory speculations in specifics, the section on Gender is his most persuasive and illuminating. In *The Historicity of Romantic Discourse* Siskin had placed Austen, as a narrator of development, among the romantics; in this book, he investigates how it was that her innovations in the novel, her way of drawing readers into the interior lives of her characters, set the direction for the future of the genre, while the stylistic models of Fielding and Richardson became dead ends. Without quoting F. R. Leavis's 1948 statement that Austen was "the inaugurator of the great tradition of the English novel," Siskin notes that what he calls "The Great Forgetting" of women writers (Austen excepted) became "The Great Tradition" in departments of English; Austen's acceptance by male critics of her own time signals a crucial moment when "some of the fundamental links between women and the novel—links that we are only now recovering—were first detached, or at least obscured" (197). By placing Austen's work within the history of writing, rather than literature, Siskin reveals that the late eighteenth-century "takeoff in publication rates," especially in periodicals, made Austen's career and later reputation possible, both by "giving new value to the position of Author and by making that position more accessible to more people" (198). For Siskin's argument, it is somewhat awkward that Austen preferred to publish anonymously, but his point is still valid: Scott—for one—recognized her distinctive authorial hand in his (anonymous) 1815 piece in the *Quarterly Review* and praised her work as "new" and better than that of her contemporaries. The strangeness of Austen's publication history—writing prolifically in the 1790s but not publishing until the second decade of the nineteenth century, despite her desire to see her work in print—is made even stranger by her decision not to publish in magazines, a readily available outlet in which she could have maintained her anonymity. Siskin notes that by publishing in book form only, whatever her reasons may have been, Austen participated in "the historical transformation of the two-tier market [for fiction] into a hierarchical system of what we now know as high versus low culture," a development that "ushered in the disciplinary advent of the new category of Literature" (200). Her novels, in earning praise for what they did not include—Gothic claptrap that, according to the *Quarterly Review*, "should now be left to ladies' maids and sentimental washerwomen"—played "an unexpected role in the disciplinary exclusion of women and women's writing" (200). Siskin suggests that a major reason for Austen's early acceptance into the literary canon is that she helped to change writing from a threatening new technology to a reassuringly "natural," domesticated, and entertaining medium for portraying British life. For example, she was so good at putting her readers at ease as they read about the unsettling effects (on her characters) of too much romance-reading that— to the question raised in *Northanger Abbey* as to whether readers (especially young women) become what they read—Austen's answer, according to Siskin, is "Yes and no, but don't worry," signaling "a change in the status of writing from a worrisome new technology to a more trusted tool" (204).

But the development of an "Author-centered, gender-conscious economy of print" (215), as changes in copyright law and in the textual marketplace closed off opportunities for women writers to publish and to have their work known and discussed, led to "Authorial professionalism," which contributed to the taming of writing and the elevation of certain kinds of writing to the status of high literature; all this made possible the "remasculinization of British Literature at the turn into the nineteenth century" (216) and the academic institutionalization of the Great Tradition in the twentieth century. *The Edinburgh Review*, founded in 1802, "helped to masculinize the literary" by establishing an old-
boys' network of reviewers, interspersing reviews with "newly specialized treatments of traditionally masculine subjects, particularly economics and politics" (224) and replacing inclusive coverage of new books with fewer and deeper reviews of selected books. To elucidate the disproportionate impact of these developments on women writers in "the social life of texts," Siskin picks up the jarring term "reverse vicariousness" (217) from David S. Kaufer and Kathleen M. Carley's Communication at a Distance: The Influence of Print on Sociocultural Organization and Change (1993). According to Kaufer and Carley, this phenomenon allows even nonreaders to "positively register at social gatherings that they know of the book without having seen or read it first hand" and keep up with the "vogue information of culture" that establishes membership in their peer groups. This "keeping up," Siskin observes, became "a very particular problem for a particular group at the particular historical moment that Authorial momentum began to turn Britain into an information culture" (218). Thus the forgetting of women writers "was neither causal nor natural; it was, rather, the result of what was reproduced, for whom, and how [...] it was a matter of whose texts, read or even unread, did get talked about and reproduced and whose texts, unread or even read, slipped into silence and out of production" (218). How much deeper into silence, he might have added, risk slipping those texts, read or unread, that were never in the production system in the first place!

And so, after all, The Work of Writing will find its uses in Blake studies—at least as a contrasting backdrop for the kind of work Blake did, and as a lens through which his critical reception may be viewed. Siskin compellingly characterizes exactly the sorts of "writing" in which Blake, a dropout from print culture, chose not to participate, except as a professional engraver, and upon which, as a poet, he made scarcely a dent. Ardently and industriously engaged in his artistic vocation, in near-poverty and obscurity, Blake managed to slip through the tightening nets of disciplinarity, professionalism, and genre-divisions of his time. He never benefited, as a writer, from an influential contemporary's "Author-before-Reader" hype, buzz, or spin. To the extent that his poems "did get talked about" by Wordsworth, Coleridge, and other poets, the conversations took place in private or through correspondence, with the single exception of a brief entry in A Biographical Dictionary of the Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland (1816), while more substantial public comments on Blake's poetry, by a handful of memoirists and fellow artists, appeared mainly as adjuncts to accounts of his development as an artist. The proliferation of periodicals had absolutely no effect on Blake's literary reputation (T.G. Wainewright's promise in London Magazine [September 1820] of a forthcoming article by "Dr. Tobias Ruddiccombe, M.D." on "Jerusalem the Emanation of the Giant Albion" never materialized). The only thing Blake himself ever published in a journal was an indignant letter to the editor of the Monthly Magazine (1 July 1806) in defense of Fuseli's painting of Dante's Ugolino. As he noted in a letter of 1 September 1800 to George Cumberland (into which he copied a letter submitted to the Monthly Magazine in support of Cumberland's proposal for a national gallery of art), "I so little understand the way to get such things into Magazines or Newspapers that if I have done wrong in Merely delivering the Letter at the Publishers of the Magazine beg you will inform me" (Robert N. Essick and Morton D. Paley, "Dear Generous Cumberland: A Newly Discovered Letter and Poem by William Blake," Blake 32 [1998]: 5). Two and a half years later, in a letter of 30 January 1803, Blake boasted to his brother James that he had learned from Hayley "& his connexions & his method of managing" that "The Profits arising from Publications are immense," but if he really knew how to realize "almost certain profits" of "500 G." on a book "got out at the Expense of Ten pounds," he never put his scheme into effect. Blake's entire poetic output, whether produced in letterpress (the privately printed Poetical Sketches, the unpublished and unsold The French Revolution) or in self-printed, hand-finished limited editions, utterly eschews the "Authorial professionalism" and "historical connections between Authorship and economic change" (160) that Siskin traces in The Work of Writing. A case in point: on 25 April 1803, after three years of writing "from immediate Dictation twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time without Premeditation & even against my Will," Blake informed Thomas Butts that "an immense Poem Exists which seems to be the Labour of a long Life all producd without Labour or Study." So it was not as a writer that Blake was eulogized in literary papers (e.g., the Literary Gazette of 18 August 1827, reprinted in the Gentleman's Magazine and elsewhere), but as an artist. Until the publication of Gilchrist's biography in 1863, as noted in G. E. Bentley, Jr.'s Blake Records (1969), his name was kept alive mainly in Allen Cunningham's Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors and Architects (1830).

Since 1830, the closing year of Siskin's book, the work of writing has continued to make short work of Blake the writer. When he finally gained recognition as a poet, late in the nineteenth century, he was unusually slow to benefit from the institutionalization of English literature as an academic discipline, and he has remained a similarly anomalous, out-of-the-mainstream figure in art history. His short-lived canonical status among the "big six" male English romantic poets, which was not attained until the late 1950s (after a long probationary period with Burns among the pre-romantics), was quickly challenged, in part on the grounds of gender, in the many waves of "writing havoc" that have washed over the disciplines of the humanities in the last 30 years. Now his space in the MLA annual bibliography appears to be shrinking, and it seems that fewer graduate students aspire to build their professional lives around him. For some of these very reasons, however, the work that Blake executed in his experimental eighteenth-century technology of relief etching has not, even yet, been tamed or
naturalized; for all we know, it may prove impervious to the formidable cultural forces Siskin associates with the enterprise of "writing." Blake, of all writers, stands to benefit most from the ongoing boom in post-literary technologies, and Blake studies, as an academic endeavor, may have a good chance of surviving, even thriving, in the waning years of print culture. In the millennium just ahead, as discussed at the 1998 convention of the Modern Language Association and in *The Wordsworth Circle* 30 (1999), web-based electronic marvels like the Blake Archive (and its ever more dazzling reincarnations in technologies yet to come) will allow unprecedented numbers of the children of the future age to experience the thrills and threats of Blake's achievement—already, Internet users anywhere in the world can call up images from a wider range of illuminated writings in a shorter span of time than anyone, including Blake himself, has ever seen at one sitting before. For Blake's future readers and viewers, it is possible that the response to this exhilarating experience won't simply be more writing, in the form of yet more work-products. What if some of these readers should forego, however briefly, "the meer drudgery of business," as Blake wrote to Butts on 10 January 180[3], and make the difficult choice, with Blake, to "follow the dictates of our Angels" and carry out "the Tasks set before us"? And what if a few, somewhere, someday, should actually heed Blake's call, in the Preface to chapter 4 of *Jerusalem*, to "expel from among you those who pretend to despise the labours of Art & Science" and decide to engage "openly & publicly before all the World in some Mental pursuit for the Building up of Jerusalem"? Where would the work of writing be then?


Reviewed by Alexander Gourlay

This book, an under-revised 1995 dissertation, is not easy to read—or to review. Mr. Whittaker has intelligently considered the resources available up to about 1993, primary and secondary, on the important and complex subject of Blake's use of the poetic and mythic versions of British history and prehistory. Unfortunately, the result is little more than an index of what is already known, and even as such it will not be very helpful, either to beginners or those who have studied these materials extensively.

Part of the problem is that although Whittaker has read other scholars' work with enough penetration to know that not all of it is equally useful, he invariably assembles his discussions—they aren't arguments, exactly—out of contingent assertions culled from his predecessors, as if the decontextualized sentences of David Erdman, Kathleen Raine, Edward Larrissy, Robert Gleckner and Don Cameron Allen were fully compatible bricks in a wall of Blakean science. As a result, bits from here and there mingle in an arbitrary stew of primary and secondary sources, made all the more bewildering because Whittaker often refers to writers by surnames only: one can easily determine whether "George" on page 170 is M. Dorothy George, Diana Hume George, or our poor George III, but by that time the point of the reference is lost. And because so much of the text is endnoted paraphrase and quotation, the reader must drop everything two or three times per page to examine notes and bibliography to divine what sort of spirit Whittaker is channeling at any given moment.

But the most important problem is that although he has done his homework, apparently understands the criticism he has read, is good at summarizing the main issues in extra-Blakean materials, and has the knowable facts straight, Whittaker doesn't show that he has yet figured out very much about Blake on his own: Blake's words and ideas are almost always seen through critics darkly, and when Whittaker directly addresses a Blake text or, very rarely, a picture, the results are often naïve. This is not a question of a flawed approach, a theory misapplied, or even critical misprision in service of an argument: Whittaker is willing (to a fault) to incorporate ideas from almost any source or point of view, and he does so with both authority and finesse, but never really gets around to creating his own intellectually useful account of Blake's historical mythtaking and mythmaking. This leaves a reviewer very little to praise or even argue with, since there is no explicit or even implicit theoretical position to examine and if there is a novel and coherent argument to debate it is buried somewhere beneath a drift of secondary sources. The book might be helpful as a review of the literature to someone who had not yet done any work on these issues (especially chapter 3, on Druids), but because Whittaker tends to be oblivious to incongruities and uncongenialities in critical arguments he is not an ideal synthesist or guide.

*William Blake and the Myths of Britain* exemplifies at once why dissertations are often published, and why they usually shouldn't be: most are undertaken as speculative exercises in dutiful plodding, and even if nothing very exciting comes of a given project, the plodder must push on grimly to the end, then polish the voluminous results to a deceptively high gloss. In this case the plodding is of the highest quality, the gloss is very high, and the consequence inconsequential.
NEWSLETTER

BLAKE EXHIBITION AT TATE BRITAIN

The following material on the upcoming Blake show and associated events at Tate Britain (formerly the Tate Gallery) has been gleaned from press releases. We present it here almost verbatim:

Tate Britain: 9 November 2000-11 February 2001
Admission: £8 (concessions £5, family ticket £21)
Opening Hours: Daily 10.00-17.40 Last Admission: 17.00
Supported by Glaxo Wellcome plc

The major exhibition at Tate Britain this autumn will take a fresh view of the unique and innovative British artist and poet, William Blake (1757-1827). Although largely overlooked in his time, Blake's impact and influence on later generations of artists, writers and musicians has been enormous. He remains a major reference point in British culture today and this show aims to reveal his remarkable work to a wide audience.

Supported by Glaxo Wellcome plc, it is the first major exhibition of Blake's work in Britain for more than twenty years and will offer a clear and informative overview of his life and work, placing him in the context of the political and social upheavals of his time and exploring his powerful personal symbolism.

The exhibition will consist of approximately 400 of Blake's works, including some of his best known images. Drawn from international public and private collections, they include all 100 plates of the illuminated book Jerusalem (c.1821, lent by Yale Center for British Art and not exhibited in this country since the 1920s), Newton (1795) and The Tyger from Songs of Experience (1794). Alongside such key works, lesser known images, documentary material, and work by Blake's contemporaries will create a rich picture of the artist and his world.

The show has been conceived in four thematic sections. The first, entitled One of the Gothic Artists, will focus on Blake's interest in medieval art. This was inspired by his early apprentice years spent drawing the tombs of English monarchs in Westminster Abbey—the site of 'his earliest and most sacred recollections'. This section embraces Blake's education in the craft of engraving, his contact with organised religion, the State and national mythology (which culminated in his exploration of the myth of Albion in Jerusalem) and his interest in the ideal of the medieval artist as a figure of individual and artistic integrity.

In the Furnace of Lambeth's Vale sets Blake's great prophetic books in the context of the French Revolution and radical politics in the 1790s, the period when he lived in Lambeth, London. Illustrated books by Blake will be displayed alongside relevant documentary material. There will also be a partial recreation of the artist's studio, based on new research, including a printing press from the period and explanations of Blake's technique.

Blake's assertion that 'the imagination is not a state, it is the human existence itself', forms the title of the third section, which explores the imaginative sources from which he developed his ideas, language and images. Characters from Blake's personal mythology will be explored, including Urizen, Los and Orc, and there will be a section devoted to Blake's important relationship with the seventeenth-century poet John Milton, featuring the illuminated book Milton (1811).

The final section, Very Many Formidable Works, presents the complete illuminated books that constitute Blake's greatest achievement as artist and poet, bringing together his revolutionary technical, stylistic and literary achievements. Here the exhibition reaches a climax in the specially designed displays of some of Blake's grandest works, ranging from Songs of Innocence and Experience (a late copy lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art) to the richly coloured Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion (printed c.1818-20).

A fully illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition, featuring contributions from the distinguished biographer Peter Ackroyd; Professor Marilyn Butler, Rector of Exeter College, Oxford; Michael Phillips, a leading Blake scholar; and Robin Hamlyn, Senior Curator, Tate Collections, who has been supported by a team of Tate curators in the creation of this remarkable exhibition.

Events and Courses Programme

Events

Wednesday 15 November, 18.30
Peter Ackroyd
The acclaimed novelist and Blake biographer discusses Blake's life and ideas.
Tickets: £5 (£2.50 concessions)

Wednesday 23 November, 18.30 (date to be finalised)
Tom Paulin
The renowned poet, critic and broadcaster analyses Blake's imagination and poetry.
Tickets: £5 (£2.50 concessions)

Tuesday 28 November, 19.00-21.00
Chambers of the Imagination—John Tavener Concert
The composer, Sir John Tavener introduces a concert of his music specially organised to mark the date of Blake's birth. The evening includes celebrated pieces such as The Tyger,
The Lamb, Eternity’s Sunrise and Song of the Angel. The soloist is the acclaimed soprano, Patricia Rosario, the music is performed by the orchestra of the Royal College of Music and the choral pieces are sung by The Elysian Singers. This concert will take place at St. Johns, Smith Square.

Tickets: £16 (£12 concessions)

Friday 1 December, 18.30-20.00
St James’, Piccadilly

Patti Smith Concert
A rare opportunity to hear the New York poet and musician, Patti Smith, perform a selection of her songs and read extracts from writings by Blake and others. The concert takes place in St James’, Piccadilly, where Blake was baptised.

Tickets: £16 (£12 concessions)

There is an exciting programme of lectures and evening events planned to coincide with the exhibition. Invited speakers include the Blake scholar and poet, Kathleen Raine, and Morris Eaves and Joseph Viscomi of the William Blake Archive. Daytime lectures include talks by Michael Phillips, Christine Riding, Richard Humphreys, Marilyn Butler and Robyn Hamlyn. A Blake film programme will also be shown. Further details of lectures and events will be available in the November/December What’s On leaflet. For a copy of this leaflet, please call 020 7887 8604/8758.

Conferences
8 & 9 December, 10.00-17.30
Blake, Nation and Empire
In association with St. Mary’s College, A College of the University of Surrey. Our understanding of William Blake arrives at radically divergent conclusions depending on whether the starting-point is his poetry or his art. This conference will attempt to explore these apparently incompatible perspectives on Blake by discussing his response to contemporary subcultures, the influence of bourgeois nationalism and the contradictions of imperialism. Blake, Nation and Empire will give equal weight to both Blake’s early and late career as defined by the Lambeth period of the 1790s and the post-Napoleonic era when he was producing Jerusalem. Invited speakers include: Linda Colley, Robert Essick, Morton Paley and Ian McCalman.

Tickets: £80 (£50 concessions) includes refreshments and wine reception

2 & 3 February, 10.00-17.30
William Blake—The Alternative View
Invited speakers include: Billy Bragg, Jah Wobble, and Iain Sinclair.

Courses
Vision and Imagination: Blake and the Impressionists
Four Tuesday mornings 14 Nov-5 Dec 2000, 10.30-12.00
This course explores the exhibitions William Blake at Tate Britain and Impression: Painting Quickly in France 1860-1890 at the National Gallery. Tickets £65 (£55 concessions) includes coffee and free admission to each exhibition.

To book call 020 7747 2888.

An Eccentric Legacy: William Blake
Five Thursday evenings 16 Nov-14 Dec, 18.00-20.00
This course takes a fresh look at the eclectic and powerful legacy of the British artist and poet William Blake through a series of gallery talks, slide lectures and performances. Tickets £85 (£70 concessions) includes drinks, exhibition entry and catalogue.

Breakfast Tours
Early Morning Tours of the Blake exhibition are available. The guided tours start at 9am, before the gallery is open to the public, and last for 1 hour. Breakfast can also be provided. For prices and more information contact Jane Toussaint at 020 7887 8758.

Open Evening
Friday 24 November, 18.30-21.00
Education Open Evening: William Blake and the Turner Prize 2000
A private view including a series of talks and events on Lambeth, Westminster and the work of William Blake. Staff will be on hand to talk about Tate Britain’s Education programs and services.

For more information about any of the above events please call Tate Box Office at 020 7887 8888.
www.tate.org.uk <http://www.tate.org.uk> (includes online booking)

Please note all event information may be subject to change.
Rodney M. Baine  
1913-2000

Born in Kosciusko, Mississippi, Rodney M. Baine (1913-2000) graduated from Tupelo High School in 1931, then earned degrees from Southwestern at Memphis, from Vanderbilt, and from Harvard. In 1936 he held a Rhodes Scholarship at Merton College, Oxford. Baine served as an instructor of English at MIT, and as professor at the University of Richmond, Delta State University of Alabama at Montevallo, and finally, beginning in 1962, the University of Georgia. He published books on Defoe (Daniel Defoe and the Supernatural, 1968), Holcroft (Thomas Holcroft and the Revolutionary Novel, 1965), Munford (Robert Munford: America's First Comic Dramatist, 1962), and through the 1990s he edited several volumes of papers concerning James Oglethorpe and the founding of Georgia. His 1986 privately printed and privately distributed book, The Scattered Portions: William Blake's Biological Symbolism, has become a respected reference. Baine was an avid chess player and a member of the local symphony. The lecture series endowed by his elder sons in his honor was inaugurated in the mid-1980s by Northrop Frye, a fellow student at Oxford with whom Baine became well acquainted. [Nelson Hilton, as adapted from the Athens [Ga.] Daily News/Banner-Herald, 27 June 2000, at www.onlineathens.com.]