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R E V I E W

Margaret Storch, Sons and Adversaries: Women in William Blake and D. H. Lawrence

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balance: it redeems and embraces much more than struggles with the oppositions with which it is in a contrary relation. It seems to me that the difficulty here is that Derrida and Kierkegaard represent a much more vigorous and unruly contrary than Adams is prepared to contemplate, one moreover that is not at all content with being brought in as the other or the opposite (9).

Second, it seems to me that the twin emphasis on the self and the expressive power of language is itself part of an American reworking of romanticism that dates back to Emerson and Thoreau. From the southern hemisphere, and no doubt from the third world, it is difficult not to see the contemporary versions of this ideology as bearing the signature of the powerful. In the late twentieth century America is surely one of the few nations to have the economic and military power necessary to make this kind of view of the self and language at all plausible. Adams' view of the antithetical is of course one that would lodge the antithetical and the self at the very center of resistance to the institutionalized oppositions which make up the nation-state. My concern is that it is here, at the very point where, presumably, Adams would want to locate a break from the expanding and contracting energies of the radical and progressive synecdoche, and so separate the individual from the mass, that the part/whole relation of synecdoche is most strikingly evident. It is perhaps not merely repeating the obvious to say that there is a self which does not (except perhaps in the mode of false consciousness or of dream) experience its relation to the world as one of radical and progressive synecdoche. For this self, synecdoche can be reinscribed as a vehicle of alienation, a process in which the part has no option but to inhabit the whole and where the whole haunts the spaces of the part. Moreover, I suspect there are others who would experience Adams' mutuality, his relation of identicality, and his "sympathetic expansive identity to include the other" (49) as being not readily distinguishable from assimilation and appropriation.

[1] Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985) 40.

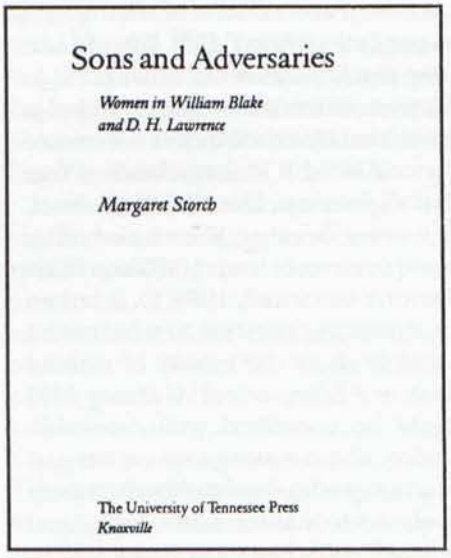
[2] Paul de Man, "Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image," in *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Norton, 1970) 65-77, 69.

[3] Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *Lacan: The Absolute Master* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991).

Margaret Storch. *Sons and Adversaries: Women in William Blake and D. H. Lawrence.* Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990. xviii + 226 pp. $28.95.

Reviewed by Nelson Hilton

As the title allusion suggests, this book contends that Blake and Lawrence were not so much the lovers as the adversaries of their mothers, and that their works fundamentally reflect—as they were fundamentally affected by—this fundamental relationship. The argument assumes the pre-oedipal dynamics of early object-relations—i.e., infant and mothering "object"—as posited initally by Melanie Klein. Almost with birth, according to Klein's model, the incipiently organized infant ego is in effect "split" by distinct relations with "good" and "bad" states which concern primarily the breast as metonym for the all-important experience of nourishment. To conceptualize the "bad," one must imagine that, from an ostensibly infantile perspective, just as the gratification of a successful feeding represents incorporation of a good object, so the frustration of hunger is by analogy not privation, but the active incorporation of a bad object (a prime example of Freud's idea that the unconscious doesn't recognize "no"). Klein labels this earliest state of a split ego threatened in its fantasy with anxiety over annihilation by the bad object the "paranoid-schizoid position" ("position" rather than "stage" to emphasize that these psychological states are never completely passed, but persist in the unconscious throughout life). Attempting in fantasy to eliminate the bad and save the good within a renewed ego-integration, the infant self resorts to a dynamic of "projective identification" by which it aggressively spits out or projects the internal bad feeling and identifies it with an object, like the ubiquitious breast.



But if reality is at least barely adequate, at the age of three or four months this schizoid adaptation runs into the new perception that good and bad breast belong both to the same "whole object" mommy. In the ensuing "depressive position," the infant begins the life-long attempt to work through ambivalence as it encounters helplessness, jealousy, anxiety that its aggression now could potentially annihilate the object on which it hates to depend,

and, at last, guilt over its aggressive fantasies. With, again, at least barely adequate reality, the depressive position gives rise to dynamics of "reparation" or efforts to spare the object or compensate it for, restore it from earlier fantasized attacks. Creative activity such as art can be seen as the attempt of the later, more coherent ego to make reparation to the archaic internalized object—an activity which, given the always ongoing, co-existing "positions," includes the recurring expression of aggressive fantasies as well.

Ambivalence is thus the hallmark of Melanie Klein's theories and the states they serve to address. And reading Blake with a psychoanalytic understanding of "denial," it is hard not to see his "Definite & Determinate" dicta as covering a fear of the amorphous and ambivalent. So Storch can find in Blake "an urgent concern with concrete containment, working against another set of images that reflect a fear of being contained and a dislike of what seems vague or undefined" (78). Edward Larrissy reaches much the same point in his post-structuralist reading, and suggests "that Blake's firmness is meant to conceal what it in fact reveals: a fear that all firmness, like all definite form, is limiting because it excludes other possible views or forms" (*William Blake* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1985] 6). It is then an interesting question to what extent "anxiety about the activity of making form in a fallen world" (Larrissy 133) might be correlated with ostensible anxiety about making love on the part of an artist who, reports Storch, "rarely deals with mature adult love, and [whose] male characters are incapable of mature love" (73). If the resolution of ambivalence entails the embrace of limits to reality and expression, perhaps such maturity would be a contradiction in terms for "the greatest radical poet in England" (Larrissy 3). But, having located in Blake "a 'bad' *bound* and a 'good' *bound*" (Larrissy 88), it is tempting, certainly, to posit a radical ambivalence relating to primal bonds. Already 25 years ago Beverly Field: argued that

> for Coleridge, as for Blake and Lawrence and Eliot, all women are one woman; it is only their disparate aspects, as projections of his ambivalence, that people the drama of his verse: the women are either "good" mothers or "bad" mothers or involuntary confusions of the two, and their "goodness" or "badness" is always intensified beyond any concern with the representation of reality. (*Reality's Dark Dream: Dejection in Coleridge* [np: Kent State UP, 1967] 64)

Storch believes that "Kleinian theory" has the capacity "to probe the *most fundamental* layers of the psyche" (xiii), and her concern with the elemental and basic shows up at every turn (emphasis added throughout this paragraph): "The male experience of the female as cold and rationalizing," for example, "is a repetition in the adult sphere of the *fundamental* pain and fear experienced by the infant at the loss of close sensory contact with the mother" (6); these are related to "*fundamental* feelings of attachment and dependence" (114) since "the *fundamental* situation giving rise to anxiety is the mother's withdrawal of nurturance and the infant's own overwhelming feelings of aggression against its mother in a state of frustrated desire" (8). Though art does not "reveal its *fundamental* impetus so readily," "Kleinian theory . . . leads us to *the truest* meaning" (98) and the realization that "creative art is *the most genuine and accurate* reflection of the inner psyche" (xiv—though "greater artistic assurance tends to mask the raw state of the feelings" [25]). With regard to Blake, Storch sees everywhere, as in Night 7 of *The Four Zoas*, "the *more fundamental* power of the mother" (82), and, as in "The Mental Traveller," "the *truer and more fundamental* infant . . . full of aggression" (88). All of this works toward the conclusion that Blake "is *fundamentally* concerned with male well-being; his redeemed people arise in the image of man, within whom the female is safely contained" (66).

Storch introduces what she terms the "mechanism of inversion" (7) as the "fundamental" psychodynamic behind the many conversions and transformations of affect that underlie her argument. "Inversion"—which doesn't appear in any of the indexes to Klein's works—appears to be standing in for Klein's key concept of "projective identification," whose importance earns it the lengthiest entry by far in R. D. Hinshelwood's *Dictionary of Kleinian Thought* (London, 1989). Curiously, even though the term "inversion" is used throughout Storch's book, neither the word nor its cognates appear in the book's index. "Projective identification," on the other hand, does not appear on any of the ten pages indexed for it (including five specified in connection with Klein). Through the operation of "inversion, resentment for the aggressive mother is transformed into the feeling that it is she who is insubstantial and abstract" (7). But, similarly, the infant "inverts the experience [of his hatred] and forms a primitive image of a vengeful maternal superego who inflicts upon him the punitive aggression that matches his own" (47). So, in the *Songs*, recurrent images of lost children and children suffering parental cruelty "are a reflection not so much of direct cruelty on the part of the parents as of the child's inversion of his own unbearable aggression against them" (25). But given "the fundamental situation" already described, the infant's aggression is itself an inversion of its anxiety over frustrated desire and lack of nurturance. The "inner psyche" which creative art reflects so genuinely and accurately (xiv) dissolves into inversions and their inversions. Just as Storch can find the "apparent meaning" of a novel "inverted" (130), one might be tempted to invert her work and find creative art the "genuine and accurate reflection" of achieved conscious insight.

A book whose subtitle promises to consider "Women in William Blake" and which privileges the poet's early childhood experience confronts a lack of contemporary data for both concerns. So the index gives only two references to "Blake, Catherine," without even specifying whether the woman

in question is Blake's mother, sister, or wife (the first reference is to the wife, the second to both wife and sister). Reference to the mother who actually did (or didn't) nourish wee Willy seems limited to the passing statement that she "angrily punished" (11) him for visionary claims. The two authorities referred to but not cited for this "anger" are Fredrick Tatham's report of Blake's assertion that "when a Child his mother beat him for running in & saying that he saw the Prophet Ezekiel under a Tree," and, oddly, Gilchrist's account of young Blake's seeing "a tree filled with angels" and "through his mother's intercession" being spared "a thrashing from his honest father, for telling a lie" (Bentley, *Blake Records* 519, 7). Noting in Blake's work recurrent "groups of three women . . . associated with the Female Will," Storch contends that "they are a split or disintegrating image of women arising from the dissolution of reality contingent upon the infant's disappointed urge for union with the good maternal object" (75). But even avoiding parallels with the three Norns, Fates, Graces, Parcae, Weird Sisters, contenders for the judgment of Paris, et al., one might speculate that a man with three significant women in his family drama each named Catherine might particularly be drawn in his identifications with the other sex to a threefold image: female Will(iam)—he Kate, in effect, the triple goddess. In which connection one might note that "inversion" as used by psychologists (more in the past than present) refers to homosexuality and assumption of the role of the opposite sex. (Richard Willmott's recent "Oxford Student Text" edition of the *Songs* blandly asserts "Blake's almost 'feminine' sympathy with the simple delights of mothers or nurses in young children" [Oxford, 1990] 115).

The possibility of such inversion of sexual roles makes it difficult to hypothesize "the essential nature of Man and Woman" (19), not to mention the nature of the "Women in William Blake." If "'[t]here is a sense in which the categories Male and Female constitute the whole of reality for . . . Blake'" (19), as Storch quotes from a 1972 dissertation by Michael G. Ballin, there is another in which this polarization and these categories are so broad—so *fundamental*—as to be useless. Then too, the interacting complexities of biological sexual difference and cultural gender difference, difficult enough in themselves to formulate synchronically and diachronically, become still more knotted in the case of Will Blake, who writes "For the Sexes" at the same time as he imagines that "Man in the Resurrection changes his Sexual Garments at Will" (*J*61.51—note the capital "W," not in Erdman, Bentley, or Keynes, but obvious in photographic copies and printed by Sloss and Wallis).

Given the "hint" Storch retrieves from the song about "old corruption" in *An Island in the Moon* concerning "a phallic mother whose breast appears to the child to be a penis" (33), one might contemplate a reciprocal inversion which would see the more nurturing papa who prompts the hint as a delphic father (Gk. *delphus* "womb") whose penis appears a breast. At any rate, meditating on Klein's "equation 'breast=penis'" ("The Oedipus Complex in the Light of Early Anxieties") offers an effective introduction to the world of object relations. These possibilities are particularly relevant in reading *Milton,* whose two designs intimating fellatio (45 and 47 in *The Illuminated Blake,* noted by W. J. T. Mitchell in 1973) jibe with the poem's seminal matrix of Ololon as "a sweet River, of milk & liquid pearl" (Storch's argument suffers from following the 1982 Erdman text which misprints "mild" for "milk"). Storch describes the central theme of *Milton* as "the son's assimilation of strength from an ideal father" (157), an assimilation which can entail the fantasy of "phallic union" between the two (166). We might hypothesize further that this split-off idealization is in part a defense against and a compensation for "the loss of close sensory contact with the mother" (6)—as Klein writes, "the father . . . is accused of having taken away [i.e., and possessed himself of] the mother's breast and the mother" (*Envy and Gratitude,* sect. iv). And if this "Maternal Loss" (the "Patterns" of which are the subject of two chapters) could itself be thematized, personified, and consciously recognized by the creative artist for the fantasy, imagination, and solace it can engender, perhaps one would not be surprised to see it called . . . Los. As Storch also says of *Milton,* "a crucial moment of self-realization for Blake" occurs "when the spirit of Los . . . becomes one with him" (21-22). To transform a sense of loss into "the creative power" (143) would be an inversion fundamental enough to open possibilities of a Maternal Los and a Female Will, a clitoral imagination in Blake's vision of words, and, finally, a world where "Sexes must vanish & cease / To be. When Albion arises from his dread repose" (*J*92.13-14).

In its fundamentalizing, categorizing, and essentializing; its recourse to special pleading (see, for example, pertinent *Concordance* citations against the claim for "[t]he unusual use of the word 'parent' . . . to refer to a place" [132]); in its theoretical reconsiderations using schemes where one thing too easily inverts to another; in its lack of hard scholarship (neglecting the colloquial reference of "Old Corruption," for instance), of textual exactness, and of wide reference to contemporary object-relations theory, this is, as regards Blake, a provoking piece of work. But for the issues it raises and the implications these suggest, *Sons and Adversaries* is unambivalently provocative indeed.