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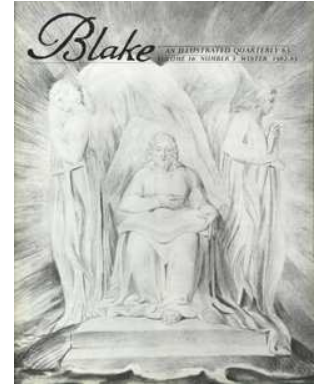
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Desire Gratified and Ungratified: William Blake and Sexuality

BY ALICIA OSTRICKER

To examine Blake on sexuality is to deal with a many-layered thing. Although we like to suppose that everything in the canon "not only belongs in a unified scheme but is in accord with a permanent structure of ideas,"¹ some of Blake's ideas clearly change during the course of his career, and some others may constitute internal inconsistencies powerfully at work in, and not resolved by, the poet and his poetry. What I will sketch here is four sets of Blakean attitudes toward sexual experience and gender relations, each of them coherent and persuasive if not ultimately "systematic;" for convenience, and in emulation of the poet's own method of personifying ideas and feelings, I will call them four Blakes. First, the Blake who celebrates sexuality and attacks repression, whom we may associate with Freud and even more with Reich. Second, a corollary Blake whom we may associate with Jung, whose idea of the emanation—the feminine element within man—parallels Jung's concept of the anima, and who depicts sexual life as a complex web of gender complementarities and interdependencies. Third, a Blake apparently inconsistent with Blake number one, who sees sexuality as a tender trap rather than a force of liberation. Fourth, and corollary to that, the Blake to whom it was necessary, as it was to his patriarchal precursor Milton, to see the female principle as subordinate to the male.

Blake number one is perhaps the most familiar to the common reader, although professional Blakeans have paid little attention to him lately. He is the vigorous, self-confident, exuberant advocate of gratified desire, writing in his early and middle thirties (that is, between the fall of the Bastille and the execution of Louis and the declaration of war between England and France) the early *Notebook* poems, the *Songs*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. A few texts will refresh the memory. Among the *Notebook* epigrams we are told that

Love to faults is always blind
Always is to joy inclind
Lawless wingd and unconfin'd
And breaks all chains from every mind (E 463)²
Abstinence sows sand all over
The ruddy limbs & flaming hair

But Desire Gratified
Plants fruits of life & beauty there (E 465)
What is it men in women do require?
The lineaments of Gratified Desire
What is it Women do in men require?
The lineaments of Gratified Desire (E 466)

It was probably these lines that converted me to Blake when I was twenty. They seemed obviously true, splendidly symmetrical, charmingly cheeky—and nothing else I had read approached them, although I thought Yeats must have picked up a brave tone or two here. Only later did I notice that the epigrams were tiny manifestoes announcing an identity of interest between sexuality and the human imagination.

During these years Blake wrote numerous minidramas illustrating how possessiveness and jealousy, prudery and hypocrisy poison the lives of lovers. He pities the chaste ("The Sunflower") and depicts the pathos of chastity relinquished too late ("The Angel"), looks forward to a "future Age" when "Love! sweet Love!" will no longer be thought a crime, while protesting its repression by Church and State in his own time. One of his two major statements about sexual repression in *Songs of Experience* is the deceptively simple "The Garden of Love," in which the speaker discovers a Chapel built where he "used to play on the green." The garden has a long scriptural and literary ancestry. "A garden shut up, a fountain sealed, is my sister, my bride," in *The Song of Solomon*. It is the site of the *Roman de la Rose*. It is where Dante meets Beatrice, it is Spenser's garden of Adonis and Milton's Paradise—"In narrow room, Nature's whole wealth." The garden is, in brief, at once the earthly paradise and the body of a woman. Probably Blake saw it so. Later he would draw the nude torso of a woman with a cathedral where her genitals should be. The briars at the poem's close half-suggest that the speaker is being crowned with something like thorns, somewhere about the anatomy, and it anticipates Blake's outraged demand, near the close of his life, in the *Everlasting Gospel*: "Was Jesus chaste? or did he / Give any lessons of chastity?" Since the design for "The Garden of Love" depicts a priest and two children kneeling at an open grave beside a church, the forbidden love may be a parent as well as a peer, and the speaker might be of either

sex: all repression is one. It is important that the tone here is neither angry nor self-righteous, but pathetic and passive — indeed, pathetically passive, for after the opening “I went,” the governing verb is “saw.” That the speaker only “saw . . . my joys and desires” being bound with briars and did not “feel” anything, should shock us into realizing that this speaker, at least by the poem’s last line, has been effectively self-alienated. Repression has worked not merely from without, but from within.”³

The other major statement is “London,” where Blake hears the clanking of the mind-forg’d manacles (chains such as “Love . . . breaks from every mind”) he will later associate with Urizen. Economic exploitation sanctioned by blackening churches and political exploitation sanctioned by bleeding palace walls are grievous, but “most” grievous is sexual exploitation, perhaps because it is a denial of humanity’s greatest virtue, charity, as sweep’s cry and soldier’s sigh are denials of faith and hope; or perhaps because, to Blake, sexual malaise precedes and produces all other ills:

But most thro’ midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the newborn Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse (E 27)

That final stanza is Blake’s most condensed indictment of the gender arrangements in a society where Love is ruled by Law and consequently dies; where virtuous females are pure, modest, and programmed for frigidity, so that healthy males require whores; where whores have ample cause to curse; and where their curses have the practical effect of infecting young families with venereal disease as well as with the more metaphoric plague of unacknowledged guilt.⁴ Through his hissing, spitting and explosive alliteration Blake creates an ejaculatory harlot who is (and there are analogues to her in Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton) not the garden but the snake. That a syntactic ambivalence common in Blake makes her one who is cursed by others as well as one who curses, does not diminish the point.

The point recurs polemically in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where, according to Auden, “the whole of Freud’s teachings may be found.”⁵ Here “Prisons are built with stones of Law, brothels with bricks of Religion,” “Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity,” and we are exhorted: “Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires” (E 36-37). Here too is the famous pre-Freudian précis of Freud’s theories on suppression: “Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place and governs the unwilling. And being restrained it by degrees becomes passive till it is only the shadow of desire” (E 34). For Freud, this process was always in some degree necessary and irreversible, as *Civilization and its Discontents* and “Analysis Terminable and Interminable” ultimately confess. But Blake — and this is what makes him more Reichian than Freudian — joyfully foresees the end of

discontent and civilization too: “For the cherub with his flaming brand is hereby commanded to leave his guard at tree of life, and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite. and holy where it now appears finite & corrupt. This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment” (E 38).⁶

In all such texts Blake is not only attacking the powers of repression, particularly institutional religion, which in the name of reason and holiness attempt to subdue desire. He is also asserting that gratified desire *does* what religion *pretends* to do: gives access to vision, the discovery of the infinite. Moreover — and this is a point to which I will return — Blake in these texts does not stress the distinction between male and female, or assign conspicuously different roles to the two sexes. Youth and virgin suffer alike under chastity, man and woman have identical desires, and the “ruddy limbs and flaming hair” of which an ardent imagination makes a garden, and an abstinent imagination makes a desert, may belong interchangeably to a lover or a beloved, a male or a female.

The poem in which Blake most extensively elaborates his celebration of love and his critique of repression is *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, printed in 1793. *Visions* is also the poem most clearly delineating male sexual aggressiveness as a component of Urizenic patriarchy, and illustrating the kinds of damage it does to both males and females. First of all, Bromion is a number of things which to Blake are one thing. He is the slaveowner who converts humans into private property and confirms his possession by impregnating the females, the racist who rationalizes racism by insisting that the subordinate race is sexually promiscuous, the rapist who honestly believes that his victim was asking for it; and, withal, he does not actually experience “sensual enjoyment.” But if Bromion represents the social and psychological pathology of sexual violence, Theotormon represents its pitiable underside, sexual impotence. “Oerflowd with woe,” asking unanswerable questions, weeping incessantly, Theotormon does not respond to Bromion’s insult to his masculinity (“Now thou maist marry Bromions harlot,” pl. 2.1). Playing the hesitant Hamlet to Bromion’s rough Claudius, intimidated slave to coarse slave-master, Theotormon has been victimized by an ideology that glorifies male aggressiveness, as much as by that ideology’s requirement of feminine purity. Dejected and self-flagellant (design, pl. 6), he cannot look Oothoon in her intellectual and erotic eye as she maintains her spiritual virginity and offers him her love, not only because she is damaged goods but because she is taking sexual initiative instead of being “modest.” Only with incredulity and grief does Oothoon realize this (pl. 6.4-20).

Most of *Visions* is Oothoon’s opera. Raped, enslaved, imprisoned, rejected, the heroine’s agonized rhapsody of self-offering rushes from insight to insight. Though she begins by focusing on her individual condition, her vision rapidly expands outward. She analyzes the enchainment of

loveless marriage and the unhappy children it must produce, she praises the value of infant sexuality and attacks the ethos which brands joy whoredom and sublimates its sexuality in twisted religiosity. She also bewails other ramifications of the tyranny of reason over desire, such as the abuse of peasant by landlord, of worker by factory owner, of the faithful by their churches. For Oothoon life means being "open to joy and to delight where ever beauty appears," and the perception of any beauty is an erotic activity in which eye and object join "in happy copulation." Made desperate by her lover's unresponsiveness, she cries out for "Love! Love! Love! happy happy Love! free as the mountain wind! / Can that be Love, that drinks another as a sponge drinks water?" Though remaining herself "bound" to Bromion, she nevertheless concludes with a vision of the vitality of all free things:

Arise you little glancing wings, and sing your infant joy!
Arise and drink your bliss, for every thing that lives is holy!
(VDA 8.9-10)

Blake in *Visions* has created a heroine unequalled in English poetry before or since. Oothoon not only defines and defends her own sexuality rather than waiting for Prince Charming to interrupt her nap, and not only attacks patriarchal ideology root and branch, but outflanks everyone in her poem for intellectuality and spirituality, and is intellectual and spiritual precisely because she is erotic. Shakespeare's comic heroines, though witty and sexy, are of course not intellectuals, much less revolutionaries. The Wife of Bath strongly resembles Oothoon as a voice of "experience, though noon auctoritee" who "spekes of wo that is in marriage," celebrates sexuality as such and female sexuality in particular, and lectures to the Apollyon of Judeo-Christian misogyny from his own texts. Yet she lacks Oothoon's generosity, and has been locked by men's contempt into a perpetuation of the war of the sexes. (If, though, we amend the portrait of the Wife as she appears in the Prologue by that "imaginative portion" of her which is her Tale, we have something different. Here perhaps is the Wife as she would be — neither offensively-defensively bawdy, nor angrily polemical, but lively and charming — telling the wish-fulfilling story of a rapist enlightened and reformed, of male violence, ignorance and pride transformed by the "sovereignty" of feminine wisdom and love.) Hawthorne's Hester Prynne comes close to being what Oothoon is, even to the point of foreseeing that "in Heaven's own time, a new truth would . . . establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness."⁷ But Hawthorne cannot sustain or elaborate the vision he glimpses, and sends Hester back in the end to her knitting, her works of charity, and a lifelong celibacy which — unlike Oothoon's — is supposed to be voluntary.

Blake number two appears later than Blake number one, and shifts his psychological principles from an essentially sociopolitical to an essentially mythic base. Beginning with *The Book of Urizen*, engraved in 1794, and through-

out his major prophecies, the poet relies on an idea of humanity as originally and ultimately androgynous, attributing the fall of man and what John Milton called "all our woe" not to female narcissism but to specifically male pride, male competitiveness, or male refusal to surrender the self, and depicting a fallen state in which sexual division — lapse of unity between male and female as one being — is the prototype of every division within the self, between self and other, and between humanity and God.

The mythology of these poems posits a hero who is both Great Britain and all mankind, and who lives in Eternity or Eden as one of a family of Eternals who collectively compose One Man, Christ. Albion's "Human Brain," the equivalent of Jung's collective unconscious, houses four energetic Jungian Zoas, each of whom has a feminine counterpart or emanation. At Man's Fall, precipitated in *Urizen* by Urizen's pride, in *The Four Zoas* and *Milton* by rivalry between Urizen and Luvah, and in *Jerusalem* by Albion's selfish refusal to maintain erotic union with his saviour and his insistence on moral virtue, Albion lapses into what Blake variously calls sleep, death and disease, and what the rest of us call human history. The Zoas simultaneously lapse into lower forms and mutual conflict instead of harmony, and are disastrously divided from their emanations. As the late Blake formulaically puts it, "The Feminine separates from the Masculine & both from Man." Bodies grow around them, inimical "To the embrace of love":

that no more the Masculine mingles
With the Feminine, but the Sublime is shut out from the
Pathos
In howling torment, to build stone walls of separation,
compelling
The Pathos, to weave curtains of hiding secrecy from the
torment.
(J 90.10-14)

At the close of his three longest poems Blake imagines an apocalypse in which selfhood is relinquished and male and female are reunified:

And the Bow is a Male & Female & the Quiver of the Arrows
of Love
Are the Children of this Bow: a Bow of Mercy & Loving-
Kindness: laying
Open the hidden Heart in Wars of mutual Benevolence Wars
of Love
And the Hand of Man grasps firm between the Male &
Female Loves.
(J 97.12-15)

To say that Blake's emanations resemble what Jung calls the anima is to say that they represent a man's interior "female part," the "life-giving aspect of the psyche" and the "a priori element in his moods, reactions and impulses, and whatever else is spontaneous in psychic life."⁸ As a positive figure the Blakean emanation like the Jungian anima is a benevolent guide to the unconscious life. As a negative figure she is seductive and destructive. She seems also to repre-

sent a man's emotionality, sensuousness, sensitivity, receptivity—all that makes him potentially effeminate—which in a fallen state he rejects or believes to be separate from himself, and must recover if he is to gain psychic wholeness. According to Jung, of course, an individual man changes and develops during the course of his lifetime but "his" anima does not. She remains static, and his only problem is to accept her existence as a portion of himself. What is particularly fascinating about Blake, then, is that he invents not one but a set of female beings, each appropriate to the Zoa she belongs to, each with her own personality and history of transformations, not radically different from the personalities in highly symbolic fiction and drama, and able to shed light very often on characters we thought we knew as well as on larger issues of sexual complementarity.

The first figures we encounter in *The Four Zoas*, for example, are Tharmas and Enion—humanity's Sensation—in the midst of a marital quarrel. Tharmas and Enion are bucolic characters of the sort that the wheels of history run over: good but not too bright, easily confused. We may recognize their like in mythic pairs like Baucis and Philemon, Deucalion and Pyrrha, and the Wakefield Noah with his farcically shrewish wife. Fictionally, and especially when a sentimental English novelist needs a pair of innocent parent-figures, they are legion: they are Sterne's Shandies, Goldsmith's Vicar and Mrs. Wakefield, and a troop of Dickensian folk like the Micawbers and Pockets, Casby (nicknamed "The Patriarch") and Flora, and perhaps most interestingly, the Gargeries of *Great Expectations*.⁹ Across the Atlantic, they stumble through the fiction of writers like W.D. Howells and John Steinbeck. What Tharmas lacks when he loses Enion is his own sense of coherence. Without her he is a frantic and suicidal "flood" of feelings. What she lacks without him is resistance to pain. In her fallen form she becomes a grieving Demeter-figure who laments the sufferings of all earthly creatures,¹⁰ and Blake gives her some of his best lines:

Why does the Raven cry aloud and no eye pities her?
Why fall the Sparrow & the Robin in the foodless winter?
(FZ I.17.2-3)

It is an easy thing to triumph in the summers sun
And in the vintage & to sing on the waggon loaded with corn
It is an easy thing to talk of patience to the afflicted
To speak the laws of prudence to the houseless wanderer . . .
It is an easy thing to laugh at wrathful elements
To hear the dog howl at the wintry door, the ox in the
slaughter house moan . . .
While our olive & vine sing & laugh round our door & our
children bring fruit & flowers
Then the groan & the dolor are quite forgotten & the slave
grinding at the mill
And the captive in chains & the poor in the prison & the
soldier in the field
When the shattered bone hath laid him groaning among the
happier dead.

It is an easy thing to rejoice in the tents of prosperity
Thus could I sing & thus rejoice, but it is not so with me.
(FZ II.35.16-36.13)

Enion gives birth to Los and Enitharmon, the Eternal Prophet and his Muse, who from the start are as arrogant and self-absorbed as their parents are humble and selfless. Enitharmon espouses parent-abuse:

To make us happy let them weary their immortal powers
While we draw in their sweet delights while we return them
scorn
On scorn to feed our discontent; for if we grateful prove
They will withhold sweet love, whose food is thorns & bitter
roots.
(FZ I.10.3-6)

Soon she turns these arts on her twin and consort, becoming a seductive and maddening tease. She is the muse who won't come across, taunting the poet with failure and giving her alliance to Reason (Neoclassicism, let us say) instead of Prophecy, while forbidding the poet to love anyone but herself. As a couple, the Los and Enitharmon who are united "in discontent and scorn" uncannily resemble the self-destructive, sullen, jealous, incestuous or quasi-incestuous couples in novels like *Wuthering Heights*, *Women in Love*, and *The Sound and the Fury*: novels which in the light of Blake we can read as visions of a primitive creative energy thwarted by the impossibility of creativity in a culturally collapsed world they never made. Enitharmon is also La Belle Dame Sans Merci, she is Pip's Estella, or Lady Brett, or Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel*; which is to say that she is the feminine agent of male sexual humiliation, who is herself governed by *ennui*.

A third couple is Urizen and Ahanian: Reason and the Faith or Idealism necessary to it. Early in *The Four Zoas*, Urizen as cosmic architect places Ahanian in a zodiacal shrine and burns incense to her. Here we have Blake's version of the "pedestal," and of that neo-Platonically inspired sexual reverence which prefers ladies pure, exalted and static rather than adjacent and active. When Ahanian is uncomfortable in her shrine and tries to give her spouse some advice about returning to Eternity, he seizes her by the hair, calling her "Thou little diminutive portion that darst be a counterpart," and throws her out of heaven, declaring "Am I not God? Who is equal to me?" (FZ III.42.21-43.9). Without Ahanian, Urizen is Doubt instead of Faith, and degenerates in the course of *The Four Zoas* from Prince of Light, to tyrannical parody of Milton's God, to William Pitt opposing the Bread Bill of 1800, to the Dragon Form of Antichrist. Ahanian falls from being a sky goddess who opened her mouth once too often to "the silent woman" about whom feminist critics are presently writing a good deal.¹¹ Until just before the end of *The Four Zoas* Ahanian has nothing further to say. As "the furrowed field" she is a figure of complete submission. We should compare her possibly to those other victims of exacerbated and anxious male intellect, Hamlet's Ophelia and Faust's Gretchen.¹²

Luvah and Vala, last of the Zoas and Emanations, are in their unfallen form lover and beloved, the Eros and Psyche of Man. Fallen, Luvah is born into this world as the revolutionary babe and flaming youth who must become a sacrificed god in epoch after epoch, while Vala is the *dolorosa* who, believing she loves him, always sacrifices him.

As all Blake readers know, Vala is one of Blake's most complicated characters. Her name means "vale" as in "valley," and as Nature she is the valley of the shadow of death, the declivity of the female genitals, and the membranous "veil" which preserves virginity, as well as the "veil" covering the tabernacle of the Old Testament. Like the chapel in "The Garden of Love" and the "chapel all of gold," she stands at the intersection between corrupt sexuality and institutional religion; thus she is also the veil of the temple which was rent when Jesus died, for Vala is the Nature we worship when we should worship Christ, she is Fortuna, Babylon, the Great Whore, enemy of Jerusalem. Where Enitharmon is a tease and a betrayer, Vala is the "Female Will" incarnate as killer. She is the chaste mistress who withholds favors so that her lovers will become warriors, and she is the blood-spattered priestess who with a knife of flint cuts the hearts out of men—all the while protesting that she craves nothing but Love. So powerful a figure is she that I expect we see at least as much of her in popular culture—where she is the voluptuous pinup on barracks walls, and she is the lady in black leather who will punish you—as in conventional fiction and drama. Pornography magazines offer us endless reproductions of Vala-Babylon, and, in the most high-chic phases of fashion design, the ideal fashion model is "cruel" Vala.

If we judge by Mario Praz' exploration of the "tormented, contaminated beauty" and "femme fatale" in western literature, this type of female seems—at least prior to Swinburne—to have been more extensively treated by French than by English writers.¹³ Ste.-Beuve, Gautier, Baudelaire adore her. For Swinburne, she becomes the Venus of "Laus Veneris," Faustine, and Mary Stuart. But if we look earlier, she certainly figures in Jacobean drama, and in at least one play of Shakespeare's.

Late in *Jerusalem*, one of Vala's avatars has a warrior-lover whom she craves to possess completely. "O that I could live in his sight," she says; "O that I could bind him to my arm" (J 82.44). Concealing him under her veil, she wishes him to become "an infant love" at her breast. When she opens the veil, revealing "her own perfect beauty," her lover has become "a winding worm." Blake hopes at this moment to show that Female Will is ultimately self-defeating. The winding worm is a further degeneration of helpless infancy, so that her wish has come true beyond her intention, as in folktales. The worm is also the phallic worm (cf. Yeats' "Chambermaid's Song," where "Pleasure has made him / Weak as a worm") and the devouring worm of the grave. The parallel story is of course *Antony and Cleopatra*. There, too, Woman reduces Warrior to absurd infantile dependency, out of pure erotic possessiveness. She then dies by

the instrument of a worm that she describes as an infant—"the baby at my breast / That sucks the nurse asleep" (V.ii.308-309) and that she croons to as lover. Without the aid of Blake, we might not think to identify the asp in *Antony and Cleopatra* as the last essence of Antony himself. With Blake, the identification seems compelling. At the same time, with the aid of Shakespeare, we may see Vala more clearly as the fallen form of female desire.

As the individual characters of Zoas and Emanations differ, so do the plots of their reconciliations. Los-Enitharmon's begins earliest in *The Four Zoas*, and involves a channeling of their arrogant energy through suffering. Following the binding of Urizen they have sunk, exhausted, to their nadir, "shrunk into fixed space . . . Their senses unexpansive" (V.57.12-18). Redemption starts with the painful birth of Orc, and the grief that follows the Los-Enitharmon-Orc Family Romance. Though repentance and sorrow over their mutual failure to free Orc are apparently useless, Enitharmon's heartbreak (V.63.10-14) triggers a process of imaginative re-expansion and re-unification that continues through the complex episodes of Spectre-Shadow and Spectre-Los reunions (VIIa.81.7-86.14) and the "six thousand years of self denial and of bitter contrition" during which Los builds Golgonooza and Los and Enitharmon finally labor together as partners in the Art which gives regenerate form to all of life (VIIa.90.2-57). At the opening of Night IX "Los and Enitharmon builded Jerusalem weeping" and at no point thereafter are separated. In the final two pages the regenerate "dark Urthona" has reclaimed them both.

Reunion of the other Zoas and Emanations completes the Eternal Man's awakening and resumption of control over his warring "members." Ahania revives at the moment of Urizen's rejuvenation. She bursts with excess of joy, sleeps a winter and returns in spring as Kore, and finally takes her seat "by Urizen" (i.e., not enshrined) "in songs & joy." Next, when Orc's passion burns itself out, Albion takes the somewhat-charred Luvah and Vala in hand and admonishes them: "Luvah & Vala henceforth you are Servants obey & live" (IX.126.6). They enact their obedience first in the ensuing pastoral episode, with its idyllic evocation of a new Golden Age, and then in the Last Vintage, where human grapes are orgiastically crushed in the wine-presses of Luvah. The episode concludes with Luvah and Vala described as a couple linked to the seasons; together they sleep, wake, and are "cast . . . thro the air till winter is over & gone" while the "Human Wine" they have made "stood wondering in all their delightful expanses" (IX.137.30-32). Finally Tharmas and Enion, first pair to be seen in collapse and last to be seen regenerate, also undergo a double transformation. They are initially reborn into Vala's garden as naive and wayward children, as befits their innocent character. But a fully renewed and humanized Enion and Tharmas embrace and are welcomed by the Eternal Man (IX.132.10-133.1) to the final feast.

For the Blake who conceived of humanity as androgy-

nous, the division of Zoas from Emanations signified human disorder and disaster. His poetry describing sexual division is some of the most anguished in the language. By the same token, re-couplings precipitate and are accompanied by all the images for joy and order Blake knew: a seasonal cycle culminating in harvest, vintage and communal feast; a painful bread-making and wine-making which issues in happiness; music and "vocal harmony" concluding in human "conversing"; and a beaming morning sun.

To trace the lineaments of Blake number three, we must return to the very outset of the poet's career, and the extraordinary lyric "How sweet I roamed from field to field," where an unidentified winged speaker is lured and trapped by "the prince of love." The poem is in a quasi-Elizabethan diction, but with the swoon of eroticism and ecstatic surrender we associate with Keats. Keatsian too are the lushness and fertility of the natural setting, and the painful close:

With sweet May dew my wings were wet,
And Phoebus fir'd my vocal rage;
He caught me in his silken net,
And shut me in his golden cage.

He loves to sit and hear me sing,
Then laughing, sports and plays with me;
Then stretches out my golden wing,
And mocks my loss of liberty.

Un-Keatsian is the ambivalent gender of the speaker and the personification power of love as male not female. Although the theme of romantic enthrallment of a woman by a man is relatively unusual in English poetry, Irene H. Chayes argues convincingly that the speaker is Psyche and the manipulator of "silken net" and "golden cage" is Eros.¹⁴

But in later versions of this scenario, the instruments of entrapment and enclosure—net, cage, locked box—will be the sexually symbolic props of females who imprison males. "The Crystal Cabinet," "The Golden Net" and "The Mental Traveller" are all versions of this theme, and the "Woman Old" of the last of these is a brilliant portrayal of the *vagina dentata* in action, for she torments male vitality simultaneously by nailing and piercing, and by binding and catching. As if correcting his own earlier naiveté, one of Blake's *Notebook* poems asks rhetorically "Why was Cupid a Boy?" and answers that the illusion of a male Cupid who inflicts sexual suffering "was the Cupid Girls mocking plan," part of a scheme to keep real boys who "cant interpret the thing" unsuspecting while she shot them full of darts (E 470). Along similar lines, "My Spectre Around Me" envisages a war between the sexes dominated by female pride, scorn, jealousy and lust for "Victory" imaged as possession and enclosure: "Living thee alone Ill have / And when dead Ill be thy Grave." The solution is a Spectral threat of rejection and retaliation:

Till I turn from Female Love
And root up the Infernal Grove
I shall never worthy be
To step into Eternity

And to end thy cruel mocks
Annihilate thee on the rocks
And another form create
To be subservient to my fate.

(E 468)

This brings the Emanation round, for it is either she, or Emanation and Spectre in duet, who "agree to give up Love" for "the world of happy Eternity."

Among the engraved poems, "To Tirzah" is a furious repudiation of female sexuality in its maternal aspect as that which encloses and divides man from Eternity. To appreciate the impact of "To Tirzah" in its original context we should probably see it as the contrary poem to "A Cradle Song" in *Innocence*. Where in *Innocence* a mother sings lullingly to a sleeping infant of the "sweet" smiles and tears that Jesus as "an infant small" sheds and shares with herself and the child, in *Experience* the child responds, ironically using Jesus' adolescent rejection of Mary (John 2.4) for his punch line:

Thou Mother of my mortal part
With cruelty didst mould my Heart,
and with false self-deceiving tears
Didst bind my Nostrils Eyes & Ears.
Didst close my Tongue in senseless clay
And me to Mortal Life betray.
The Death of Jesus set me free,
Then what have I to do with thee?

A second strong repudiation is *Europe*, where erotic entrapment both maternal and sexual, the former expressing itself as possessive, the latter as seductive manipulation of male desire, takes place so that "Woman, lovely Woman! may have dominion" during the corrupt centuries of Enitharmon's reign. Here Enitharmon's "crystal house" is analogous to the crystal cabinet, and within it there is a constant claustrophobic movement of nocturnal binding, circling, cycling, broken only by the dawn of European revolution.

How well do these poems fit the Blake who praises "gratified Desire" and insists that "Energy is the only life and is from the body"? Rather poorly, I think. However allegorically we interpret the thing, sexual love in these poems is neither gratifying nor capable of gratification, and the poet consistently associates "sensual enjoyment" with cruelty, imprisonment, illusion and mortality instead of liberation, vision and immortality. Morton Paley has pointed out that Blake's Lambeth books involve "a sort of involuntary dualism, a myth with implications that in some ways conflicted with his own beliefs. Blake's intuition of the goodness of the body in general and of sexual love in particular had not weakened . . . but . . . the Lambeth myth seems to imply that physical life is inherently evil."¹⁵ If, in other words, we have one Blake for whom physical life is type and symbol of spiritual life and fulfilled joy in one leads us to the other, there is also a Blake for whom body and spirit are as irreconcilably opposed as they are for any Church Father. But the contradiction is exacerbated rather than resolved in the later books, where the anatomical image of the enclosure vastly expands to become a whole world, the realm of Beulah, a

dreamy moony place presided over by tender females, which is both comfort and trap.

To a fallen and depleted consciousness, Beulah is the source of poetry and our one hope of returning to Eden. The "Daughters of Beulah" are reliably compliant "Muses who inspire the Poets Song" or nurse-figures who comfort and protect the weary and distressed. That "Contrarieties are equally true" in Beulah makes it seem an obvious advance over single vision and Newton's sleep. Yet as another Crystal Cabinet writ large, Beulah inevitably means confinement, limitation, illusion. It can never mean Infinity. Where Eden is fourfold and human, Beulah is merely threefold and sexual, the vacation spot for beings who cannot sustain the strenuous mental excitement of Eden and need "repose":

Into this pleasant shadow all the weak & weary
Like Women & Children were taken away as on wings
Of dovelike softness, & shadowy habitations prepared for them

But every Man returned & went still going forward thro'
The Bosom of the Father in Eternity on Eternity.

(M 31.1-5)

Of the double potentialities of Beulah, benign yields to malign in successive works. In *The Four Zoas*, Beulah is purely protective. *Milton* begins to emphasize not only its pleasantness but also its delusiveness. In *Jerusalem*, where the Daughters of Beulah have been replaced as muses by a single male muse and lover, "the Saviour . . . dictating the words of his mild song," Blake firmly identifies "the lovely delusions of Beulah" (J 17.27) with the terrors of sexuality. Thus Vala, claiming precedence over the Savior, hypnotizes Albion with her concave allure and her usurped phallic power:

The Imaginative Human Form is but a breathing of Vala
I breathe him forth into the Heaven from my secret Cave
Born of the Woman to obey the Woman O Albion the mighty

For the Divine appearance is Brotherhood, but I am Love
Elevate into the Region of Brotherhood with my red fires

(J 29.48-30.1)

Responding to Vala's triumph, Los laments:

What may Man be? Who can tell! But what may Woman be?

To have power over Man from Cradle to corruptible Grave.
There is a Throne in every Man, it is the Throne of God
This Woman has claim'd as her own & Man is no more! . . .
O Albion why wilt thou Create a Female Will?
To hide the most evident God in a hidden covert, even
In the Shadows of a Woman & a secluded Holy Place

(J 30.25-33)

Beulah itself seems at fault, in Los's agonized cry:

Humanity knows not of Sex: wherefore are sexes in Beulah?
(J 44.3)

And again, anticipating Keats's yearning description of a work of art "all breathing human passion far above:"

redeem'd Humanity is far above
Sexual organization; & the Visions of the Night of Beulah
(J 79.73-4)

For, as Blake in his own persona tells us, however tender and pleasant and full of "ever varying delights" the "time of love" passed in Beulah may be, where "every Female delights to give her maiden to her husband" and

The Female searches sea & land for gratification to the
Male Genius: who in return clothes her in gems & gold
And feeds her with the food of Eden, hence all her beauty beams

(J 69.17-19)

Love in Beulah inevitably brings a depletion of energy and the advent of jealousies, murders, moral law, revenge, and the whole panoply of inhuman cruelties the poet has taught us to struggle against. In visionary contrast, Blake imagines a love that transcends sexuality because it is a mingling of male with male:

I am in you & you in me, mutual in love divine:
Fibres of love from man to man thro Albions pleasant land . . .
I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend;
Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me.

(J 4.7-19)

Such is the opening promise of the Saviour, and if in Eternity "Embraces are Comingslings from the Head even to the Feet" (J 69.43), we well may wonder whether such embraces can ever occur between male and female. For if the Blake who celebrates desire sees it as equally distributed between genders, the Blake who fears desire sees sexuality in general and sexual threat in particular as a female phenomenon. This third Blake gives us an array, culminating in *Jerusalem*, of passive males subject to females who seduce, reject, betray, bind, lacerate, mock and deceive them. After *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, though Blake continues strenuously to oppose the idea that woman's love is *sin*, he increasingly describes it as *snare*. There is no comparable depiction of males seducing and betraying females.

This brings me to Blake number four, who is perhaps not quite a classic misogynist — though he sometimes sounds like one — but someone who believes that the proper study of woman is the happiness of her man, and who cannot conceive of a true woman in any but a supportive, subordinate role. In the margin of his 1789 edition of Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, Blake wrote, "Let the men do their duty & the women will be such wonders, the female life lives from the light of the male, see a mans female dependents, you know the man" (E 585). Females, in other words, may be wonders, but only if men are: and to be female is to be dependent.

Examining Blake from this point of view, and returning to *Visions*, we notice that Oothoon is good, and she is wise, but she is completely powerless. So long as her men-folk refuse enlightenment, she will be bound hand and foot, imprisoned in a passivity which she does not desire but to which she must submit. Looking at *The Four Zoas*, we see that Enion and Ahania are likewise good — indeed, they represent precisely the goodness of selfless love and compassion — but passive, while Enitharmon and Vala are active and evil. In *Milton* and *Jerusalem* the story is the same: female figures

are either powerful or good; never both. The late prophecies may even constitute a retreat from the point Blake arrived at in *Visions*, for the better the late females are, the more passive, the more submissive and obedient they also are.¹⁶ When Ololon finds Milton, she tearfully apologizes for being the cause of Natural Religion. And when Milton concludes his splendid final speech on "Self-annihilation and the grandeur of Inspiration" with a peroration against the "Sexual Garments, the Abomination of Desolation," Ololon responds by dividing into the six-fold Virgin who dives "into the depths / Of Miltons Shadow as a Dove upon the stormy sea" and a "moony Ark" who enters into the fires of intellect

Around the Starry Eight: with one accord the Starry Eight
became
One Man Jesus the Saviour. Wonderful! round his limbs
The Clouds of Ololon folded as a Garment dipped in blood
(M 42.9-11)

At the climax of *Jerusalem* there is a similar self-immolative plunge when "England" awakes on Albion's bosom. Having blamed herself for being "the Jealous Wife" who has caused all the troubles of the poem:

England who is Britannia enterd Albions bosom rejoicing
Rejoicing in his indignation! adoring his wrathful rebuke.
She who adores not your frowns will only loathe your smiles
(J 95.22-4)

But this somewhat gratuitous-seeming passage lacks—since we have not met "England" until now—the systematic quality of Blake's treatment of his chief heroine.

The poet's final and most fully-idealized heroine "is named Liberty among the sons of Albion" (J 26.3-4) yet we seriously mistake Blake's intention if we think Jerusalem is herself a free being, or even a being capable of volition. She is the City of God, bride of Christ, and man's Christian Liberty, to be sure, but that is only in Eden, and even there she does not act; she simply is. What happens to Jerusalem within the body of the poem at no point involves her in action or in protest. At its outset she is withheld by Albion from "the vision & fruition of the Holy-one" (J 4.17) and is accused of sin by Albion and Vala. Unlike Oothoon she does not deny the accusation, nor does she defend her own vision with anything like Oothoon's exuberance. Patiently, meekly, she explains and begs Love and Forgiveness from her enemies. That is her last initiative. Subsequently she is rejected as a whore, cast out, imprisoned, driven finally to insanity, and becomes wholly incapable even of remembering her original self without being reminded of her origins by the voice of her pitying and merciful God. Even this comfort does not help; for at the poem's darkest moment, just before the advent of the Covering Cherub, Jerusalem passively receives a cup of poison from the conquering Vala (J 88.56).

The final movement of *Jerusalem* evokes its heroine twice, when "the Universal Father" speaking through "the vision of Albion" echoes the Song of Solomon:

Awake! Awake Jerusalem! O lovely Emanation of Albion
Awake and overspread all Nations as in Ancient Time

For lo! the Night of Death is past and the Eternal Day
Appears upon our hills: Awake Jerusalem, and come away
(J 97.1-4)

and when the poet's vision of "All Human Forms" is complete:

And I heard the Name of their Emanations they are named
Jerusalem
(J 99.5)

Yet however amorous, however reverential our attitude toward this "persecuted maiden"¹⁷ redeemed, we do not and cannot encounter the "awakened" Jerusalem directly. As *A Vision of the Last Judgment* explicitly tells us, and as the whole of *Jerusalem* implies, "In Eternity Woman is the Emanation of Man; she has no Will of her own. There is no such thing in Eternity as a Female Will" (E 552). If we wonder what the Emanative role in Eternity is, Blake has already told us:

When in Eternity Man converses with Man, they enter
Into each other's Bosom (which are universes of delight)
In mutual interchange, and first their Emanations meet . . .
For Man cannot unite with Man but by their Emanations . . .
(J 88.3-9)

Is femaleness, then, ideally a kind of social glue? Susan Fox argues that although "in his prophetic poems Blake conceives of a perfection of humanity defined by the complete mutuality of its interdependent genders," he nevertheless in these same poems "represents one of these equal genders as inferior and dependent . . . or as unnaturally and disastrously dominant," so that females come to represent either "weakness" or "power-hunger."¹⁸ Anne Mellor has observed that Blake's ideal males throughout the major prophecies are creative and independent while his ideal females "at their best are nurturing . . . generous . . . compassionate . . . all welcoming and never-critical emotional supporters," and that "in Blake's metaphoric system, the masculine is both logically and physically prior to the feminine."¹⁹ But at its most extreme, Blake's vision goes beyond proposing an ideal of dominance-submission or priority-inferiority between the genders. As a counter-image to the intolerable idea of female power, female containment and "binding" of man to mortal life, Blake wishfully imagines that the female can be re-absorbed by the male, be contained within him, and exist Edenically not as a substantial being but as an attribute. Beyond the wildest dreams of Levi-Strauss, the ideal female functions as a medium of interchange among real, that is to say male, beings.

And what are we as readers to make of Blake's contradictions?²⁰ Morris Dickstein, noting the shift from the "feminism" of *Visions* to his later stress on "female Will," calls it "a stunning change that seems rooted less in politics than in the nearly unknown terrain of Blake's personal life."²¹ Diana George believes that Blake became entrapped in a culturally mandated sexual typology which he initially intended to "redeem."²² Although all our anecdotal material about the Blakes indicates that Catherine adored her visionary hus-

band even when he was not bringing home the bacon, much less adorning her in gems and gold, marital friction looks like a reasonable source for many *Notebook* and other poems. Perhaps, too, Blake had a model for Oothoon in Mary Wollstonecraft, whose vigorous equal may not have been encountered in his other female acquaintances after Wollstonecraft's death.²³ At the same time, we should recognize that the shift in Blake's sexual views coincides with other ideological and doctrinal transformations: from a faith in political revolution perhaps assisted or exemplified by Art to a faith in Imagination as that which alone could prepare humanity for its harvest and vintage; from what looks like a love of nature that makes him one of the great pastoral poets in the English language and extends as far as *Milton*, to a growing and finally absolute rejection of nature and all fleshly things; and from an imminent to a transcendent God.

Yet to say that Blake's views moved from X to Y would be an absurd oversimplification. It would be truer to say that X and Y were with him always — like his Saviour — in varying proportions, and that the antagonism between them is the life of his poetry. One of the idols of our tribe is System, a Blakean term signifying a set of ideas bounded by an adhesive inflexible consistency, cognate of the "bounded" which its possessor soon loathes, the "Circle" that any sensible God or Man should avoid, and the "mill with complicated wheels." If "Unity is the cloke of Folly" in a work of art, we might make it our business as critics not only to discover, but also to admire, a large poet's large inconsistencies — particularly in an area like the meaning of sex, where the entire culture, and probably each of us, in the shadows of our chambers, feel profound ambivalence.

If "without contraries is no progression," I think we should be neither surprised nor dismayed to find in Blake both a richly developed anti-patriarchal and proto-feminist sensibility, in which love between the sexes serves as a metaphor for psychic wholeness, integrity, and more abundant life, and its opposite, a homocentric gynophobia in which heterosexual love means human destruction.²⁴ "If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite." What then if we concede that Blake's vision, at least part of the time, was fogged to the degree that he could perceive Man as infinite but could not perceive Woman as equally so? Blake understood that it is impossible for any prophet finally to transcend historical time. He understood so of Isaiah and Ezekiel, he understood the same of John Milton. "To give a Body to Error" was, he believed, an essential service performed by mighty intellects for posterity. We might, with gratitude for this way of comprehending great poetry, see him as he saw his precursors. To paraphrase Emerson and the *Gita*, when him we fly, he is our wings.

¹ Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1947), p. 14.

² Quotations are from David V. Erdman, ed., *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (New York: Doubleday, 1970).

³ I am disagreeing at this point with Morris Dickstein's otherwise excellent essay, "The Price of Experience: Blake's Reading of Freud" in *The Literary Freud*, ed. Joseph Smith (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 67-111. Dickstein (pp. 95-96) sees "The Garden of Love" as "angry polemical simplification," arguing that the speaker "thinks of repression in terms of a very simple etiology: They have done it to him," and that there is no question of "delusion or projection" here. A persuasive reading of the poem's Oedipal dimension is in Diana George, *Blake and Freud* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 104-106.

⁴ For a harrowing account of the phenomenon of the youthful harlot in nineteenth-century England, see Florence Rush, *The Best-Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980), ch. 5.

⁵ W.H. Auden, "Psychoanalysis and Art To-day" (1935), in *The English Auden*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 339.

⁶ Analysis of Freud's rationalist and scientific pessimism, versus Blake's imaginative and artistic optimism, is a primary theme in *Blake and Freud*, which argues that in other respects the two men's diagnoses of western man's psychosexual ills were close to identical. Politically of course Freud remained conservative; the close parallels between Blake and Reich as radical psycho-political thinkers are discussed in Eliot Katz, "Blake, Reich and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*," unpub.

⁷ *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. 1 (Ohio State Univ. Press, 1962), p. 263.

⁸ C.F. Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," *Collected Works*, ed. Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler and W. McGuire, trans. R.F.C. Hull, Bollingen Series (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, Bollingen Series XX, 1967-78), vol. 9, part 1, p. 27. Jung also discusses the anima and the animus "sacred marriage" in "Two Essays on Analytical Psychology" (vol. 7) and "Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self" (vol. 9, part 2). Among his less predictable parallels to Blake is Jung's idea that the anima-animus marriage is always accompanied and completed by the figure of a Wise Old Man — who I am ready to presume is "Old" in the same sense that Albion is an "Ancient" Man; i.e., he is Urmensch, not elderly. Among the critics who identify anima with emanation are June Singer, *The Unholy Bible: A Psychological Interpretation of William Blake* (New York: Putnam, 1970), p. 212, and W.P. Witcutt, *Blake: A Psychological Study* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1946), pp. 43ff. Christine Gallant, in *Blake and the Assimilation of Chaos* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978) disagrees, arguing that although "the anima in Jungian psychology is a personification in a symbol, or in an actual human being, of those aspects of his unconscious of which a man is most ignorant, usually his emotional, irrational qualities," Blake's emanations are not animae because "if they were . . . they would have characteristics as differentiated as those of their Zoas" (pp. 53-54). It is my contention that they do. Although Jung in general diverges from both Freud and Blake in uncoupling psychological issues from socio-historic ones, he departs from Freud and coincides with Blake in at least three major respects: his insistence on the validity of spirituality in human life, his belief in a collective unconscious, and his relatively non-phallogocentric exploration of female identity.

⁹ That Deucalion-Pyrrha and the Noahs are flood-survivors who renew the human race, and that the fallen Tharmas-Enion are identified with water and Tharmas in Night III struggles to take on Man's form, is a coincidence I do not pretend to understand but feel obliged to notice. My *primary* point here is that these couples are all parental, and all naive. The relation of Dickens' Gargery to Tharmas and Enion seems to me particularly charming in that Joe Gargery is rather a perfect Tharmas throughout, but is given two wives by Dickens—as it were to parallel the quarrelsome and the redeemed Enion.

¹⁰ Gallant (p. 54) notes the Poseidon-Demeter/Tharmas-Enion parallel (another coincidence) and points out that the questing Demeter disguised herself as an old woman.

¹¹ See, for example, Mary Daly, *Beyond God The Father* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), Marcia Landy, "The Silent Woman," in *The Authority of Experience*, ed. Arlyn Diamond and Lee Edwards (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1977), Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1980), chaps. 1 and 2. The contention of these and other feminist writers in America, England and France is that western religion and philosophy, by consistently associating power and authority with masculinity, have deprived women of access to authoritative speech and muted their ability to "voice" female experience authentically. The critique of rationalism in such works for the most part tallies very well with Blake's.

¹² Ophelia's selfless "O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown" speech nicely resembles Ahania's memory of "those sweet fields of bliss / Where liberty was justice & eternal science was mercy (FZ III.39.12-13). Later, when Hamlet has rejected her and slain her father (cf. Urizen's rejection of Ahania and his defiance of Albion), Ophelia's "speech is nothing." Both Ophelia and Gretchen, of course, express profound admiration for their lovers' intellects.

¹³ Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (1933; rpt. Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1956) pp. 28ff, 189ff. Among Praz' many valuable observations is a remark on Ste.-Beuve which is particularly relevant to the Vala-Jerusalem relationship: "Whenever it happens that a writer feels admiration for [female] passionate energy—particularly if this energy have fatal results . . . it is always the diabolical . . . who ends by occupying the whole stage and causing her angelic rival . . . to appear a mere shadow" (p. 191).

¹⁴ Irene H. Chayes, "The Presence of Cupid and Psyche," in *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, ed. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 214-43.

¹⁵ Morton D. Paley, *Energy and the Imagination: A Study of*

the Development of Blake's Thought (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 90.

¹⁶ A partial exception is the prophetic figure of Erin in *Jerusalem*, yet in a sense Erin is an exception that proves the rule; for though her voice is inspirational without passivity or subordination, she remains undeveloped as a character, lacking the internal struggles and self-transformations of the other major figures in the poem.

¹⁷ The term is from Praz, who suggests Clarissa and Sade's Justine as two examples of the type.

¹⁸ Susan Fox, "The Female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry," *Critical Inquiry* 5 (Spring 1977), 507.

¹⁹ Anne K. Mellor, "Blake's Portrayal of Women," in this issue.

²⁰ For some readers, of course, no contradiction worth noticing exists. Consider, for example, the following: "Some modern women may have much to object to in Blake's latest thought about the relations between the sexes. But it is hard to believe that *l'homme moyen sensuel* would reject the hearty bread and full-bodied wine the late Blake is offering him. Or his wife either, for that matter: 'let men do their duty & the women will be such wonders.' " Such is Jean Hagstrum's pleasant conclusion in "Babylon Revisited, or the Story of Luvah and Vala," in *Blake's Sublime Allegory: Essays on The Four Zoas, Milton and Jerusalem*, ed. Stuart Curran and Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1973), p. 118. David Aers, in "William Blake and the Dialectic of Sex," *ELH* 44 (1977), 500-14, feels that in *Visions* Blake "may have slipped toward an optimistic, idealistic illusion in his handling of Oothoon's consciousness. The illusion lies in assuming that revolutionary consciousness can ever be as uncontaminated by dominant structures and ideologies as Oothoon's appears to be" (p. 505). By stressing female will in later poems, Blake "is casting out the vestiges of optimistic delusions," having discovered that "it is utopian and undialectical to imagine a female consciousness like Oothoon's" (p. 507). Since Aers does not seem to reflect that Oothoon's inventor himself must have been as "uncontaminated" as his invention, and that Los in *Jerusalem* seems likewise, I take Aers' position to be that we can believe in a male uncontaminated consciousness but that it is undialectical to believe in a female one.

²¹ Dickstein, pp. 77-78.

²² *Blake and Freud*, chap. 6, includes this argument in a larger discussion of Blake's treatment of "the feminine."

²³ See Alicia Ostriker, "Todd, *Wollstonecraft Anthology*," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 14 (1980-81), 129-31.

²⁴ The mirror image of this view appears in a number of contemporary lesbian feminist works. See, for example, Griffin, pp. 207-27.