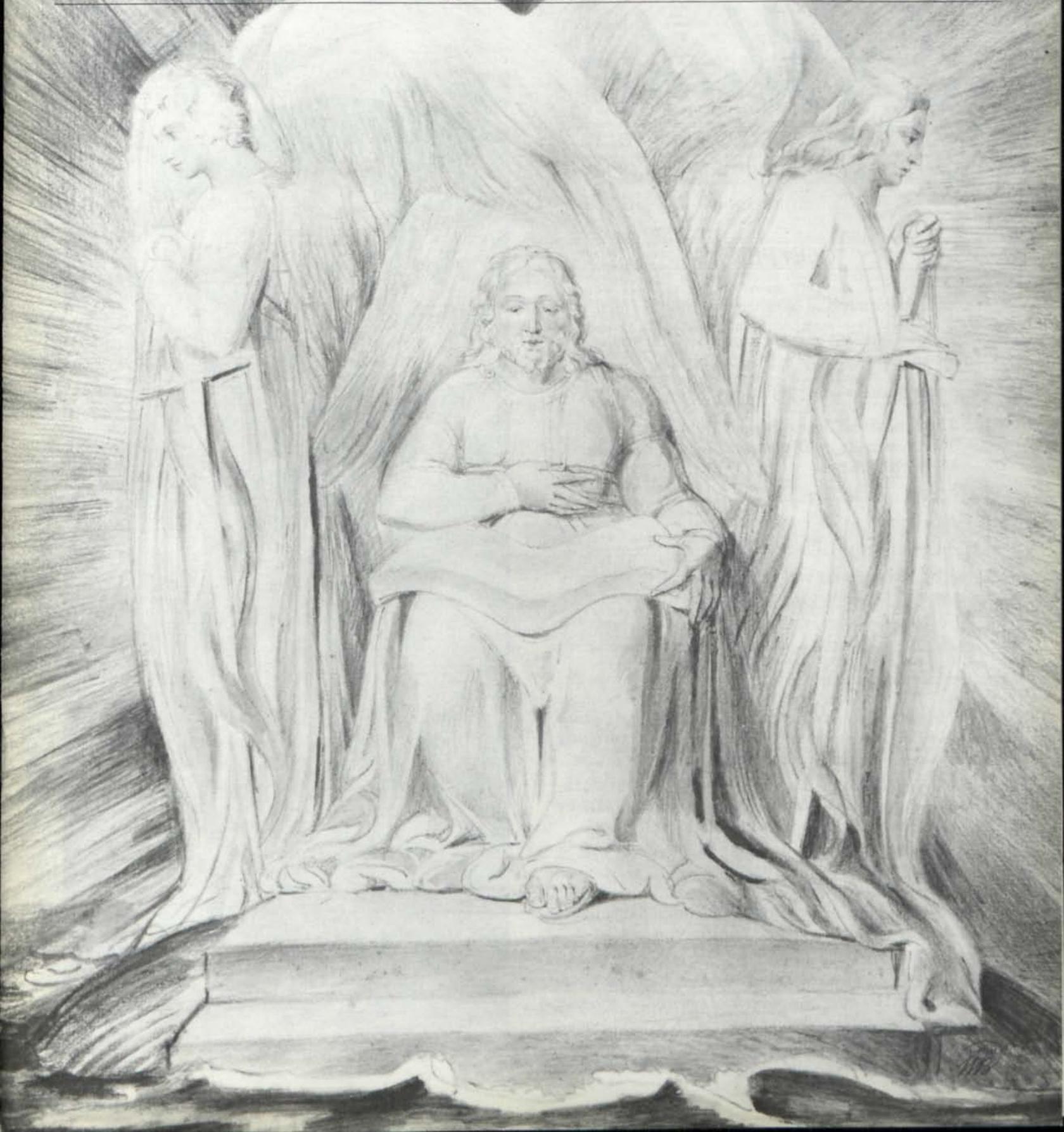


Blake

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VOLUME 16 NUMBER 3 WINTER 1982-83



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Blake's Portrayal of Women

BY ANNE K. MELLOR

In Eden or Eternity, as Los says in *Jerusalem*, the human form divine is both male and female:

When in Eternity Man converses with Man they enter
 Into each others Bosom (which are Universes of delight)
 In mutual interchange, . . .
 For Man cannot unite with Man but by their Emanations
 Which stand both Male & Female at the Gates of each Humanity
 (J 88:3-5, 9-10; E 244)

Focusing on such lines as these, critics have hailed Blake as an advocate of androgyny, of a society in which there is total sexual equality. Irene Tayler has acclaimed Blake's revolutionary attack on the limited sex-roles of a patriarchal culture and emphasized that in Blake's liberated Eternity, "there are no sexes, only Human Forms,"¹ forms that experience no divisions between male and female but exist as "one will."² And Michael Ferber, after discussing Blake's idea of brotherhood as a viable political utopia, insists that "Blake's fraternity seems not to exclude women" and that "most of Blake's female figures are symbols of mental states or their projections that can be found in any mind, male or female."³

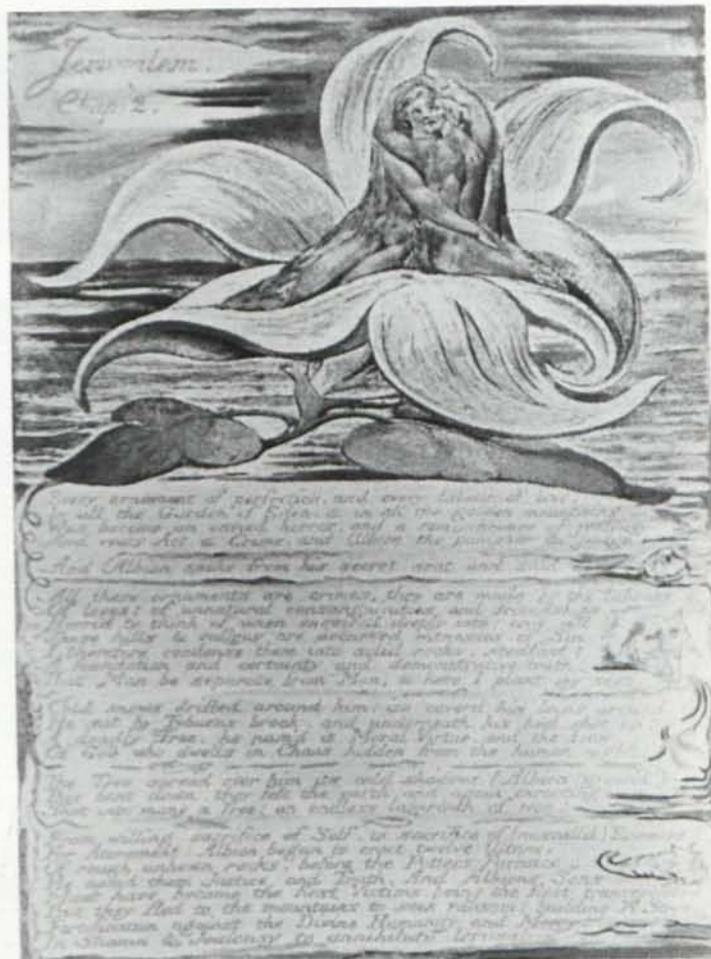
But such attempts to read Blake's Eden and the four-fold Man as genuinely androgynous are belied by Blake's consistently sexist portrayal of women. The poetic and visual metaphors that Blake develops and uses throughout the corpus of his work typically depict women as either passively dependent on men, or as aggressive and evil. As Susan Fox has persuasively shown in her fine essay on "The Female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry," Blake portrays the female gender "as inferior and dependent (or, in the case of *Jerusalem*, superior and dependent), or as unnaturally and disastrously dominant. Indeed, females are not only represented as weak or power-hungry, they come to represent weakness (that frailty best seen in the precariously limited "emanative" state Beulah) and power-hunger ("Female Will," the corrupting lust for dominance identified with women)."⁴ Blake's theoretical commitment to androgyny in his prophetic books is thus undermined by his habitual equation of the female with the subordinate or the perversely dominant. As I shall try to show, in Blake's apocalyptic human form divine, the female elements continue to function in subordination to the male elements.

Susan Fox has already pointed out that Blake's heroines are consistently passive. Thel lacks the will to confront the

fallen world of Experience and try to redeem it. The more courageous Oothoon lacks the power to break her lover's or her society's mind-forged manacles; thus she is, despite her liberated vision, an impotent revolutionary. Ololon, however eager she is to give up her virginity and to unite with Milton, remains a submissive Eve. And *Jerusalem* can only wait patiently for Albion to acknowledge her love and embrace her; her redemptive role in the poem is circumscribed by male choices and responses. Blake's attack on domineering women—on Rahab, Tirzah, Vala, Leutha, the Enitharmon of *Europe*, and all those women whom he denounces as embodiments of the "Female Will"—is overt and repetitive. In a typical passage, Los urges Albion to rebel against the power of the female:

. . . 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!
 Albion is the Tabernacle of Vala & her Temple
 And not the Tabernacle & Temple of the Most High
 O Albion why wilt thou Create a Female Will?
 (J 30[34]:25-31; E 175)

Blake identifies the Female Will with the vision of the materialistic world as all-sufficient, and thereby re-energizes the patriarchal association of woman with nature. Woman has traditionally been seen as the mother, the womb, the land, earth: she is always fertile, passively waiting to be "plowed and to crop." Blake implicitly affirms this image of the woman as passive earth-mother by presenting its alternative, the aggressive, independent woman, as someone who thwarts imaginative vision (by insisting on the primacy of the five senses) and at the same time frustrates sensual pleasure (by chastely denying man sexual satisfaction in order to gain power over him). Moreover, Blake's depiction of the Female Will as a division from the harmoniously unified individual further reinforces the Biblical and Miltonic image of the woman as created from the ribs of the man. Since Blake identifies the Female Will with egoistic selfhood, he implies that women should have no existence independent of men. "He for God, she for God in him," proclaimed Milton in *Paradise Lost*, and Blake says much the same thing in *A Vision of the Last Judgment*: "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" (VLJ 85; E 552).



Now I wish to suggest some of the specific ways in which the female—as metaphor, as a set of human activities, and as an artistic image—is portrayed in Blake's work as secondary to the male. In Blake's metaphoric system, labor is strictly divided on the basis of sex-gender. Males—or the masculine dimension of the psyche—create ideas, forms, designs; females—or the feminine states of mind—can desire (and thus inspire) these forms but not create them. Instead, the female obediently embodies those ideas or designs in physical shapes and perceptible colors. Here, for instance, is the way that Los and Enitharmon build Golgonooza. Enitharmon first calls out to Los,

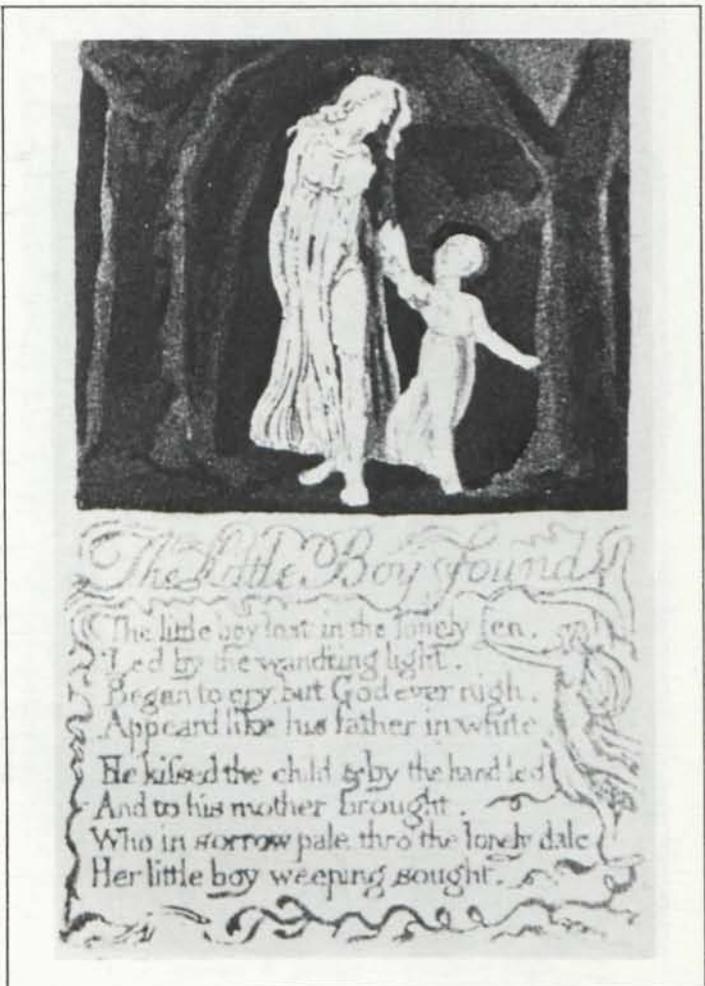
... O Los my defence & guide
 Thy works are all my joy. & in thy fires my soul delights . . .
 . . . I can sigh forth on the winds of Golgonooza piteous forms
 That vanish again into my bosom but if thou my Los
 Wilt in sweet moderated fury. fabricate forms sublime
 Such as the piteous spectres may assimilate themselves into
 They shall be ransoms for our Souls that we may live
 Los then responds:
 . . . his hands divine inspired began
 To modulate his fires studious the loud roaring flames
 He vanquishd with the strength of Art . . .

1. *Jerusalem*, plate 99, copy E, from the collection of Paul Mellon.
2. *Jerusalem*, plate 28, copy E, from the collection of Paul Mellon.

And first he drew a line upon the walls of shining heaven
 And Enitharmon tincturd it with beams of blushing love
 It remaind permanent a lovely form inspird divinely human
 Dividing into just proportions Los unwearied labourd
 The immortal lines upon the heavens till with sighs of love
 Sweet Enitharmon mild Entrancd breathd forth upon the wind
 The spectrous dead Weeping the Spectres viewd the immortal
 works

Of Los Assimilating to those forms Embodied & Lovely
 In youth & beauty in the arms of Enitharmon mild reposing
 (FZ VII, 90:16-17, 20-27, 35-43; E 356)

In this gender-determined division of labor, Los employs the sons "In Golgonooza's Furnaces among the Anvils of time & space" while Enitharmon employs the daughters in the Looms of Cathedron (FZ VIII, 103:35-36; E 361). Men forge, engrave, draw, construct plans; women then add watercolors, weave coverings ("for every Female is a Golden Loom" [J 67:4; E 217]), and actually build the city, the city



3. Jerusalem, plate 28, the Pierpont Morgan Library copy, first state.
4. Jerusalem, plate 28, the Pierpont Morgan Library copy, second state.
5. "A Little Boy Lost," Songs of Innocence, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
6. "Traditio Legis," 4th century mosaic, apse, Mausoleum of Constantina.

that bears a female name, Jerusalem, and serves as the female's ultimate self-realization. The human form divine ultimately is "A Man" (J 96:6; E 253); while the woman is only a garment that clothes, physically embodies—or, more negatively, veils or imprisons—that spiritual form.⁵ In Golgonooza, Los' furnaces rage,

... Creating Continually
The times & spaces of Mortal Life the Sun the Moon the Stars
In periods of Pulsative furor beating into wedges & bars
Then drawing into wires the terrific Passions & Affections
Of Spectrous dead. Thence to the Looms of Cathedron convey'd
The Daughters of Enitharmon weave the ovarium & the integument



In soft silk drawn from their own bowels in lascivious delight
(*FZ VIII*, 104: 4-10; E 362)

And in *Milton*, Orc says that Jerusalem is the Garment of God, a "Garment of Pity & Compassion" (*M 18*:35; E 111).

Further, in Blake's metaphoric system, men prophesy; women then realize that prophecy in historical time and space. Los or Urthona foretells the advent and true nature of Eden, while Cambel and her sisters

... sit within the Mundane Shell:

Forming the fluctuating Globe according to their will

Sometimes it shall assimilate with mighty Golgonooza;

Touching its summits: & sometimes divided roll apart.

As a beautiful Veil so these Females shall fold & unfold

According to their will the outside surface of the Earth

An outside shadowy Surface superadded to the real Surface;

Which is unchangeable for ever & ever Amen.

(*J 83*:33-34, 43-48; E 239)

Men are intellect (at its most abstract and logical, they are intellect as rationalistic "spectres"); women are "emanations," divided from and intended to be finally reabsorbed into the male. And in the rare cases where Blake insists that emanations can be male, he specifically defines the function of such male emanations as subordinate. They play the role of

mediator or reconciler between conflicting ideas or desires. "For Man cannot unite with Man but by their Emanations / Which stand both Male & Female at the Gates of each Humanity" (*J 88*:10-11; E 244). Thus both male and female emanations function primarily to facilitate the greater identity of the male human form divine. Blake's imagery, in all the passages I have been quoting, insists that the masculine principle is prior to the feminine principle and that the female depends upon, serves and reflects the male. As Blake wrote in an early annotation to Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, "the female life lives from the light of the male; see a man's female dependents, you know the man" (E 585). Blake's divine fraternity walk to and fro in Eternity as One Man, conversing in visionary forms dramatic; Blake's females, waiting at home with the children in Beulah, do not.

In Blake's art as well as his poetry, the ideal female is subsumed under the male. In what is perhaps the most striking visual example of this, the liberated Jerusalem on plate 99 (illus. 1) is portrayed so ambiguously that critics have seen this figure both as female and as male. David Erdman endorses the traditional identification of the naked figure as female, as Jerusalem-Britannia, although he also suggests that this figure represents "all youth," both male and female.⁶



7. "Die thronenden Christus," 12th century stone-relief, Benedictine Monastery Petersburg-bei-Fulda, Germany.

8. "Christ the Redeemer," 9th century Carolingian ivory book-cover, Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS. Douce 176).

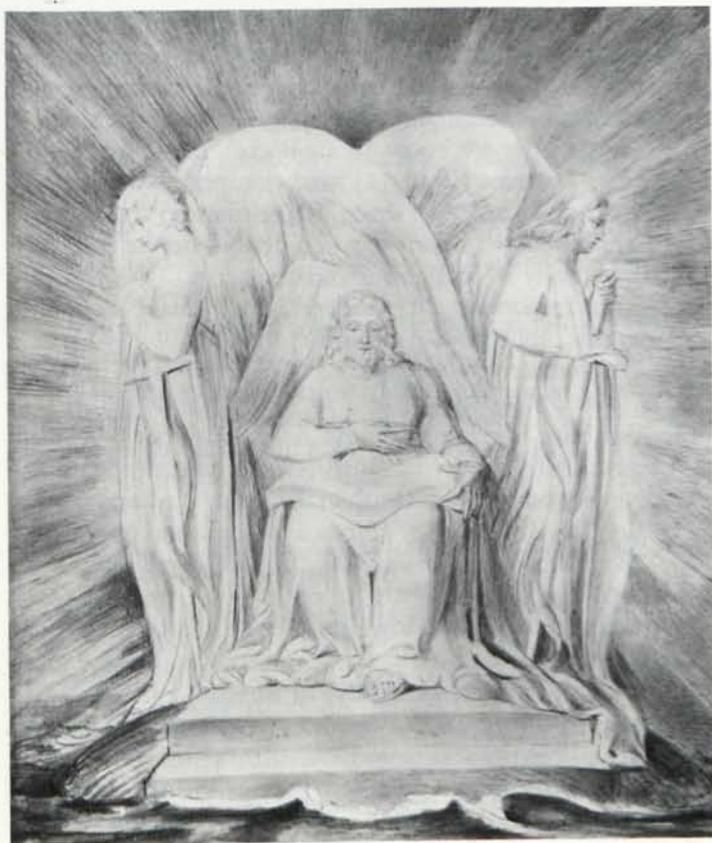


W.J.T. Mitchell also sees the naked figure as predominantly female, locked in a sexual as well as filial embrace with the old man, but he also allows for the possibility that this naked figure is male (as in copy E) or an androgyne.⁷ On the other hand, David Bindman in *Blake as an Artist* initially sees the nude figure as male and describes the scene as "the exultant union between Albion and Christ," although he later qualifies this identification, saying that the naked figure "could be either male or female" while the bearded figure is "either Christ or Jehovah."⁸ One might conclude that Blake has here achieved a triumphant visual image of androgyny. But the point I wish to make is that Blake has presented the ultimately liberated Jerusalem as masculinized, but he has *not* imaged the liberated Albion/Christ/Jehovah as feminized. The long white mustache and beard of a male is prominent in the over-arching, dominating figure of the old man. Here a male nude form has absorbed the female form, but there is no parallel absorption of femininity by the masculine figure.

Such a visual glorification of the masculine human body is of course intrinsic to the Michelangelesque style which

Blake adopted as his icon of heroic energy. When Blake imitated Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel nudes to depict the human form divine, he tacitly endorsed Michelangelo's hostility to the female body as well as his homosexual celebration of the male body. Whether Blake did this consciously or not, it remains the case that Blake's female nudes are so similar to his male nudes that when seen from behind, they often cannot be distinguished from each other. In the controversial case of Plate 28 of *Jerusalem* (illus. 2), Blake seems to have used the same physical image to present in the figure closest to us on our right first a male (in the Pierpont Morgan proof sheet; illus. 3) and then, in the final copy, a female nude (illus. 4).

To the suggestion that Blake did feminize the male figure of Jesus as an alternative image of androgyny, as in the illustration for "A Little Boy Lost" (illus. 5) where the rescuer has been identified both as Christ and as the boy's mother, two counter arguments must be considered. First, in presenting a beardless Christ with long hair and a high-waisted robe, Blake was following an established iconographical tradition,



9. *Christ Girding Himself with Strength*, the City Art Gallery, Bristol.

10. "Christ descending into the Grave," illustration for Blair's *The Grave*.



as seen in these three examples. First (illus. 6) is a fourth century mosaic from the Mausoleum of Constantina at Rome, showing Christ giving the Law to Saint Peter and Saint Paul; the second (illus. 7) is a twelfth century stone-relief of the throned Christ from the Benedictine Monastery in Petersburg-bei-Fulda in Germany; and, from the Bodleian Library in Oxford, the third (illus. 8) is a ninth-century Carolingian ivory book-cover, showing Christ the Redeemer trampling the lion, dragon, asp and basilisk.⁹ In all these examples, Christ appears without a beard and wears a robe with a sash beneath his breast.

Secondly, Blake on several occasions took pains to emphasize the *masculinity* of this image of Jesus, as in *Christ Girding Himself with Strength* (illus. 9) and in his illustration to Blair's *Grave* (illus. 10). Blake apparently valued the male human form as a more powerful image of physical beauty and grandeur than the female form; as he wrote in *Jerusalem*, the masculine is sublime, the feminine is pathos (J 90:10-11; E 247).

I grant that in Blake's New Jerusalem, male and female functions converge harmoniously in total mutual fulfillment, for in Eden "Embraces are Cominglings: from the Head even to the Feet" (J 69:43; E 221). After all, the masculine artistic imagination needs the feminine manifested art-product to complete the artistic process; the prophet needs historical time and space to vindicate his claim to true vision. But such mutual interdependence should not obscure the fact that, in Blake's metaphoric system, the masculine is both logically and physically prior to the feminine. The artist can have ideas to which he does not give manifest artistic form; but no art form can exist without a prior creative idea or impulse. Similarly, one can prophesy without history, but history cannot be understood (or some modern historians would say, even exist) without an interpretative idea, structure or "explanation."

Moreover, Blake consistently refers to his perfected human being as a Man. And while we might agree that Blake is here using Man in the generic sense, to refer to the species



11. Portrait of Catherine Blake, British Museum.

mankind and not exclusively to males, nonetheless he is subtly supporting a patriarchal attitude. Since linguistic usage in many ways shapes our conscious experience, to refer to all human beings as Man or mankind devalues woman.¹⁰ By continuing to use the sexist language of the patriarchal culture into which he was born, Blake failed to develop an image of human perfection that was completely gender-free. A writer who wished to portray a truly androgynous creature or society would have to transform the language we use. Such radical revisions have occurred in literature: Marge Piercy, in *A Woman on the Edge of Time*, uses the pronoun "per" to refer to all persons, irrespective of sex-gender. And Ursula Le Guin develops detailed portraits of androgyny in her science-fiction, both of biological androgynes (in *The Left Hand of Darkness*) and of androgynous societies (on the planet of Anarres in *The Dispossessed*).

We should not condemn Blake for his failure to escape the linguistic prisons of gender-identified metaphors inherent in the literary and religious culture in which he lived. But neither should we hail him as an advocate of androgyny or sexual equality to whom contemporary feminists might look for guidance. Blake certainly recognized the social injustice involved in treating women as property or slaves, as *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* makes clear. But he did not transcend the prevailing patriarchal assumption of his

day concerning the appropriate function of the female. In Blake's art, women at their best are nurturing mothers, generous sensualists, compassionate lovers, all-welcoming and never-critical emotional supporters.

What little we know about Blake's relationship with his wife Catherine (illus. 11) further supports this view of Blake as an unconscious sexist. Blake married the illiterate Catherine Boucher because, when he told her he had been jilted by Polly Wood and asked suddenly, "Do you pity me?" she responded, "Yes indeed I do."¹¹ Blake later came to identify pity with the feminine: in *The Book of Urizen*, the "first female now separate" is called "pity" (18:10, 19:1, E77). Blake shows us in the Tate Gallery color-prints that pity can have both positive and negative dimensions. The compassionate loyalty of Ruth is there contrasted to the divisive pity portrayed as death in the print "Pity" and further explained in *The Book of Urizen* as co-optation by the enemy, "For pity divides the soul" (13:52; E 76). Pity in this sense is what Virginia Woolf later called in *The Three Guineas* a "commitment to unreal loyalties,"¹² a sympathy for the oppressors because "after all, they're human too." The identification of women with pity, as Susan Griffin has emphasized in *Women and Nature*, is a typical metaphor in a patriarchal culture. "It is said," Griffin writes, referring to Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, "that pity is the offspring of weakness and that women and animals, being weaker, feel more pity."¹³ In this context, Darwin's insistence that women are more tender and less selfish than men¹⁴ becomes a subtle form of male dominance, because it encourages women to heed the needs of others over the needs of their own selves.

As far as I can tell, Catherine Blake played the traditional role of the subservient wife in a patriarchal marriage. She was the student (Blake taught her to read and write and paint); she was Blake's unpaid domestic servant—as William Hayley reported, "they have no servant:—the good woman not only does the work of the House, but she even makes the greatest part of her husband's dress & assists him in *his art* . . ."¹⁵ Above all, she worshipped her husband's genius. As Crabb Robinson commented, "She was formed on the Miltonic model—And like the first Wife Eve worshipped God in her Husband—he being to Her what God was to him."¹⁶ However apocryphal, the following anecdote suggests the degree to which Catherine Blake set her husband on a pedestal above ordinary mortals. When the Blakes were living in their small, "squalid and untidy" rooms at Fountain Court, Catherine once excused "the general lack of soap and water" by explaining to George Richmond, "*You see, Mr. Blake's skin don't dirt.*"¹⁷ A woman who could say that of a man—and a painter!—with whom she had lived for forty years could not have lived in an egalitarian marriage nor experienced psychological androgyny. And if Catherine did not regard herself as Blake's equal, it is not surprising that in Blake's *Jerusalem* women—or the female state of mind—do not receive parity with the male. Having had no emotional

experience of sexual equality, Blake was not able to portray such a gender-free androgynous ideal in his poetry and art, where male characters and mental functions both outnumber and take precedence over female figures and functions.

¹ Irene Tayler, "The Woman Scaly," *Midwestern Modern Language Association Bulletin* 6 (Spring 1973), 84.

² p. 86.

³ Michael Ferber, "Blake's Idea of Brotherhood," *PMLA* 93 (May 1978), 446.

⁴ Susan Fox, "The Female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry," *Critical Inquiry* 3 (Spring 1977), 507.

⁵ Morton Paley has studied the image of the garment in similar terms in "The Figure of the Garment in *The Four Zoas*, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*," in *Blake's Sublime Allegory*, ed. Stuart Curran and Joseph A. Wittreich, Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), pp. 119-39.

⁶ David V. Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1974), pp. 378, 375.

⁷ W.J.T. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art* (Princeton: University Press, 1978), p. 214.

⁸ David Bindman, *Blake as an Artist* (Oxford: Phaidon and New York: Dutton, 1977), pp. 180, 183.

⁹ These images are reproduced in, respectively, Pierre Du Bourguet, *Early Christian Art*, trans. Thomas Burton (New York:

Reynal and Co., 1971), p. 129; Robert Berger, *Die Darstellung des thronenden Christus in der romanischen Kunst* (Reutlingen: Gryphius, 1926), fig. 66, p. 111; and E. Baldwin Smith, *Early Christian Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1918), fig. 169, p. 250.

¹⁰ This point has been documented by Wendy Martyna in "What Does 'He' Mean? Use of the Generic Masculine," *Journal of Communication* 28 (Winter 1978) and in "Beyond the 'He/Man' Approach: The Case for Nonsexist Language," *Signs* 5 (Spring 1980), 482-93.

¹¹ Frederick Tatham, "Life of Blake" (c. 1832), cited in G.E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 517.

¹² Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1978; Harbinger, 1963), p. 78.

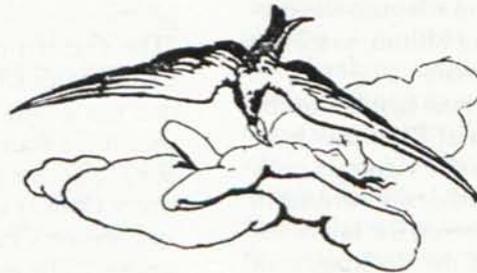
¹³ Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (New York: Harper, 1980), p. 30.

¹⁴ See Darwin, *Descent*, as cited by Eva Figges, *Patriarchal Attitudes* (New York: Fawcett, 1970), p. 112.

¹⁵ Bentley, *Blake Records*, p. 106.

¹⁶ Henry Crabb Robinson, *Reminiscences*, 1852; reprinted in Bentley, *Blake Records*, p. 543.

¹⁷ Mona Wilson, *The Life of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 331n; cf. Bentley, *Blake Records*, p. 294; "squalid and untidy" is Crabb Robinson's phrase.



Desire Gratified and Ungratified: William Blake and Sexuality

BY ALICIA OSTRIKER

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 inclin'd
Lawless wing'd and unconfin'd
And breaks all chains from every mind (E463)²
Abstinence sows sand all over
The ruddy limbs & flaming hair

But Desire Gratified
Plants fruits of life & beauty there (E465)
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 (E466)

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 "sovereyntee" 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 reunited:

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 Ahania: Reason and the Faith or Idealism necessary to it. Early in *The Four Zoas*, Urizen as cosmic architect places Ahania 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 Ahania 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 Ahania, Urizen is Doubt instead of Faith, and degenerates in the course of *The Four Zoas* from Prince of Light, to tyrannic parody of Milton's God, to William Pitt opposing the Bread Bill of 1800, to the Dragon Form of Antichrist. Ahania 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* Ahania 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's 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

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. Wittcutt, *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.

Some Sexual Connotations

BY NELSON HILTON

The last time I taught "To Spring" in California, three students walked out of the class — dramatic confirmation, perhaps, that the poem suggests a correspondence between dew and other genital juices, semen especially: "O thou with dewy locks . . . Come o'er the eastern hills . . . scatter thy pearls / Upon our love-sick land."¹ Spring's "dewy locks" are like those of the "beloved" in the Song of Songs, who says, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of night" (5:2). For the ancient Greeks, dew was a manifestation of Zeus' semen;² so Emile Benveniste can discuss lexical relationships in Greek which suggest that "tiny new born animals are like dew, the fresh little drops which have just fallen,"³ and William Harvey can equate dew with "the Primigenial Moisture" from which "Seed" is made.⁴ This equation is explicit in *Jerusalem* 30[34].3-4: "O how I tremble! how my members pour down milky fear! / A dewy garment covers me all over, all manhood is gone!" By the end of "To Spring," Spring has already come (see *OED* citations from 1650 and 1714), and so quickly that the speaker is left pointing to the country's arborescent "modest tresses" which were bound up.

With "To Summer" things get even hotter as we focus on the presence of Summer *in* the countryside, notably in "our vallies," "our mossy vallies": "Our vallies love the Summer in his pride" (1, 10, 13). We encounter similar content in the "sweet valleys of ripe virgin bliss" and "valleys of delight" of the Lambeth books (*Am* c. 30; *SL* 3.28), evoking, perhaps, the popular etymology, "*Vulva*, as it were *vallis*, a valley."⁵ Such contentment often befalls in the summer, and Summer "oft . . . has slept, while we beheld / With joy [his] ruddy limbs and flourishing hair." Our joy, or jouissance, is that of gratified desire, and it allows us to turn to making songs and using other instruments of joy — in accordance with the notebook quatrain:

Abstinence sows sand all over
The ruddy limbs & flaming hair
But Desire Gratified
Plants fruits of life & beauty there

(E 465)

Such gratified desire is not the lot of the singer who sweetly "roam'd from field to field / And tasted all the summers pride" until he had the misfortune of beholding not the ruddy limbs of Summer but "the prince of love" (Amor does

not roam). In a double bind of lilies and "blushing" (e-)roses, the singer forsakes wide open fields for the *vita nuova* of love's cultivated gardens and golden pleasures. Entering the garden, everything seems permitted: "With sweet May dew's my wings were wet." But the sweet wetness of what one may do in the warmer months evaporates as Phoebus fires "vocal rage" and the singer, now come of age, is caught and caged. Another of Blake's singers feels that whenever he enters the "sweet village" where his "black-ey'd maid" is sleeping, "more than mortal fire / Burns in my soul, and does my song inspire." Just so the first singer now spends his time alone with a prince of love who loves songs first, then "sport and play," and who will at last only mockingly stretch out the singer's now solitary golden wing.

That Blake's "loom" also invokes the "womb" is well recognized; *Jerusalem* even repeats on three occasions that "the female is a golden Loom." The Looms are a main feature of "Cathedron," the textile-mill district of Golgonooza. With its spires and domes Cathedron obviously owes something to "cathedral" — which as a "holy place" also names the female genitalia, the "holy of holies" as a common vulgarity had it — but even more interesting is the word's closeness to the name of the women in Blake's life, his mother, sister, and wife, Catherine. Blake surely knew that the name comes from the Greek "katheros," meaning "pure." In *The Four Zoas* Enitharmon erects Looms, "And call'd the Looms Cathedron in these Looms She wove the Spectres / Bodies of Vegetation" (100.3-4). There

The Daughters of Enitharmon weave the ovarium & the
integument
In soft silk drawn from their own bowels in lascivious delight
With songs of sweetest cadence

"Ovarium" is a curiously technical word to find here, just as "lascivious delight" seems an unusually strong description, though we hear elsewhere of the "sweet intoxication" in which the Daughters ply their looms (*J* 80.80). Going to the Authorized Version and to the Hebrew *rachamim*, "bowels" can also mean "womb," and *Jerusalem* tells us that drawn silk can be a sexual "silk of liquid . . . issuing from . . . Furnaces" (87.19-20). This system can be better understood if we grasp the sexual aspect of "fibres," suggested parenthetically by Jean Hagstrum some years ago.⁶

The correlation linking fibres, worms, and semen has one source in Erasmus Darwin's influential hypothesis that

life originates as a "simple living filament . . . an extremity of a nerve" which is secreted from the parent.⁷ This "filament" could in turn be seen as an instance of "the seminal worms, now so well known [which] were first observed in the male seed by the help of the microscope."⁸ So Orc "like a Worm / In the trembling womb / To be moulded into existence" (*BU* 19.21-23),⁹ appears to be, in part, a materialization of Los' spermatozoon—a vermicular fibre. Ejaculation thus consists in "shooting out"—another common street term ("shooting out in sweet pleasure" [*J* 88.28])—fibres, or, giving the Female Will a superior position, in having fibres "drawn" out. In *Jerusalem* we see Enitharmon like a faint rainbow waving before Los and "Filling with Fibres from his loins which reddend with desire" (*J* 86.51), and in the illustration of plate 85 (illus. 1), one of the fibres handled by the naked Enitharmon leads, evidently, between Los's thighs to his phallos—perhaps the propensity of semen to agglutinate into tenuating strands when handled is one source of its conception as silky "fibre."

Again, when the Daughters are pulling fibres from Albion, as they do all through *Jerusalem*,

Conwenna sat above: with solemn cadences she drew
Fibres of life out from the Bones into her Golden Loom
(*J* 90.21-22)

Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang* reports that "bone" was cockney slang for the erect penis beginning in the mid-nineteenth century,¹⁰ but that is for printed reference, which always lags far behind oral speech. Again, at the end of *Jerusalem* we see Los, himself now "intoxicated," saying

. . . my wild fibres shoot in veins
Of blood thro all my nervous limbs. soon overgrown in roots
I shall be closed from thy sight.

This saturation of sexual reference suggests that Los is being enclosed in genitality, becoming a sort of polyphallos (to keep up with the polypuss) with proliferating "nervous Limbs" and "roots."¹¹ Los' next words are curious in the extreme:

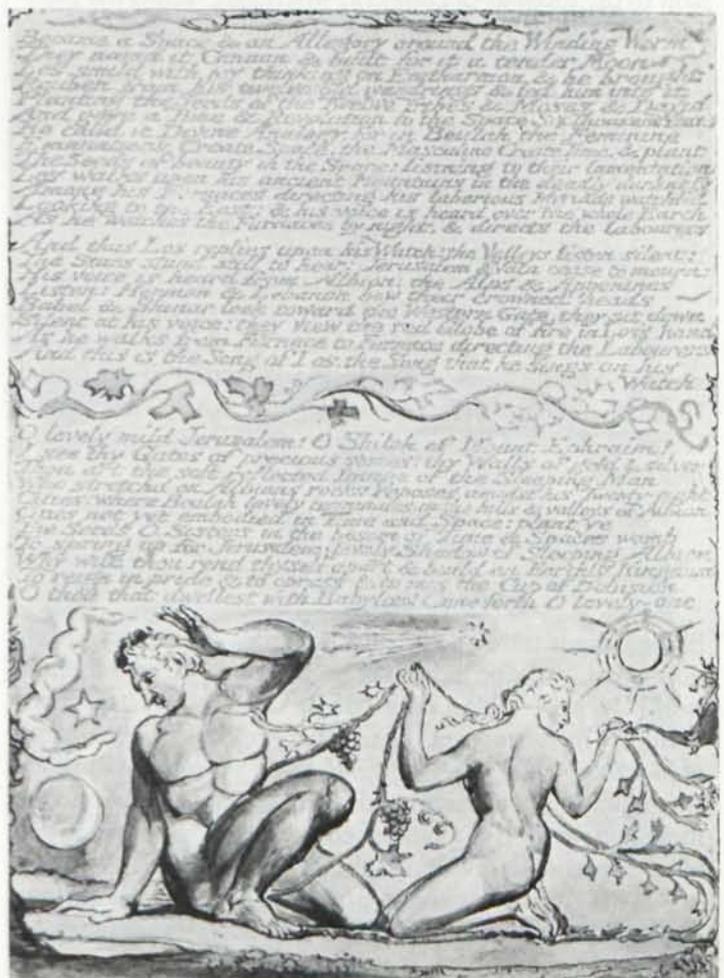
. . . seize therefore in thy hand
The small fibres as they shoot around me draw out in pity
And let them run on the winds of thy bosom
(*J* 87.5-9)

Who is to draw out what in pity? Are the fibres to run on Enitharmon's bosom as before "All day the worm lay on her bosom" (*BU* 19.24)? The passage is striking for the merely suggested quality of a graphic sexual reference. This is perhaps as Blake would have it: actual sexual relations cannot in the first instance fully image imagination, and in the second could not describe the nature of the intercourse between the Daughters and Albion, or Enitharmon and Los. As Los continues, "I will fix them / With pulsations. we will divide them into Sons & Daughters." Division is always sexual: into parts, sections, sects, as the Latin etymology reminds us.

Having alluded to coitus interruptus,¹² it would be fitting to mention Blake's conception of consummation. The word is polysemous: Frye notes its ambiguity "in referring to

the two chief aspects of the Last Judgment, the burning world and the sacred marriage."¹³ But since *Jerusalem* calls "the Loins the place of the Last Judgment" (44[30].38), consummation surely refers to profane marriage as well. Such consummation, it must be observed, is rather futile in Blake: while Orc's parents hope "to melt the chain of Jealousy, not Enitharmon's death / Nor the Consummation of Los could ever melt the chain." Here the standard English sexual euphemisms "death" and "melt" point to the physical nature of the consummation. The chain cannot be melted because it is already part of the body of Los—his phallos is one of the chain's essential links, as apparent in some versions of *Urizen*, pl. 21. Along with the male-female dialectic, there appear to be two kinds of consummation. "No one can consummate Female bliss in Los's World without / Becoming a Vegetated Mortal, a Vegetating Death" (*J* 69.30-31). Such, evidently, is Blake's denigration of physical, "Female," consummation. For male consummation we must turn to *Milton* and another odd episode in Orc's dealings with the Shadowy Female. In *The Four Zoas*, we should first note, it is "in the

1. *Jerusalem*, pl. 85, copy E, from the collection of Paul Mellon.



Caverns of the Grave & Places of human seed" that "The nameless shadowy Vortex stood before the face of Orc" (91.1-2). Here we see that the Female is, in one aspect, the Vortex. George Devereux cites instances from his psychoanalytic practice in which "the hairy vulva is fantasied as a vortex which, by suction, draws the victim into the vagina."¹⁴ This archaic male fear must underlie the intellectual/astronomical fantasy-projection of the "whirls of generation" by means of which, Thomas Taylor reported, souls descend to generation; Charles Cotton's late seventeenth century double-entendre, *Erotopolis*, warns that a man, "if he have not a care, he may chance to lose a limb, swallowed up in a whirl-pit, not without the Effusion of the choicest part of the blood." The Female vortex stands before Orc "that he might lose his rage / And with it lose himself" in the intoxicating consolations of the world of generation. In *Milton*, however, Orc tells the Shadowy Female:

... Behold how I am & tremble lest thou also
Consume in my Consummation; but thou maist take a Form
Female and lovely, that cannot consume in Mans
consummation
(18.27-29)

Orc's sexual "rage" has now turned to an anger which inures him to sexual temptation—a heavy change from the conclusion to the foreplay of *America*, where Orc "seiz'd the panting, struggling womb" of the Shadowy Daughter. Orc's anger comes from the realization that the "nameless shadowy Vortex" has become "Urizens harlot / And the Harlot of Los & the deluded harlot of the Kings of Earth" (FZ 91.14-15)—in other words, Mystery, the whore of Babylon, "With whom the Kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (Rev. 17:2).

"Mans consummation," apparently, is to be "consummated in Mental fires" (FZ 85.46), a cerebral destiny which insures against the possibility that "the Sexual Garments sweet / Should grow a devouring Winding Sheet," that "Sexual Generation swallow up Regeneration" ("Keys to the Gates," 25-26; J 90.37). On the other hand, plate 7 of *Jerusalem* exclaims:

O holy Generation! [*Image*] of regeneration!
O point of mutual forgiveness between Enemies!
Birthplace of the Lamb of God incomprehensible!
(65-67)

Blake's anger, and the contention that "Humanity knows not of Sex," may be located in his reaction against a Pauline world "Where a Man dare hardly to embrace / His own Wife, for the terrors of Chastity that they call / By the name of Morality" (J 44[30].33; 32[36].45-47). It is men who have created rape, fornication, and 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[34].31-32).

This dynamic can be approached through Robert Stoller's recent argument that the underlying cause of sexual excitement is hostility: "it is hostility—the desire, overt or

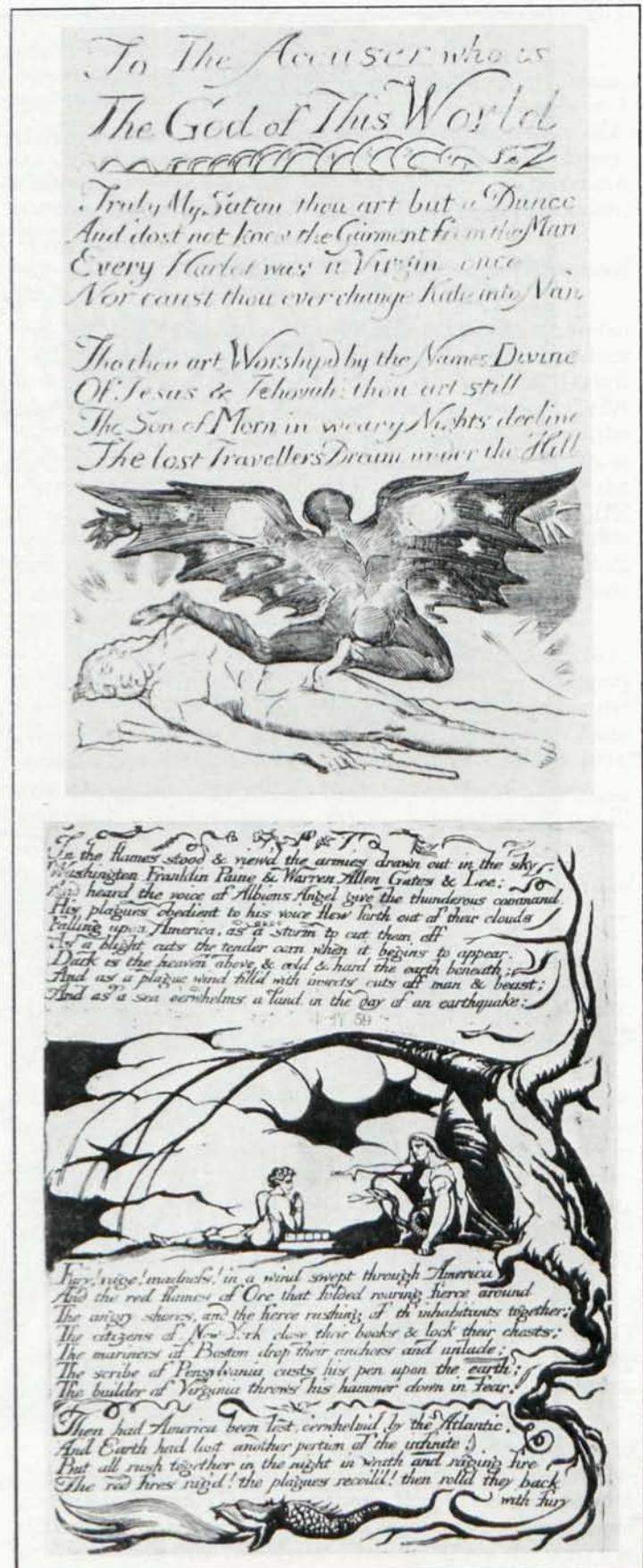
hidden, to harm another person—that generates and enhances sexual excitement. The absence of hostility leads to sexual indifference and boredom. The hostility of erotism [Stoller's term] is an attempt, repeated over and over, to undo childhood traumas and frustrations that threatened the development of one's masculinity or femininity."¹⁵ This analysis-cum-male fantasy finds an analogue in Blake's perception of "Spiritual Hate, from which springs Sexual Love" (J 54.12). For Blake, however, the threatening childhood traumas and frustrations that underlie any hostility and excitement are associated more fundamentally with growing up, particularly growing into the inner hormonal explosion of the world of generation, whose complications are exacerbated by the divisions of gender which are first and foremost culturally instituted. Blake, "Weeping over the web of life," will not accept the basic structures of our experience, and asks us to do the same. As Damrosch notes unsympathetically, "there is no avoiding the realization that [Blake's] ideal for human existence does away with human nature as poets have always described it" (p. 217). Stoller believes further that the hostility is in part expressed through the "mystery" of the body: "the mystery being managed emanates from sexual anatomy." And, he continues, "The point is not simply that in the past a person was frightened by mystery but that, paradoxically, *he or she is now making sure the mystery is maintained* . . . if the appearance [what Blake would call the veil] of mystery does not persist, excitement will fade." A similar understanding is the basis for Blake's indignation. For Blake, the "Sexual texture woven" is the corollary of "the Veil of Moral Virtue, woven for Cruel Laws" which prompts the "eternal torments of love & jealousy." Inexorably, "All the Jealousies become Murderous and unite together in Rahab / A Religion of Chastity," an evolution clearly identified by Mary Wollstonecraft as well. In the sacred rites of Sexual Religion, "the Female lets down her beautiful Tabernacle: / which the Male enters magnificent between her Cherubim" (J 44[30].34-35), but from the perspective of Eden this is just the pompous High Priest entering an empty room behind the veil: a ritual of guilt and atonement rather than the delight of joy and at-onement. Paul Miner, in "William Blake's 'Divine Analogy'" (*Criticism* 3 [1963]: 46-61), is very good on such correspondences between Old Testament references and Blake's sexual context, though his distinction between pompous Atonement and a selfless "propitiatory offering" of coitus seems problematic. What is to be propitiated? It may well be that "no one can consummate Female bliss . . . without Becoming a Generated Mortal," but then, neither can we

behold Golgonooza without passing the Polypus
A wondrous journey *not passable by Immortal feet* . . .
For Golgonooza cannot be seen till having passed the Polypus
It is viewed on all sides round by a Four-fold Vision
Or till you become Mortal & Vegetable in Sexuality
Then you behold its mighty Spires & Domes of ivory & gold
(M 35.19-25, italics added)

Jerusalem shows us "the beautiful Daughters of Albion," and adds, "If you dare rend their Veil with your Spear; you are healed of Love!" (J 68.42). Set amidst graphic passages devoted to the castrating Druidic priestesses, this introduces a countervailing comment identifying phallic penetration with the soldier's spear that pierced Christ's side (John 19:34). The point may be to show that the "love" of which one may be healed, is, as elsewhere in the passage, pride & wrath; Los says, "I also have pierced the Lamb of God in pride & wrath" (FZ 106.55). Fallen sexuality is seen as inextricably bound up with the context of power, the hostile dehumanizing and fetishizing of the "sex-object." Stoller's argument that hostility underlies a prevalent experience of sexual excitement lends Blake's image additional weight. In rending the veil one is healed of a wounding "love" to become, perhaps, like Bromion sated and bored after having rent Oothoon's virgin mantle with his thunders (a scene offering another reference to the Passion and its aftermath). Or, paradoxically, one may indeed be healed of that spurious love (pride & wrath) by experiencing the void behind the rent veil, a "healing" which would at least lead to a potentially saving despair and the eventual discovery of delight in the place of excitement. "Arise O Lord, & rend the Veil!" cries Los in lamentation: only imagination can expose the unprolific mystery of sexual fascination and worship, the anger and projection that constitute "that false / And Generating Love: a pretense of love to destroy Love" (J 17.25-26). Foucault would remind us, as well as Los, that the discourse of sexuality is a social fiction.

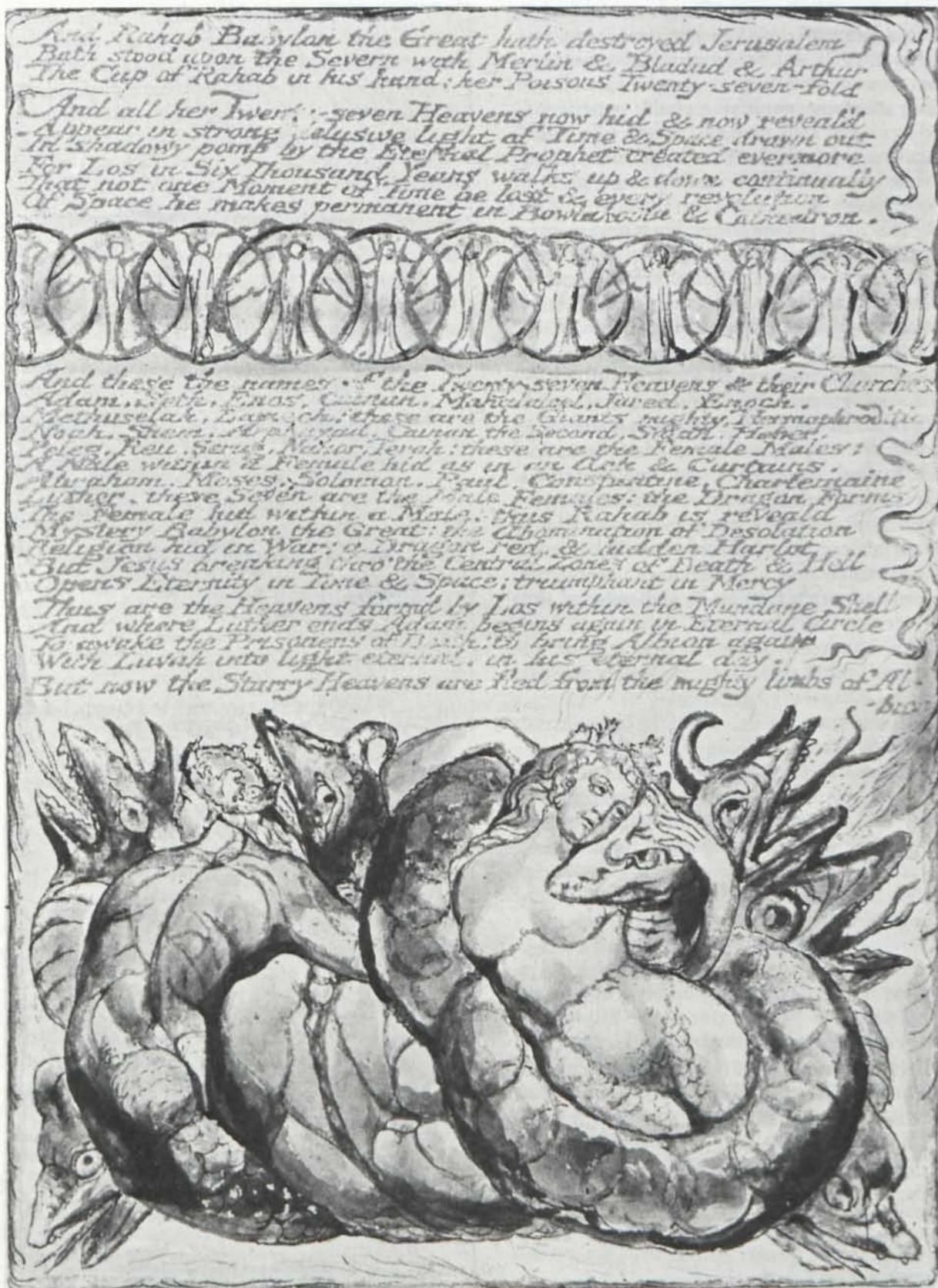
The creation of such a fiction may be seen in the "Epilogue" to *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise* (illus. 2). Here we see the Satanic spectre "that has resided in [the traveller's] breast" now "rising out of the sleeping traveller."¹⁶ Commentators seem to have avoided the obvious fact that the starry spectre's foot is placed to double for the traveller's snaky penis (compare illus. 3) rising in his sleep while the spectre in effect emerges from it. We have, then, a multistable image¹⁷ — a graphic equivalent of the double-entendre — of the fallen lost traveller ready to copulate ("sleep") with his own nocturnal emission ("emanation" — etymologically, a flowing-out), his dream of the starry universe of generation: "The lost traveller's dream under the hill." This visualization of the sleeper's condition is implicit in earlier references to Luvah's "reasoning from the Loins in the unreal forms of Ulro's night," or that while "Albion slept," his "Spectre from his Loins / Tore forth in all the pomp of War! / Satan his name" (J 27.37-39).

Plate 75 of *Jerusalem* offers a different conception in its multistable image (illus. 4). David Erdman suggests that we



2. *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise*, pl. 19, copy D, by permission of the Pierpont Morgan Library.

3. *America*, pl. 14, copy F, by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.



see "probably Tirzah at the left, ending in a fish tail," while on our right is "probably Rahab . . . all woman as far as we can see (yet scaly)" (*Illuminated Blake*, p. 354). But—especially in color—we can see that, combining two scales of perspective, Rahab also terminates in a "tail," that is to say, a life-size representation of the glans penis (ventral view). In words: scales become a masculine coat of mail. Going beyond Géza Róheim's later vision of Aphrodite as "the woman with a penis,"¹⁸ Rahab is Female Will as phallus (perhaps even Will Blake's): "The Female hid within a Male: thus Rahab is reveal'd" (75.18). S/he is not only embracing the serpent, but slipping imperceptibly into its coils as well, "a Dragon red, & hidden Harlot" (75.20). This graphic image should help lift our understanding and visualization of Female Will out of the entangling gender-traps of language which so hamper discussions of it. For Blake, the phallus signifies the fall of us into wandering error, the realm of fallacy ("Raha[b], in an outside which is fallacious!" [M 37.9]).

The enveloping spectre of genital sexuality (identified by Blake in the famous letter of 23 October 1804 as "the enemy of conjugal love") occasions the radical argument of the notebook poem, "My Spectre":

Let us agree to give up Love
And root up the infernal grove;
Then shall we return & see
The worlds of happy Eternity

(67-70)

The "infernal grove" is the site of genital and generative worship, where, as another poem suggests, we "suffer the Roman & Grecian Rods / To compel us to worship them as Gods" (E492).¹⁹ Understanding the sexual reference of this and the other examples presented above, we realize also their limited transitory dimension in the global contest they serve to illuminate. Blake sees the potential of life, particularly of "All-bionic" intersubjective life, as exploited by the forces of generation (like the engendering genetic program) and driven to weave to dreams the sexual strife. These connotations are aspects of an old dream, whose unconscious status denotes that "Sexes must vanish & cease / To be, when Albion arises from his dread repose" (J 92.13-14).

¹ Blake is quoted from David V. Erdman, ed. *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, 3rd printing, rev. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968).

² Géza Róheim, *Animism, Magic, and The Divine King* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1930), p. 95.

³ *Indo-European Language and Society*, trans. Elizabeth Palmer (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), p. 22.

⁴ *Anatomical Exercitations Concerning the Generation of Living Creatures*, trans. (London, 1653), pp. 462-63.

⁵ Helkiah Crooke, *ΜΙΚΡΟΚΟΣΜΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ, A Description of the Body of Man* (London, 1651), p. 175.

⁶ "Babylon Revisited, or the Story of Luvah and Vala," in Stuart Curran and Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., eds., *Blake's Sublime Allegory: Essays on The Four Zoas, Milton, Jerusalem* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1973), p. 107.

⁷ *Zoonomia, or the Laws of Organic Life*, vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1794), p. 489.

⁸ Albrecht von Haller, *First Lines of Physiology*, trans. William Cullen, *The Sources of Science*, no. 32, 2 vols. in 1 (1786); facs. rpt., New York: Johnson Reprint, 1966), sect. 882.

⁹ G. L. Leclerc de Buffon observes in his *Natural History, General and Particular* that "the spermatic worm . . . becomes a real foetus" (trans. William Smellie, 3rd. ed., 9 vols. [London, 1791], 2.137).

¹⁰ Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1961), s.v.

¹¹ "Nerve" is frequent in Latin for the penis (*nervus*), and so used in English by Dryden; this sense appears in Urizen's address to the "bowstring" (one of the word's other meanings) taken from the "serpent": "O nerve of that lust form'd monster" (BA 3.27). In other contexts Blake refers to "the sportive root" and the "delving root," and, in particular, we see the force of Orc as "Enitharmon cried upon her terrible Earthy bed / While the broad Oak wreathd his roots round her forcing his dark way" (FZ 98.7-8). Los says that men "know not why they love," and that their misguided idea of "Holy Love" has "separated the stars from the mountains: the mountains from Man / And left Man, a little grovelling Root, outside of Himself" (J 17.31-32).

¹² Leopold Damrosch, Jr. argues that "Blake . . . dreads [sexual desire's] power because it leads to generation," and suggests that "We cannot be surprised if at times Blake suggests that the proper response is to withhold the desired seed" (*Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth* [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980], p. 203).

¹³ Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (1947; rpt., Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 351.

¹⁴ *Dreams in Greek Tragedy: An Ethno-Psycho-Analytical Study* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976), p. 334.

¹⁵ *Sexual Excitement* (New York: Pantheon, 1979), p. 17.

¹⁶ David V. Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), p. 279, and George Wingfield Digby, *Symbol and Image in William Blake* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), p. 53.

¹⁷ See Aaron Sheon, "Multistable Perception in Romantic Caricatures," *Studies in Romanticism* 16 (Summer 1977), 331-35; Stephen Leo Carr, "Visionary Syntax: Nontyrannical Coherence in Blake's Visual Art," *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 22 (Autumn 1981), 222-48; and Fred Attneave, "Multistability in Perception," *Scientific American*, December 1971, pp. 63-71; "multistability" offers another way of formulating "overdetermination."

¹⁸ See Géza Róheim, "Aphrodite, or the Woman with a Penis," *Psychoanalytical Quarterly* 14 (1945), 350-90; and also Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body* (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 62ff.

¹⁹ Perhaps the arrestingly curious and repeated reference to "the detestable Gods of Priam" in *Milton* offers an oblique allusion to a (castrated?) Priapic pantheon: Priapus becomes polypus (Richard Payne Knight's *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus and its Connection with the Mystic Theology of the Ancients* was published in 1786).

The Embattled Sexes: Blake's Debt to Wollstonecraft in *The Four Zoas*

BY MICHAEL ACKLAND

Our knowledge of Blake's acquaintance with the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft is at once precise and frustratingly incomplete. We know he illustrated, and presumably also read, her novel *Original Stories from Real Life*.¹ We also have evidence in his earlier works, notably in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, that he was influenced by the doctrines she expressed in *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).² Moreover, both writers were frequent visitors at the bookseller and publisher Joseph Johnson in the early 1790s; and would, at the very least, have been known to each through word of mouth. But here the incidents of explicit contact cease.³ On 8 December 1792 Wollstonecraft left for France, where she was to witness the progress of revolution at first hand. Blake's domicile remained England, and there is nothing to indicate that they met after her return to London in 1795. Yet Wollstonecraft's ideas would continue to act as a catalyst in his protracted exploration of embattled sexuality, long after all personal ties between them had been severed.

The possibility of her continued influence on Blake's work, however, has been partially obscured by the illuminated books printed between 1793 and 1795. In these, the emphasis is primarily sociopolitical; and personae often seem more suited to illuminating the larger historical forces at work in the poet's time than the intricate relationship of the sexes.⁴ In particular, the female figure becomes the subject of vast and frequently negative metaphorical expansion, as in *Europe a Prophecy*. There Enitharmon and her daughters can variously represent the all-consuming Female Will, the vegetative world, and the benighted social, moral and religious constructs of man's fallen consciousness. Hence discussions of Blake's debt to Wollstonecraft tend to focus exclusively on *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, where the basic situation, despite its wider sociohistorical implications, is that of a lovers' triangle; and where the heroine Oothoon offers, in word and deed, a Blakean version of major dilemmas articulated in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. But, as I hope to demonstrate, Blake's debt to Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* does not cease there. Instead, his complex treatment of women in the ensuing Lambeth books is closely related to Oothoon's views, and

with them to Wollstonecraft's conception of female potential. Moreover, these ideas are further developed in *The Four Zoas*, where many crucial conceptual links between the works of Blake and Wollstonecraft testify to the enduring impact on him of her impassioned call for harmony, equality and true friendship between the sexes.

Visions of the Daughters of Albion offers evidence not only of Blake's debt to Wollstonecraft but, more importantly, of his capacity to assimilate her ideas into his evolving cosmology. As commentators have noted, Oothoon's description of the negative and positive roles open to her sex seems to draw heavily on the *Vindication*.⁵ In essence, her speeches contrast the prevailing feminine mode of "hypocrite modesty," which transforms love into a possession and the sexes into ravaging beasts, with the female's potential to redeem herself and her surroundings through freely given love:

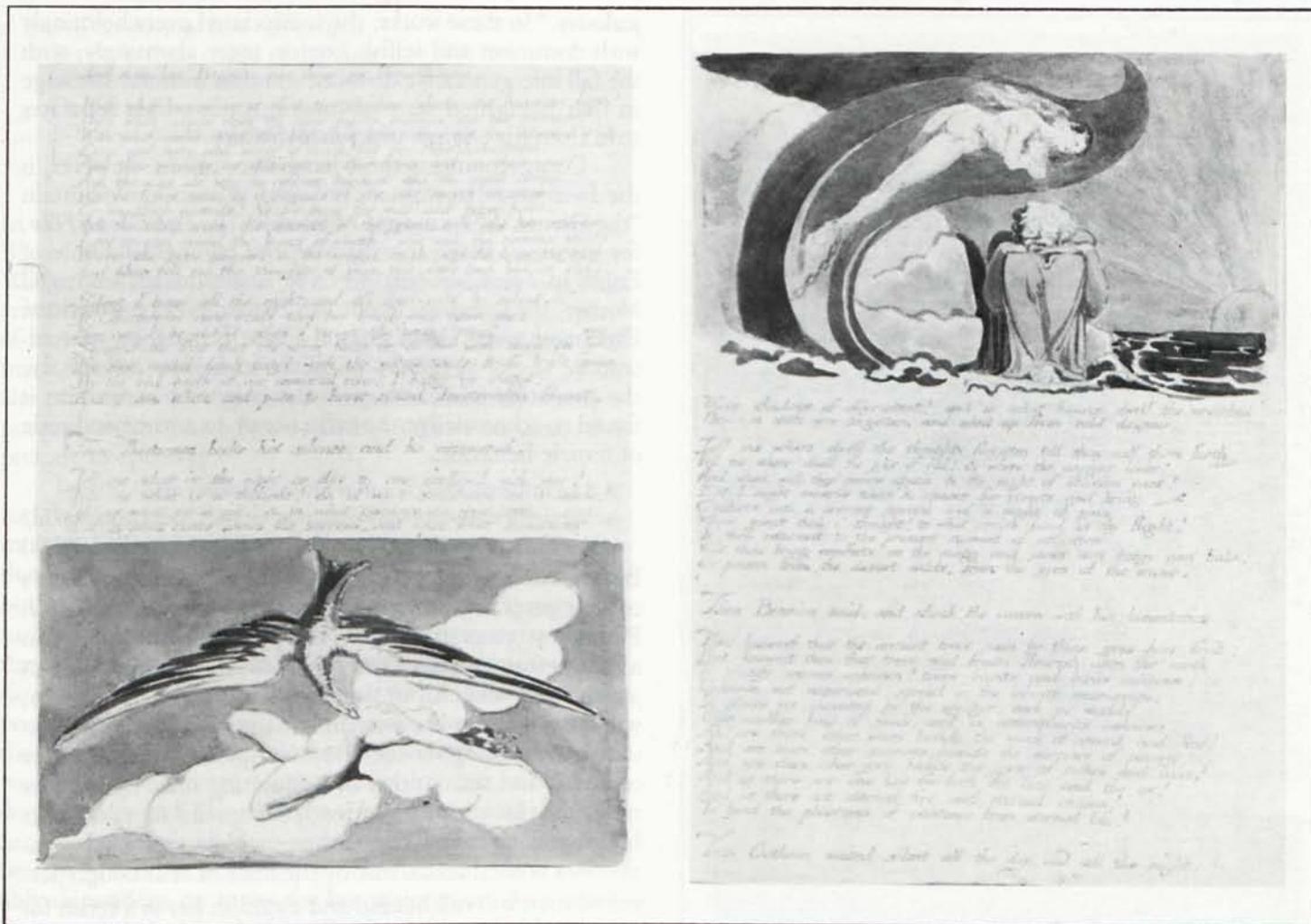
Open to joy and to delight where ever beauty appears
If in the morning sun I find it: there my eyes are fix'd
In happy copulation; if in the evening mild, wearied with
work;

Sit on a bank and draw the pleasures of this free born joy.
(VDA 6:22-23, 7:1-2, E49/K194)⁶

But while *Visions* and the *Vindication* are remarkably similar in their critique of debilitating sexual roles, a clear distinction needs to be made between their characterizations of liberated woman. Wollstonecraft's ideal woman approximates, not Oothoon, but the chaste and disciplined Jane Eyre, whom Charlotte Brontë presents as the equal and devoted companion of her husband. In the *Vindication* monogamy is commended; and the way to emancipation is sought in equal access to education, rather than in what, to Urizenic eyes, must seem Oothoon's advocacy of universal promiscuity.

These conservative views, which tend to separate and repress basic human needs, are ruthlessly exposed in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. There education is inherently sexual,⁷ and one measure of devoted and unselfish companionship is willing complicity in the total sexual freedom of one's partner:

But silken nets and traps of adamant will Oothoon spread,
And catch for thee girls of mild silver, or of furious gold;
I'll lie beside thee on a bank & view their wanton play



In lovely copulation bliss on bliss with Theotormon:
 Red as the rosy morning, lustful as the first born beam,
 Oothoon shall view his dear delight, nor e'er with jealous cloud
 Come in the heavens of generous love; nor selfish blightings
 bring.

(VDA 7:23-29, E49/K194-95)⁸

1. *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, copy A, pl. 3. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

2. *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, copy A, pl. 4.

In the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft's apparent neglect of woman's sexuality is, of course, in part a reaction against the enforced role of the female as a mere instrument for man's sensual gratification.⁹ She thus attacks passionate, physical love as a force which must, and can be, mastered early in a relationship: "a master and mistress of a family ought not to continue to love each other with passion. . . they ought not to indulge those emotions which disturb the order of society, and engross the thoughts that should be otherwise employed."¹⁰ According to her, "love, perhaps, the most evanescent of all passions, gives place to jealousy or vanity" (p. 27); and its unreasonable deification is seen as a major cause of woman's, and more generally mankind's, wretched lot. Blake, characteristically, was able to acknowledge and transcend the partial truth embodied in this view. In *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* perversions do indeed result from such a limited notion of love, but libidinal energy is also pre-

sented as a potentially regenerative force working within a rationally constrained world. Blake's Oothoon may be bound and tortured, but her naked body is nonetheless pictured in sensual and aspiring positions on plates three and four.

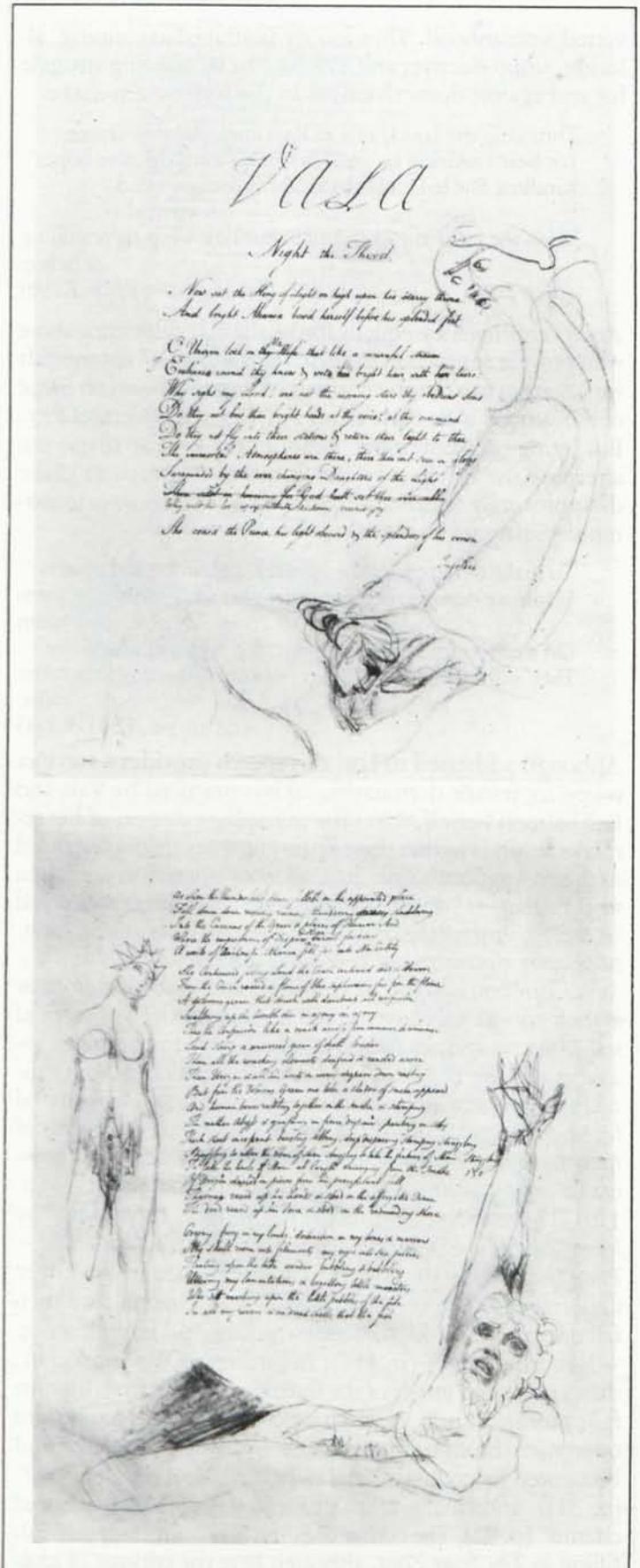
Throughout the Lambeth period, Blake's appraisal of female capabilities remains constant, although their presentation varies according to the scope and aim of the specific work. In *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* the influence of Wollstonecraft is most apparent, because this work, like her own *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, focuses on the perverted relationships generated by restrictive social conditioning. The ensuing Lambeth books, however, are more concerned with developing a coherent cosmology and with exploring the negative effects of mankind's fall. Consequently, the identification of woman with the memory or latent promise of visionary renewal is subordinate to her projection as an active participant in the "torments of love and

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.

(A 5:29-34, 39-47, E88-89/K255)¹⁵

In the works printed between *Visions* and *Vala*, then, Blake divided among separate personae elements of the Wollstonecraftian vision first attributed to Oothoon. This enabled a more flexible and clearly differentiated treatment of female potential, well suited to his wider examination of myth, history, and psychological motivation. The division also prepared the way for that dialectical interplay between positive and negative forces which, in *The Four Zoas*, is a prelude to apocalypse.

By the time Blake began *Vala*, Wollstonecraft's ideas had thus been thoroughly absorbed into his developing cosmology. Consequently, the full and lasting extent of her influence shows itself not in direct echoes or explicit allusions, but in broad and significant areas of conceptual agreement, such as the close resemblance of Blake's characterization of the delusive emanation to the portrayal of woman's severely circumscribed state in the *Vindication*.¹⁶ Wollstonecraft, positing that woman has the same rational potential as man, claims that she receives a limiting education in accordance with the subordinate role attributed to her in a male-dominated world. She is taught to be pleasant and alluring; her single goal is to attract, capture, and then retain a male because, given her lack of any wider education, she is inevitably dependent on males for her sustenance. As a result women are encouraged, either implicitly or explicitly, to be charming, vain, proud, jealous, indolent and, above all, cunning: "that pitiful cunning which disgracefully characterizes the female mind — and I fear will ever characterize it whilst women remain the slaves of power!" (p. 164). Their social and physical weakness leaves them no option but to use their few native weapons, such as beauty, tears and smiles, to overcome their legal oppressors. The result is an undeclared but constant battle between the sexes for command, or as Wollstonecraft explains: "It is this separate interest — this insidious state of warfare, that undermines morality, and divides mankind!" (p. 97). Similarly in *The Four Zoas*, as in earlier works, Blake uses the interaction of the sexes to demonstrate both the fallen, divided state of the original Divine Humanity, and the resulting distortion of all moral principles. Furthermore, his emanations correspond almost point by point with Wollstonecraft's image of per-



5. *The Four Zoas*, p. 37.

6. *The Four Zoas*, p. 44.

Ahania playing the part of a submissive slave, while Urizen's posture and countenance express revulsion.²¹ The implications of this scene are articulated later, when Urizen chastizes Ahania for the perfect obedience which he himself demanded, because he perceives his loathsome self-image in the undistorting mirror she affords:

Thou little diminutive portion that darst be a counterpart
Thy passivity thy laws of obedience & insincerity
Are my abhorrence. Wherefore hast thou taken that fair
form

Whence is this power given to thee! once thou wast in my
breast

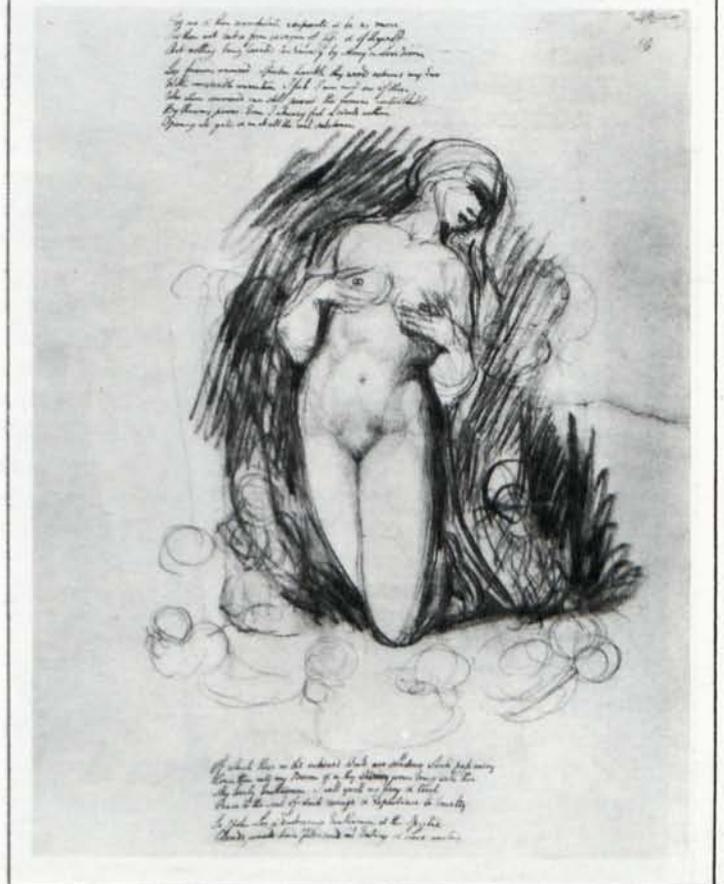
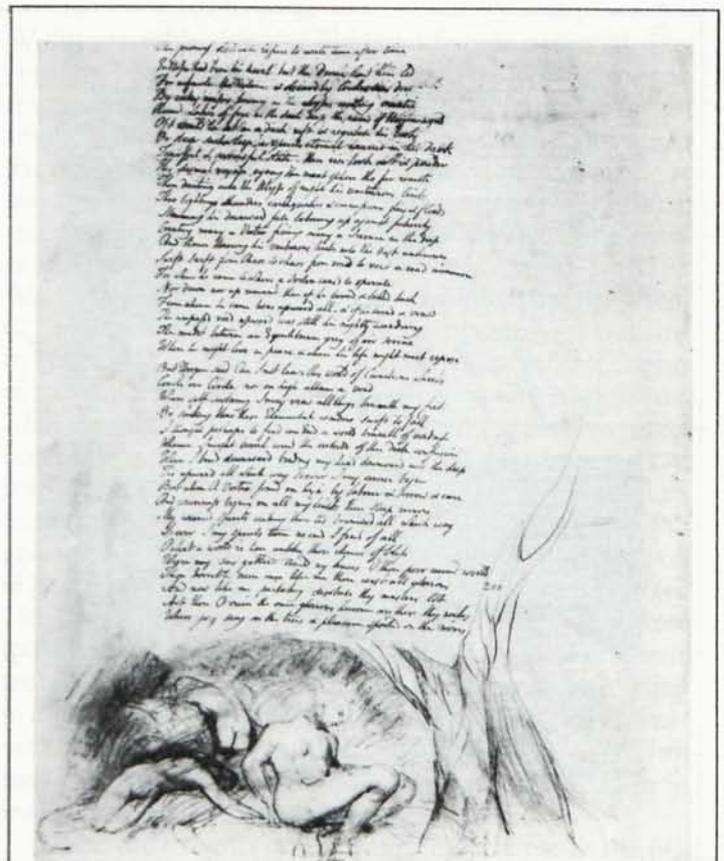
A sluggish current of dim waters. on whose verdant margin
A cavern shaggd with horrid shades. dark cool & deadly.

where
I laid my head in the hot noon after the broken clods
Had wearied me. there I laid my plow & there my horses fed
And thou hast risen with thy moist locks into a watry image
Reflecting all my indolence my weakness & my death

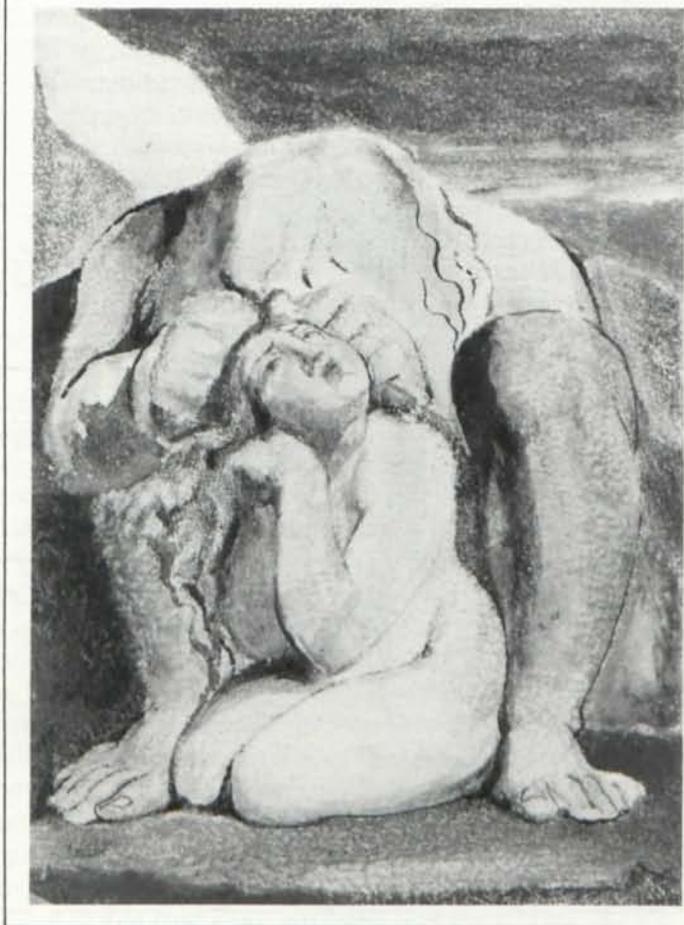
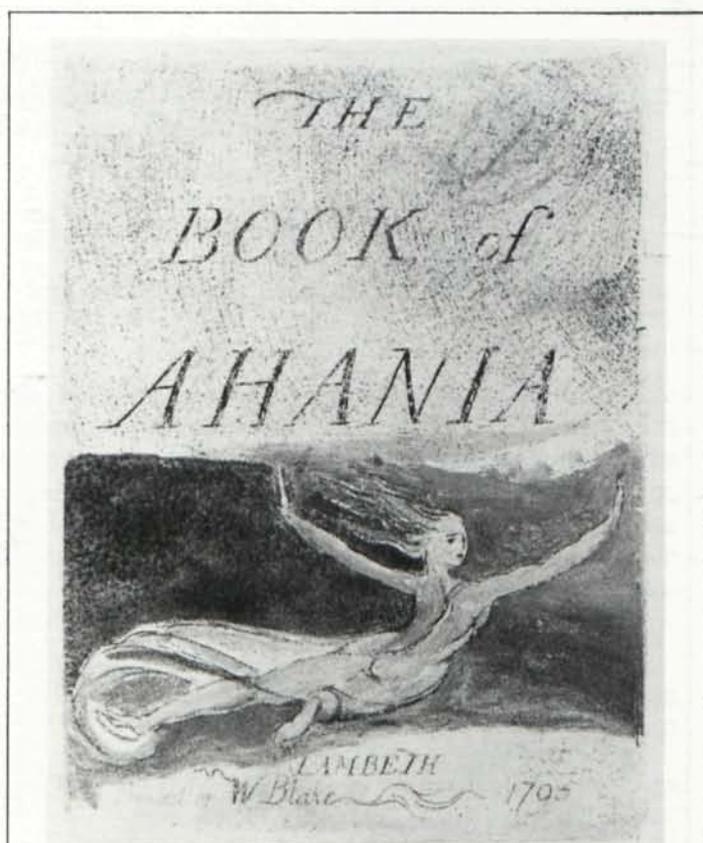
(FZ 43:9-18, E322/K295)

By trying to become more than man he too has become less or diminutive. Her "laws" are those he promulgates and, with the confusion typical of fallen reason, the former image of her that he lovingly invokes has the characteristics for which he now curses her. Furthermore, because these attributes are, as he recognizes, dominant in himself, any attempt to reject them in her can precipitate his own fall. So Blake, with fine dramatic irony, makes Urizen the judge and destroyer of his own realm. For at this stage the tyrant has only glimmerings of what will become redemptive self-consciousness in Night the Ninth, much as his precipitation to lower depths ironically foreshadows the lesson of self-abnegation he has yet to learn before true regeneration can begin. Here undeniably, as in other scenes, Blake's attack on "selfish loves" is more specific and coherent than Wollstonecraft's. But his basic views certainly accord with the details of her discussion, and with her summary conclusion that man must "willingly resign the privileges of rank and sex for the privileges of humanity" (p. 149).

Even more important, Blake and Wollstonecraft concur in their analysis of the wider implications of these fallen passions. Apart from transforming what should be "sports of Glory" into those of Cruelty, this debased concept of love destroys the possibility of a healthy parental bond, and is ultimately linked with deleterious social manifestations. In her brief chapter "Parental Affection," Wollstonecraft remarks that the parent-child bond is often "a pretext to tyrannize where it can be done with impunity" (pp. 150-51). As such, it becomes, "perhaps, the blindest modification of perverse self-love" (p. 150), and can serve as a



7. *The Four Zoas*, p. 72.
8. *The Four Zoas*, p. 86.



9. *The Four Zoas*, p. 112.

10. *The Book of Ahania*, copy A, pl. i. Courtesy of the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress.

11. *The Book of Ahania*, copy A, pl. 1.

model for all other forms of oppression: "Power, in fact, is ever true to its vital principle, for in every shape it would reign without controul or inquiry. . . . Obedience, unconditional obedience, is the catch-word of tyrants of every description, and to render 'assurance doubly sure,' one kind of despotism supports another" (p. 150). No less than Blake, Wollstonecraft is aware that the bondage of parenthood and marriage parallels and supports a constricting social structure which promotes priestcraft, war and mystery.²² Slavish obedience to parents is, she tells us, preparation "for the slavery of marriage" (p. 155); and both institutions, founded on their victims' "weakness and ignorance," are protected by "mysterious sanctity" (p. 153). Yet if unselfish love can once prevail, not only may parents and children find natural ground for "mutual sympathy," but the parents will be drawn together "when . . . mutual confidence takes place of overstrained admiration—a child then gently twists the relaxing cord, and a mutual care produces a new mutual sym-

pathy" (p. 152). Without this abandonment of egotistical constraint, however, man remains essentially separate and disconsolate, like the three exhausted women pictured under a leafless, barren tree of Experience, on page 72 of *Night the Sixth*.

In *The Four Zoas*, Blake projects similar insights through the actions of Los and Enitharmon, who appear first as children and then as parents. In their role as parents, they illustrate the perverse self-love and tyrannical drive for unconditional obedience that Wollstonecraft castigates. But Blake's analysis demonstrates more clearly than the *Vindication's* that these egotistical acts recoil harmfully upon their instigators. Los, although he attempts to render "assurance doubly sure" by binding Orc with the chain of jealousy, is himself a victim of the same chain.²³ It constricts his vital humanity, and even the removal of its physical presence is no guarantee of complete liberation:

But when returnd to Golgonooza Los & Enitharmon
Felt all the sorrow Parents feel. they wept toward one another
And Los repented that he had chaind Orc upon the mountain
And Enitharmons tears prevaild parental love returnd
Tho terrible his dread of that infernal chain . . .

(FZ 62:9-13, E335/K309)

Blake is here contrasting the first glimmerings of genuine, self-sacrificing parental feeling with their destructive opposite: "Love of Parent Storgous Appetite Craving" (FZ 61:10, E334/K308). The dilemma faced by parents and child is analagous to that confronting fallen man and woman. They are doomed to feed selfishly on each other, as do Los and Enitharmon on their mother Enion in *Night the First*,²⁴ or to live in mutual fear and antagonism, until suffering awakens their repressed sense of human sympathy. In a realm where hatred is dominant instead of love, "stern demands of Right & Duty instead of Liberty" (FZ 4:18-19, E297/K265), the chain of jealousy is justifiably described as "living" and taking root in the earth's center (FZ 63:1-4, E336/K308). Los feels its pull. He "dreads" these forces at work within himself and throughout fallen nature. Furthermore, like Enion "Rehumanizing . . . in pangs of maternal love" (FZ 9:3, E300/K276), he must learn repentance and that parental "sorrow" which involves recognizing consanguinity with and responsibility for a world external to the self-centered "I." This shift is already hinted at in the above passage when "they wept toward one another" and in a design on page 112, which apparently portrays Los attempting to assuage Enitharmon's maternal bereavement.²⁵ The binding of Orc occasions then, in Wollstonecraft's words, "a mutual care [which] produces a new mutual sympathy"; and this, in the full context of Blake's epic, marks a first step towards that greater self-annihilation which will be demanded of the scattered Zoas, if they are to regain the lost unity of Eternity.

Although the events in *The Four Zoas* take place on a cosmological scale far removed from the diurnal world described in the *Vindication*, the redemptive role that Blake attributes to the emanation also appears to owe much to

Wollstonecraft's vision of liberated female potential. Her constant emphasis is on the need to emancipate woman from a constricting sexual role: to have her recognized as an intellectual and, in the widest sense, a human creature. As she explains, the female "was not created merely to be the solace of man, and the sexual should not destroy the human character" (p. 53). Accordingly, she stresses that "true beauty and grace must arise from the play of the mind" (p. 118). Woman should be taught not to control others but herself (p. 62), to turn her "sensibility into the broad channel of humanity" (pp. 174-75); and so "to participate in the inherent rights of mankind" (p. 175). For in Wollstonecraft's own words, "the corrupting intercourse . . . between the sexes, is more universally injurious to morality than all the other vices of mankind collectively considered" (p. 192). Thus "mutual affection, supported by mutual respect," must replace "selfish gratification" (p. 192); modesty becomes a "natural reflection of purity" rather than "only the artful veil of wantonness" (p. 193); and compassion be extended "to every living creature" (p. 172). Our choice is between "a REVOLUTION in female manners," which will have "the most salutary effects tending to improve mankind" (p. 192), and a condition that encourages woman "by the serpentine wriggings of cunning . . . [to] mount the tree of knowledge, and only acquire sufficient to lead men astray" (p. 173).

The final Nights of *The Four Zoas* dramatize the potential inherent in these alternate conceptions of woman. In *Nights the Seventh* and *Eighth*, Blake portrays the spiritual nadir of man, and takes as his central symbol of this enslavement the Tree of Mystery. Around and through this Tree his personae move in an elaborate series of actions which explicitly allude to Milton's portrayal of the fall, and to the ensuing transformation of Satan and his hellish legions into serpents. But while *Paradise Lost* is here the main source, it is possible that some of Blake's rich reworkings of Milton's motifs were inspired by Wollstonecraft's comparison of fallen woman's striving after fulfillment with a serpentine ascent into the Tree of Knowledge. In *Night the Seventh*, womankind in its lowest and most abstract state (the Shadow of Enitharmon) is pictured as descending "down the tree of Mystery" (FZ 82:16, E350/K327) to lead astray the spectrous form of Urthona. Following their sexual union, they are found "Conferring times on times among the branches of that Tree" (FZ 85:4, E353/K327). In *Night the Eighth*, this same constellation of images is iterated almost obsessively on manuscript pages 101 and 103, as Vala exerts her sway:

Beginning at the tree of Mystery circling its root
She spread herself thro all the branches in the power of Orc.
(FZ 103:23-24, E361/K345)

For Blake, this repeated motif presents woman at her most dangerous and debased. In Wollstonecraft's words, "the sexual" has been allowed to "destroy the human character."²⁶ Similarly, in drawings on pages 86 and 26, Vala is portrayed both as a sensuous, fecund figure, and as a hideous, hybrid dragon-form. The former captures her alluring presence,

the latter constitutes a visionary judgment on her role in entrapping man in the toils of corporeality. Yet whether pictured as a gazer fixated on external existence or as an embodiment of pestilential evil, woman and her generative acts can be seen by Blake as potential images or means of regeneration.²⁷ Her realm is nature, and nature remains part of the Divine Humanity. Hence even the triumph of Vala can serve paradoxically as a prelude to apocalypse, for any consolidation of error makes it more readily identifiable and remediable. Moreover, this dual character of female action, its potential for good and evil, is made explicit through the respective weaving of Enitharmon and Rahab-Tirzah:

Enitharmon wove in tears Singing Songs of Lamentations
And pitying comfort as she sighd forth on the wind the
spectres
And wove them bodies calling them her belovd sons &
daughters
(FZ 103:32-34, E361/K345)

While Rahab & Tirzah far different mantles prepare webs of
torture
Mantles of despair girdles of bitter compunction shoes of
indolence
Veils of ignorance covering from head to feet with a cold web.
(FZ 113:19-21, E362/K346)²⁸

Here woman is no longer presented as a single and negative aspect of man. Instead she is used in these Nights to embody our complex capacity for creative and uncreative labor, for regeneration or self-damnation; and so she becomes at last the male's true counterpart in the mental wars of Eternity, as well as in the cruel sports of the fallen realm.

In accordance with this expanded conception of woman, emanations assume the role of moral agents which Wollstonecraft had foreseen for her sex (p. 178). In *Night the Second*, for instance, Enion utters from the Void one of Blake's greatest condemnatory songs of Experience; and her words suffuse with concern a fellow emanation, Ahania, who "never from that moment could . . . rest upon her pillow" (FZ 36:19, E319/K291). A succession of suffering spokeswomen is thereby assured, and woman is singled out as a focal point of genuine moral vision. Hence Blake, at the end of *Night the Eighth*, employs chants by Ahania and Enion, rather than one by Los, to prepare the reader for the ensuing *Vintage of the Nations*. First Ahania, who "Saw not as yet the Divine vision her Eyes are Toward Urizen" (FZ 108:7, E368/K353), catalogues the intricate mazes of Experience:

Will you seek pleasure from the festering wound or marry for
a Wife
The ancient Leprosy that the King & Priest may still feast on
your decay
And the grave mock & laugh at the plowd field saying
I am the nourisher thou the destroyer in my bosom is milk
& wine
And a fountain from my breasts to me come all multitudes.
(FZ 108:13-17, E369/K354)

Here woman and earth assume metaphoric equivalence as referents for that vegetative existence which both nourishes and kills. But in the following chant of Enion, from beyond the limitations of fallen perception, the female earth is subsumed in the Eternal Man:

So Man looks out in tree & herb & fish & bird & beast
Collecting up the scatterd portions of his immortal body
Into the Elemental forms of every thing that grows

And in the cries of birth & in the groans of death his voice
Is heard throughout the Universe wherever a grass grows
Or a leaf buds The Eternal Man is seen is heard is felt.

(FZ 110:6-8, 25-27, E370/K355-56)

As in the *Vindication*, so here lasting harmony is inseparable from the realization of compassion for all things, and from the merging of secondary distinctions in the redemptive vision of a single and indissoluble humanity. This vision becomes reality in *Night the Ninth*. But instead of Wollstonecraft's notion of a bloodless revolution having "the most salutary effects tending to improve mankind," Blake offers a picture of fierce and, at times, anguished transformation. Mankind is literally threshed and crushed free from fallen selfhood. Here the virtues of purity, modesty, and disinterested compassion, espoused by Wollstonecraft, are largely relegated to a "lower Paradise" (FZ 128:30, E382/K369), where the instinctual passions have to relearn their innocence under the guidance of a morally regenerated Vala.²⁹ By implication, Blake suggests that these traditional virtues exist in their pure forms only "in Eternal Childhood," and he is careful to stress that the protagonists are merely "the shadows of Tharmas & of Enion in Valas world" (FZ 131:19, E385/K371). A clear distinction is thus made between the redemptive role of the female and the role of her conventional attributes. These attributes, at best, are elements in a limited pastoral interlude; while the truly emancipated female plays a more active and vitally engaged role in the ongoing spiritual harvest. Characteristically, Blake's enlarged concept of human potential allows him to appropriate, and then to develop, progressive ideas from the *Vindication*; although here, as in his other reworkings of Wollstonecraft, he shows himself capable of transcending the received assumptions that are also embodied in her work.³⁰

Thus Blake not only found inspiration in Wollstonecraft's work, but he also succeeded in freeing her perceptions from many of their contemporary limitations. For *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, despite its revolutionary fervor, remains partly ensnared by conventional notions of morality, education, and human capacity. Here man, at his noblest, is pictured as a rational creature; literature as peculiarly suited to increase the scope of his reason; and social stability as a necessity for fruitful human intercourse.³¹ But Blake, ignoring this conservatism, focused on the work's incisive analysis of the conditions generated by debased sexuality, and on its concrete suggestions for their

amelioration. These notions he had thoroughly assimilated by 1793 at the latest, with the publication of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*; and they were then expanded and emended in accordance with the cosmological vision developed in the Lambeth books. For the liberating views expounded in the *Vindication* required a new conception of art, language and human creativity commensurate with their radical potential. This Blake provided in *The Four Zoas*, where woman becomes the fallen emanation, self-realization the prelude to apocalypse, mutual affection and forgiveness the Gates of Paradise. There at last Wollstonecraft's precepts attain the fulfillment denied them in her work and in her tragically brief life; and there also they are saved from the usual fate of truth in this world, which she pictures as "lost in a mist of words, virtue, in forms" (p. 12), by an art form created specifically "for the day of Intellectual Battle" (FZ 3:3, E297/K264).

¹ He also illustrated her translation of Salzmann's *Elements of Morality*. For the details see David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet against Empire*, rev. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), p. 156; Jacob Bronowski, *William Blake and the Age of Revolution* (1965; rpt. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 150; and Dennis M. Welch, "Blake's Response to Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories*," *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* 13 (1979), 4-15.

² These parallels are noted by Mark Schorer, *William Blake: The Politics of Vision* (1946; rpt. New York: Knopf, 1959), pp. 187 and 251; and Erdman, *Blake: Prophet against Empire*, p. 243.

³ Commentators, however, have offered a range of conflicting, speculative readings in an attempt to enlarge this meagre fund of biographical information. In "Notes on the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* by William Blake," *Modern Language Quarterly* 9 (1948), 292-97, for instance, Henry H. Wasser argues that *Visions* is, on one level, "an expression of Blake's knowledge of the love affair between Mary Wollstonecraft and Henry Fuseli" (p. 292). But Kathleen Raine, in *Blake and Tradition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), I, 166-68, proposes that elements of the work may reflect a passionate attachment between Blake and Wollstonecraft, while Morton D. Paley claims that "the story of Oothoon and Bromion reflects that of Mary Wollstonecraft and her American lover Gilbert Imlay, with at least a possibility that Blake cast himself as Theotormon" (*William Blake* [Oxford: Phaidon, 1978], p. 27).

⁴ There are obviously exceptions to these broad generalizations. *The Book of Urizen*, for instance, presents a cosmic myth, and the Los-Enitharmon-Orc triad portrays recognizable human archetypes, although the overwhelming preoccupation of the Lambeth books is with the revolutionary forces manifested in Blake's time. For the historical background informing these works see *Blake: Prophet against Empire*, pp. 201-79; Morton D. Paley, *Energy and the Imagination: A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 61-88; and Michael J. Tolley, "Europe: 'to those ychain'd in sleep,'" in *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, ed. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 115-45.

⁵ Other issues, of course, inform her speeches, most notably the contemporary debate on slavery. For the details see David V. Erdman, "Blake's Vision of Slavery," *Journal of the Warburg and*

Courtauld Institutes 15 (1952), 242-52, or *Blake: Prophet against Empire*, pp. 226-42.

⁶ All references to Blake are from E: *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, 4th printing, rev. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), and K: *The Complete Writings of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 3rd printing, rev. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), using the following abbreviations: VDA: *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*; L: *The Book of Los*; E: *Europe a Prophecy*; A: *The Book of Abania*; FZ: *The Four Zoas*.

⁷ Or as Paley says of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "Blake envisions, not revolution and sexual freedom, but a revolution which is libidinal in nature" (*Energy and the Imagination*, p. 16).

⁸ In their immediate context, the lines refer only to plural partners for the male, but Oothoon's earlier comments on the crippling effects of enforced monogamy seem to project an ideal of equal freedom for both the male and the female. Similarly, Blake's contemporary comments in the Notebook repeatedly recognize the equal and complementary needs of the sexes, as in the following lines, where the emphatic parallelism negates any possibility of sexist distinctions:

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

(E466/K180)

Failure to recognize this larger context, however, can almost transform the healthy Oothoon into a sexual deviant, as when Leopold Damrosch, Jr., speaks confidently of her "fantasies, with their sadomasochism and voyeurism," in *Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980), p. 198.

⁹ Alternatively, given the unusual degree of sexual liberation she was to enjoy in her own life, this omission may reflect a conscious concession to her audience, made in the hope of winning approval for other radical and, in some senses, more important aspects of her program for female emancipation.

¹⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, ed. Carol H. Poston (New York: Norton, 1975), pp. 30-31. Future page references to this edition will be cited parenthetically.

¹¹ This is as true of *America a Prophecy* as it is of other works of the period, like *Europe a Prophecy* and *The Book of Urizen*. For as Minna Doskow has demonstrated in "William Blake's *America*: The Story of a Revolution Betrayed," *Blake Studies* 8 (1979), 167-86, the shadowy female of the prelude acts the part of "the obedient daughter of a tyrannical father" (p. 171). She is used as an instrument to enslave the dangerous energies of Orc; and when this strategy fails her long training ensures that the love she returns the fiery youth is selfish and possessive, and that revolutionary potential is thereby severely limited.

¹² In fact, the negative impression left by these works has been so strong that Susan Fox has felt compelled to argue against the received view of Oothoon. According to her reading, Blake's choice of a woman as the main protagonist in *Visions* reflects, not even a relenting in his view of womankind, but rather his need for a figure who could be symbolically raped and readily enslaved ("The Female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry," *Critical Inquiry* 3 [1977], 513). A more persuasive and illuminating commentary on this is-

sue, however, is provided by Irene Taylor, "The Woman Scaly," *Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 6 (1973), rpt. in Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant, eds., *Blake's Poetry and Designs* (New York: Norton, 1979), pp. 539-53. There we are invited to see Blake's critical treatment of womankind as "reflecting a view prominent in Western mythologies" (p. 542), rather than a personal animus.

¹³ The most comprehensive and informed discussions of putative composition dates and textual details are to be found in William Blake, *Vala or The Four Zoas: A Facsimile of the Poem and A Study of Its Growth and Significance*, ed. G. E. Bentley, Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); David V. Erdman, "The Binding (et cetera) of *Vala*," *The Library* 29 (1969), 112-29; *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, pp. 737-39; and in *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* 12 (Fall 1978), an issue devoted to *The Four Zoas*.

¹⁴ Despite her somewhat ambiguous gestures and posture, I assume that she is flying because, as David V. Erdman notes, the depiction of her hair "indicates swift flight" (*The Illuminated Blake* [London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975], p. 211).

¹⁵ Her concluding words also echo lines eleven to fifteen of "Earth's Answer,"

Selfish father of men
Cruel jealous selfish fear
Can delight
Chain'd in night
The virgins of youth and morning bear,

and thereby link her with the life-and love-giving attributes of the female Earth. For a full discussion of these implications, and of Blake's association of the female figure with apocalyptic renewal in "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found," see my essay "Blake's Problematic Touchstones to Experience: 'Introduction,' 'Earth's Answer,' and the Lyca Poems," *Studies in Romanticism* 19 (1980) 3-17.

¹⁶ Some of these female traits had, of course, appeared in earlier works, such as *Europe a Prophecy*. But it is not until *The Four Zoas* that they receive detailed treatment; and only then does their close association with Wollstonecraft's conceptions clearly emerge.

¹⁷ Wollstonecraft attacks, for example, the following passage cited from Rousseau: "Would you have your husband constantly at your feet? keep him at some distance from your person. You will long maintain the authority in love, if you know but how to render your favours rare and valuable. It is thus you may employ even the arts of coquetry in the service of virtue, and those of love in that of reason." (p. 89).

¹⁸ For a fuller account of this, and of other scenes mentioned briefly in this paper, consult Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson, *Blake's Four Zoas: The Design of a Dream* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978).

¹⁹ A parallel image of man's idolatry to his female self-projection emerges from the combined accounts of the Spectre of Urthona and the Shadow of Enitharmon in *Night the Seventh* (a):

Listen O vision of Delight One dread morn of goary blood
The manhood was divided for the gentle passions making way
Thro the infinite labyrinths of the heart & thro the nostrils issuing
In odorous stupefaction stood before the Eyes of Man
A female bright. . . .

(FZ 84:12-16, E352/K327)

Among the Flowers of Beulah walkd the Eternal Man & Saw
Vala the lilly of the desert. melting in high noon
Upon her bosom in sweet bliss he faintd Wonder siezd
All heaven they saw him dark. . . .

(FZ 83:7-10, E351/K326)

²⁰ Interestingly, Blake and Wollstonecraft diverge in their views on the effects of solitary withdrawal and reflection. According to Wollstonecraft, both are necessary if women are to develop independent thought and genuine feeling, or as she puts it: "Besides, by living more with each other, and being seldom absolutely alone, they [women] are more under the influence of sentiments than passions. Solitude and reflection are necessary to give to wishes the force of passions, and to enable the imagination to enlarge the object, and make it the most desirable" (p. 58). In Blake, such acts are often associated with Urizenic withdrawal from humanity, or with negative self-enjoyings, like those lamented by Oothoon:

The moment of desire! the moment of desire! The virgin
That pines for man; shall awaken her womb to enormous joys
In the secret shadows of her chamber, the youth shut up from
The lustful joy. shall forget to generate. & create an amorous image
In the shadows of his curtains and in the folds of his silent pillow.

Is it because acts are not lovely, that thou seekest solitude,
Where the horrible darkness is impressed with reflections of desire.
(VDA 7:3-7, 10-11, E49/K194)

²¹ The heavily drawn claw on his foot is eloquent testimony both to Urizen's status as tyrant and to its bestializing effects: a theme repeated in other Blake designs, such as those of Nebuchadnezzar.

²² In "Of the Pernicious Effects which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society," a chapter which closely parallels Blake's analysis of fallen England, Wollstonecraft describes the world as "a den of sharpers or oppressors" (p. 140), in which "a true north-east blast . . . blights the tender blossoms of affection and virtue," and the "silken wings" of innocent womanhood are "shrivelled up" (p. 141). British politics is dubbed "the present system of war" (p. 145), and is seen to consist "in multiplying dependents and contriving taxes which grind the poor to pamper the rich" (p. 143), while humanity, and in particular woman, is enchained "like the poor African slaves" (p. 144).

²³ Diana Hume George in *Blake and Freud* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1980) offers a detailed account of Blake's exploration of this reciprocal bondage, and of its psychological roots, in a subsection of her study entitled "Experience: The Family Romance" (pp. 98-124).

²⁴ Drawing forth drooping mothers pity drooping mothers sorrow

And then they wanderd far away she sought for them in vain
In weeping blindness stumbling she followd them oer rocks &
mountains

Rehumanizing from the Spectre in pangs of maternal love
Ingrate they wanderd scorning her drawing her Spectrous Life
Repelling her away & away by a dread repulsive power
Into Non Entity revolving round in dark despair.
And drawing in the Spectrous life in pride and haughty joy
Thus Enion gave them all her spectrous life

(FZ 8:7, 9:1-8, E300/K269-70)

²⁵ W.H. Stevenson in *The Poems of William Blake* (London: Longman, 1971), p. 428, makes this identification, although Bentley suggests that the leaf on which the drawing occurs originally concluded *Night the Fourth* (*Vala or The Four Zoas*, p. 201).

In this case the design would illustrate Enitharmon's response to the binding of Urizen in Night the Fourth. Yet the depiction of Los as at once resolute and tender is closer to the visual description of Los in Night the Fifth than to that in Night the Fourth where

Spasms siezd his muscular fibres writhing to & fro his pallid lips
Unwilling movd as Urizen howld his loins wavy like the sea
At Enitharmons shriek his knees each other smote & then he lookd
With stony Eyes on Urizen & then swift writhd his neck

(FZ 55:24-27, E331/K305)

By transposing the design to page 112 of Night the Eighth, Blake made possible, and even desirable, Stevenson's reading. For a visual reference back to events in Night the Fifth is appropriate here, as it reminds us of the starting-point of Los and Enitharmon's regeneration, which leads to their redemptive labors described on page 113 of Night the Eighth.

²⁶ My comments here are complemented by Jean H. Hagstrum's section on "the phallic woman" in "Babylon Revisited, or the Story of Luvah and Vala," in *Blake's Sublime Allegory: Essays on The Four Zoas Milton Jerusalem*, ed. Stuart Curran and Joseph Wittreich, Jr. (Madison: Wisconsin Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 108-12, and by John E. Grant's account of the motif of "erotic degradation," which appears in Blake's designs to the poem, in "Visions in Vala: A Consideration of Some Pictures in the Manuscript,"

in *Blake's Sublime Allegory*, pp. 141-202.

²⁷ The theme is a common one in the later prophecies. Book one of *Milton*, for instance, concludes with a great hymn on the spiritual wonders of vegetative life, and Los sums up this vision on plate 7 of *Jerusalem* with the exclamation: "O holy Generation [Image] of regeneration!" (E149/K626).

²⁸ The complex significance of this weaving motif is dealt with by Morton D. Paley in "The Figure of the Garment in *The Four Zoas, Milton, and Jerusalem*," in *Blake's Sublime Allegory*, pp. 119-39.

²⁹ For a more complete account of this scene see *Blake's Four Zoas: The Design of a Dream*, pp. 223-28.

³⁰ Blake's capacity to select only what he needed from Wollstonecraft, and at the same time to criticize her conservative viewpoints, is well illustrated by Dennis M. Welch in "Blake's Response to Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories*."

³¹ Wollstonecraft, of course, was not alone in her failure to transcend many of the reactionary values of her age. Even her husband, the anarchist philosopher William Godwin, was capable of attacking all the institutions of society, and yet of defending the need for material security, in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*.



NEWSLETTER

BLAKE AT CORNELL

Cornell University will host *Blake: Ancient & Modern*, a symposium 8-9 April 1983, exploring the ways in which the traditions and techniques of printmaking and painting affected Blake's poetry, art, and art theory. The symposium will also discuss Blake's late prints and the prints of his followers, and examine the problems of teaching in college an interdisciplinary artist like William Blake. Panelists and speakers include M. H. Abrams, Esther Dotson, Morris Eaves, Robert N. Essick, Peter Kahn, Karl Kroeber, Reeve Parker, Albert Roe, Jon Stallworthy, and Joseph Viscomi.

The symposium is being held in conjunction with two exhibitions: *The Prints of Blake and his Followers*, Johnson Museum of Art, 15 March-17 April, and *William Blake: Illustrator and Poet*, Department of Rare Books, 1 April-15 May.

For further information write: Blake Symposium, A. D. White House, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.

GOLGONOOZA NEWS

According to Alexandra Eldridge, there have been eight couples married and thirteen babies baptized at Golgonooza (in Millfield, Ohio). At the baptism of four babies on 24 October 1982, Aethelred Eldridge, "acting as Parson of the Church of Wm. Blake, and 'aspersing lunacy & balming moon dew' marked a 'Broad appointed Arrow' on the expanding foreheads of Sebastian Blake Eldridge, Maeve Elspeth Callahan, Aero Basho Nishimawva, & Brendon John Moran."

LECTURE: YALE CENTER

On 23 February 1983, as part of the lecture series at the Yale Center for British Art, Karl Kroeber, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, will present a lecture entitled "Representing Hypocrisy: Blake and Hogarth."

MLA 1983

Mark Greenberg is preparing a proposal for a special session celebrating the bicentennial of *Poetical Sketches* at the 1983 MLA Convention in New York. Space for one or two papers remains, and he invites proposals from interested readers, including (and perhaps even especially) graduate students. Please write him at the Department of Humanities, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

WILLIAM BLAKE & HIS FOLLOWERS

In conjunction with the exhibition *William Blake and His Followers* at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, Morton D. Paley (Univ. of California, Berkeley) delivered a lecture, "How Far Did They Follow?" on 16 January 1983.

JOHN LINNELL: A CENTENNIAL EXHIBITION

We have received the following news release from the Yale Center for British Art:

The first retrospective exhibition in America of the work of John Linnell will open at the Yale Center for British Art on Wednesday, 26 January.

John Linnell was born in London on 16 June 1792. He died ninety years later, after a long and successful career which spanned a century of unprecedented change in Britain. His father was a craftsman, a picture-frame maker from a family of carpenters and cabinetmakers. With such a background it was almost inevitable that the young Linnell should serve an apprenticeship in an allied trade; in fact, he determined to become a painter, and in 1804 he was articled to John Varley. The choice of master was a particularly fortunate one. The brothers Cornelius and John Varley were members of the sketching club which Thomas Girtin helped to establish before his untimely death in 1802. They shared a common interest in working out-of-doors as a way of capturing in watercolors the more transient effects of nature, and they encouraged the practice among a group of younger artists which included Linnell, William Mulready, and William Henry Hunt. Linnell's early attempts to paint directly from nature therefore parallel, and in some cases anticipate, those of John Constable.

In 1818, Linnell met William Blake. The two artists became friends, and Linnell's moral and financial support helped to rescue the older artist from the obscurity into which his uncompromising visions had driven him. Under Blake's influence, Linnell's attitude towards landscape became less factual and more emotive. As if in answer to the Industrial Revolution, which transformed the face of "England's green and pleasant land," Linnell produced a brand of nostalgic pastoral which appealed widely to the Victorian public. One reason for its popularity was underlined by William Makepeace Thackeray in his review of the Royal Academy's Exhibition of 1855: "We English are a rural people. Few of the well-to-do residents in London feel themselves at home there. Everyone remembers with regret his country house and looks forward with hope to returning thither at last . . . What a pleasure it is to stroll through the exhibition and renew acquaintance with streams and hills and woods."

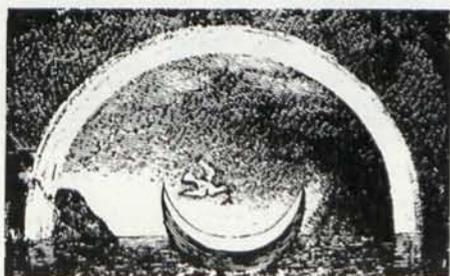
Unlike Constable, Linnell was not born into the countryside. This perhaps explains why his view of the landscape converted so readily into a vision of it, more-over into one which was popular among the newly rich industrialists of the North. Like Linnell, and unlike Thackeray's well-to-do, they were men without roots in the shires. Often they shared Linnell's own dissenting, religious outlook and responded gratefully to his formulation of "Imaginative or High Art" based not upon explicit and idolatrous imagery, but upon a "vivid perception of those qualities in nature which most affect the mind with emotions of moral sympathy, sublimity and beauty."

Linnell was one of the few artists for whom the youngbloods of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had any respect. Like Ruskin, he defended their moral earnestness and their skill from 1851 onwards. Subsequently, he witnessed their spectacular success and then, within a decade of his death, his reputation fell, like theirs, into the oblivion to which the aesthetic movement consigned so much Victorian art. In spite of a two-volume biography by A. T. Story, published in 1893, Linnell became a forgotten master of the nineteenth century.

In 1973, Stephen Somerville's exhibition in London of *John Linnell and His Circle* drew attention to the importance of the artist's early work *en plein air*. The present exhibition, organized to coincide with the centenary of his death, is carefully selected to do justice to his entire career. It was catalogued by Katherine Crouan of the Winchester School of Art, England, and was shown first at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. At the Yale Center for British Art it is augmented by a number of paintings from Yale's collections and provides a fitting sequel to *William Blake: His Art and Times*. It is on view on the third floor through 20 March 1983.

As part of the "Art in Context" series, Duncan Robinson, the Director of the British Art Center, will discuss "Noah: The Eve of the Deluge" by John Linnell on Tuesday, 1 February at 12:30 p.m. Gallery talks on the Linnell exhibition will be given by members of the Department of Academic Programs on the following Thursdays at 2 p.m.: 27 January, 3, 10, and 17 February; and 3, 10, and 17 March. Special tours may be arranged by contacting Teri Edelstein at 203-436-3013. For further information, please contact Constance Clement, Yale Center for British Art, Box 2120 Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520. Telephone 203-436-1162.

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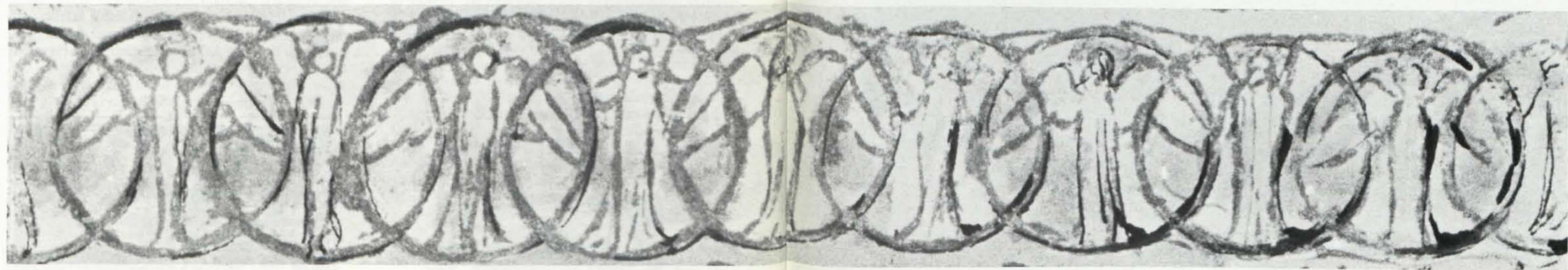


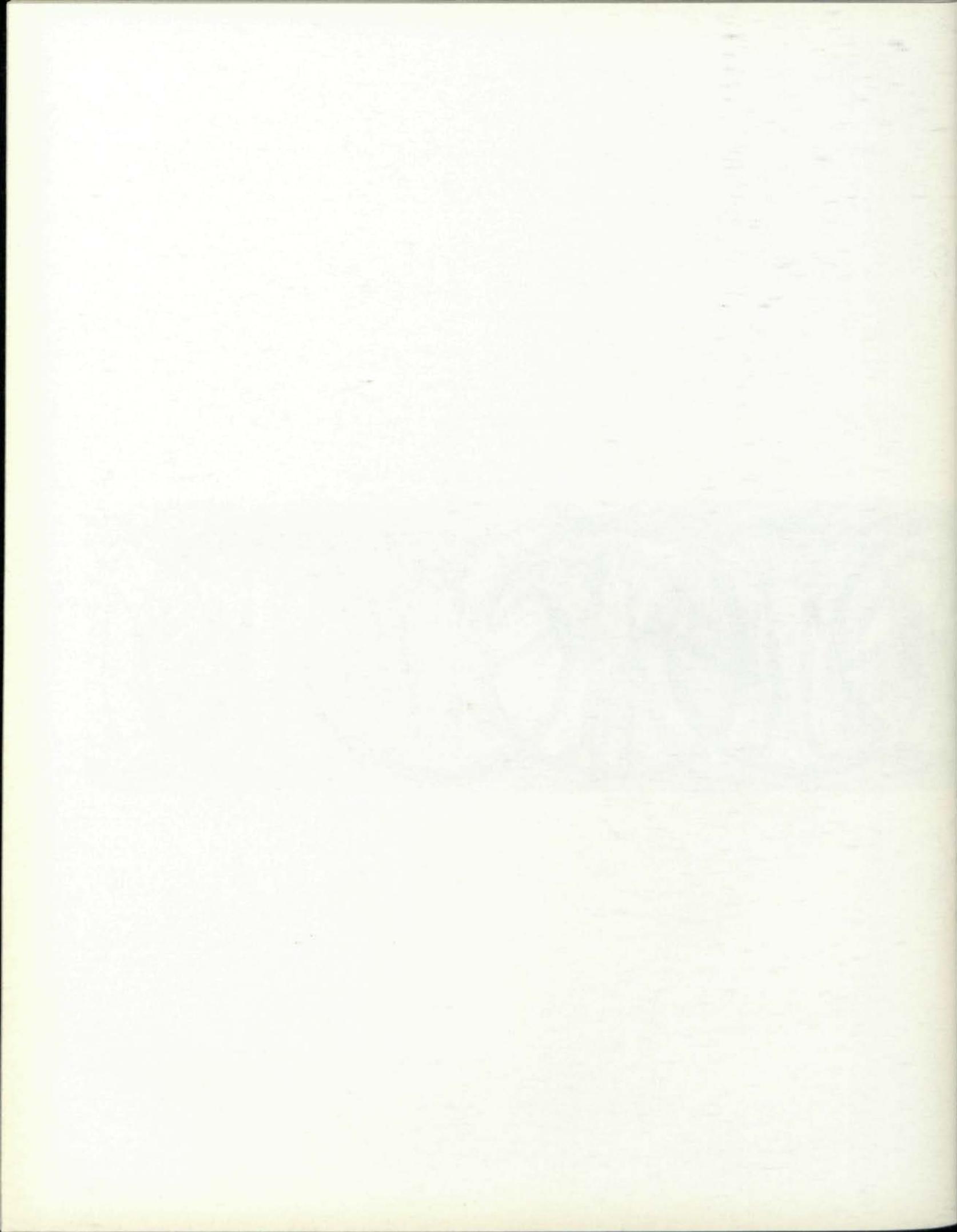
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BLAKE/AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY INDEX TO VOLUME 15
Compiled by Thomas L. Minnick, The Ohio State University

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