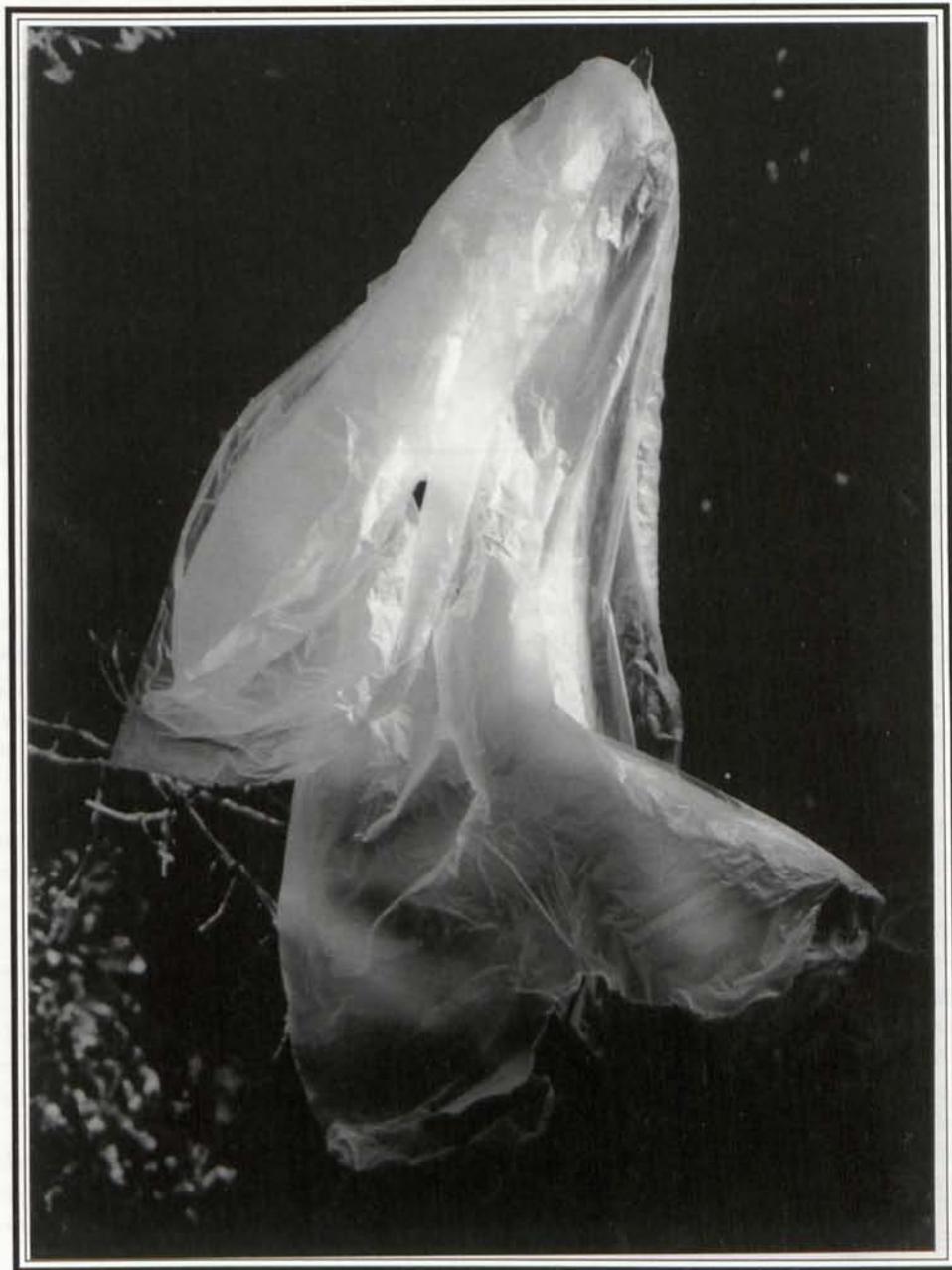


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COVER ILLUSTRATION: Verena Immenhauser, "Untitled," a figural veil/a veiled figure, executed in preparation of the installation shown at Berne, Switz.

Jerusalem and the Origins of Patriarchy

BY MARC KAPLAN

"O Albion why wilt thou Create a Female Will?" Los wails in *Jerusalem* 30:31.¹ The term "Female Will" here makes its first appearance in Blake's poetry, though for years critics have used it retroactively to explicate prior works, because it ties together so many of the sinister actions of the women characters of the earlier poetry.² Critics who elaborate on Blake's notion of the Female Will usually make the case that Blake does not intend a criticism of actual women by the term, but rather of nature and Natural Religion, or else that his criticism is not of woman's empowerment but of the perverse exercise of that power. On the other hand, feminist readings like those of Susan Fox and Anne K. Mellor have pointed out that Blake seems uneasy about any display of willfulness on the part of the female, and that he almost invariably portrays such situations negatively, while simultaneously idealizing female self-sacrifice as embodied in characters like Ahania and Oothoon.³ *Jerusalem* is no exception to this latter rule.

¹ David V. Erdman and Harold Bloom, eds., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (New York: Doubleday, 1988) 176. Subsequent references to this text will be designated by *E* followed by the page number. Plate and line numbers will accompany the page numbers where appropriate.

² Lengthy critical works on *Jerusalem* are few, probably due to the difficulty of the poem, which presumes a thorough familiarity with Blake's earlier poetry. Most studies remain at the level of establishing the epic's coherence and making it scrutable. Such works include Morton D. Paley's *The Continuing City* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), Minna Doskow's *William Blake's Jerusalem* (East Brunswick, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1982), Joseph Wicksteed's *William Blake's Jerusalem* (London: Trianon Press, 1953), a work that has been criticized for its eccentric and erroneous interpretations, and Joanna Witke's *William Blake's Epic: Imagination Unbound* (London: Croom Helm, 1986). Works dealing with gender in *Jerusalem* include Thomas D. Frosch's *The Awakening of Albion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), discussed in the text, and Brenda Webster's *Blake's Prophetic Psychology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983). Webster contends: "The chief psychological problem posed by the poem is how to reconcile the father, Albion, with the son, Los. The difficulty is their mutual suspicion and hatred, which are linked for their desire for exclusive possession of the mother, Jerusalem." As the argument of this chapter indicates, I agree with Webster that the poem's central struggle is that of son against patriarch and patriarchy, but disagree with her implication that Blake is unconscious of his poem's theme.

³ Susan Fox, "The Female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry," *Critical Inquiry* 3 (1977): 508-13, and Anne K. Mellor in "Blake's Portrayal of Women," *Blake* 16 (1982-83): 148-55, advance the basic propositions involving Blake's sexism around which subsequent debate has revolved. Alicia Ostriker in "Desire Gratified and Ungratified: William Blake and Sexuality," *Blake* 16 (1982-83): 156-65, concurs with Fox and Mellor that in Blake's ideal universe "to be female is to be de-

There is more to the above statement of Los than the sexism that might immediately meet the eye, however. Los clearly implies that the evil Female Will is the creation of Albion, the fallen patriarch of British civilization, and not something brought about by woman herself. Los later reiterates, "O Albion why didst thou a Female Will Create?" (56:43, *E* 206). A close scrutiny of *Jerusalem* reveals, I believe, that Blake offers a perceptive critique of masculine gender-roles without a similar rethinking of the role of the female.

Jerusalem criticizes male power as it is embodied in the structures of a society specifically identified by the poet as *patriarchal*. This term has for Blake many of the same pejorative connotations as it does for contemporary feminist discourse: in both instances, "patriarchal" connotes an oppressive masculinist system that perpetuates itself through the definition and control of *property*.

The word "patriarch" and other terms derived from it appear but a single time in Blake's work prior to *Jerusalem*, an incidental reference in *The Four Zoas* to "a throne & a pavement / Of precious stones surrounded by twenty four venerable patriarchs" (123:35, *E* 393). In *Jerusalem*, however, Blake uses the terms eight times, each time in a highly significant context. It first appears in the prose section "To the Jews" that precedes chapter 2 (27, *E* 171): "Was Britain the Primitive Seat of the Patriarchal Religion?" Blake here

pendent" (162) and notes that "In *Milton* and *Jerusalem* . . . female figures are either powerful or good; never both" (162-63). Other works which deal with Blake's sexual politics include Webster, *Blake's Prophetic Psychology* (see above) and her article, "Blake, Women and Sexuality" in Donald Ault, Mark Bracher and Dan Miller, eds., *Critical Paths: Blake and the Argument of Method* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987): 204-24; Margaret Storch, *Sons and Adversaries: Women in Blake and D.H. Lawrence* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991); and Diana Hume George, *Blake and Freud* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980). Webster, Storch and George constitute a wing of Blake criticism that is both Freudian and at times feminist as well, but George, ostensibly using the same Freudian paradigms and often looking at the same poems as Storch and Webster, comes to an almost opposite judgment of Blake. Both Webster and George see Blake's views as similar to those of Freudian radicals like Norman O. Brown, but whereas George champions Brown's and Blake's revolutionary sexual ethos, Webster finds such strategies dangerous and regressive, and Storch, after Webster, has a similar view. David Punter, "Blake, Trauma and the Female," *New Literary History* 15 (1984): 475-90, suggests that the trauma of Oothoon in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* is really the projected displacement of the trauma felt by Blake and males in general at a time when gender roles were in flux. Nelson Hilton in "An Original Story" in *Unman'd Forms: Blake and Textuality*, Hilton and Thomas Vogler, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) 69-104, provides one of the most interesting recent defenses of Blake and *Visions*, making the argument that Blake's eye (his text) saw more than his heart knew—a familiar poststructuralist strategy, but Hilton's knowledge of the background material on Mary Wollstonecraft (see n15) helps him fashion a convincing case.

means Patriarchal Religion to be taken in a double sense: as referring both to the eternal truths of the Judeo-Christian culture and to the degenerated Natural Religion which is the actual practice of that same culture. It becomes clear that Blake identifies the patriarchal element in that heritage with its fallen or erroneous aspect when he links patriarchy to Druidism a few lines later: "Your Ancestors derived their origin from Abraham, Heber, Shem, and Noah, who were Druids: as the Druid Temples (which are the Patriarchal Pillars & Oak Groves) over the whole Earth witness to this day" (*E* 171). Druidism is the prehistoric form of Natural Religion; in one quatrain of the poem that follows the prose on plate 27, Blake addresses the "Spectre of Albion":

Is this thy soft Family-Love
Thy cruel Patriarchal pride
Planting thy Family alone
Destroying all the World beside.

(27:76-80, *E* 173)

The criticism of patriarchy enters *Jerusalem* proper further on in chapter 2, when the twelve sons of Albion corroborate their father's fall by "Rearing their Druid Patriarchal rocky Temples around his limbs" (46:14, *E* 196). Later, Jerusalem hears the Divine Voice asking "Wilt thou make Rome thy Patriarch Druid" (61:50, *E* 212). Jerusalem subsequently laments the death of her beloved "Along the Valley of Destruction, among these Druid Temples./ Which overspread all the Earth in patriarchal pomp & cruel pride" (79:66-67, *E* 235). Urthona, the Eternal form of Los, characterizes himself as acting "Against the Patriarchal pomp and cruelty, labouring incessant" (83:4, *E* 241). Finally, in the apocalyptic burst of song that concludes the work, the poet exultantly asks "Where is the Tree of Good & Evil that rooted beneath the cruel heel / of Albions Spectre the Patriarch Druid!" (98:47-48, *E* 258). The return of humankind to the unfallen state is clearly linked to the abolition of patriarchy.

Blake does not stop at mere condemnation of patriarchy; *Jerusalem* contains the poet's most sophisticated analysis of institutionalized masculinism. The critique of conventional masculine roles and authority figures is a consistent theme in Blake's poetry from early on. Helen Bruder, in "The Sins of the Fathers: Patriarchal Criticism and *The Book of Thel*,"⁴ finds Blake already engaged in a critique of patriarchy in *The Book of Thel*, one of the first illuminated books, in which she describes the poet as "exclaiming against the patriarchal fetishizing of the hymen as an oppressive curb to an erotics of mutual delight" (156). She likewise finds the poet preaching against phallogentrism in the creation of a "young woman (Thel) who is so unimpressed by . . . displays of

⁴ Helen Bruder, in *Historicizing Blake*, Steve Clark and David Worrall, eds. (New York: St. Martin's, 1994) 147-59.

the phallus" (156). The anti-phallogentrism, the attack on conventional (that is, Urizenic) masculinity, and the repudiation of repression and virginity are indeed constant preoccupations of Blake's writing and art. But Bruder is in error to say that the presentation of these themes in themselves constitutes "a neglected feminist dimension to Blake's long-acknowledged radicalism" (147). A critique of masculinity is not per se a critique of gender, and an insistence on woman's sexual freedom is not necessarily a feminist position when that erotic freedom is, as it is so often in Blake's myth, the only new freedom that the poet will allow his female characters.⁵ *Jerusalem* is perhaps the most dramatic example of the true character of Blake's sexual politics: never has the poet's condemnation of traditional masculine authority in the form of patriarchy been more overt and forceful, yet Blake's solution to the problem in no way presumes an increase in female empowerment.

The critique of patriarchy advanced by Blake in his final epic is, however, in many ways strikingly similar to the argument of feminist historian Gerda Lerner in her contem-

⁵ Nor am I convinced by Bruder's attempts to establish a counter-tradition of Blake criticism that vindicates the poet's radical feminism. The authors she cites, like Bruder herself, make a case for Blake as an opponent of phallogentrism and a champion of woman's sexual freedom, but not a case for the poet as an advocate of genuine female empowerment. Vernon E. Lattin, in "Blake's Thel and Oothoon: Sexual Awakening in the Eighteenth Century" in *The Literary Criterion* 16 (1981): 11-24, notes the way "Blake speaks very clearly about the centrality of woman's sexual awakening as the way of vision" (12) and finds Oothoon, unlike Thel, gaining liberation "by confronting her desire" (22); Lattin doesn't consider the extent to which female sexual license benefits male power structures. K. D. Everest, in "Thel's Dilemma" in *Essays in Criticism* 37 (1987): 193-208, similarly describes the way "nominal virtue in Thel is gradually subverted by an insurgent sexuality of superb energy and abandonment" (206). Catherine L. McClenahan, in "'No Face Like the Human Divine?': Women and Gender in Pickering Manuscript," in G. A. Rosso and Daniel P. Watkins, eds., *Spirits of Fire: English Romantic Writers and Contemporary Historical Methods* (London: Associated University Presses, 1990) 189-208, demonstrates how Blake shares Wollstonecraft's critique of sexual modesty, but fails to note that the rationality that Blake so dislikes is the fundamental principle of Wollstonecraftian feminism. Another of McClenahan's arguments, that Blake learned subversive techniques and voices from marginalized woman writers, sounds suspiciously like the exploitative appropriation of feminine characteristics that Alan Richardson has termed a "colonization" of the feminine and found to be typical of male romantic writers as a group (see n17). David G. Reide, in "The Symbolism of the Loins in Blake's *Jerusalem*," in *Studies in English Literature* 21 (1981): 547-64, convincingly shows how the poem rates Blake's contempt for "mere genital sexuality" (549), and Elizabeth Langland in "Blake's Feminist Revision of Literary Tradition in 'The Sick Rose'" in Donald Ault, Mark Bracher and Dan Miller, eds., *Critical Paths: Blake and the Argument of Method* (Durham, NC and London: Duke Univ. Press, 1987) 225-43, demonstrates how that poem's ironic language exposes the speaker's violation of the rose by phallic psychological projections; as noted in the text however, anti-phallogentrism does not automatically constitute feminism.

porary study, *The Creation of Patriarchy*.⁶ Lerner maintains that the control by males of women's sexual behavior and reproductive capacity is the very cornerstone of our civilization. She contends that this appropriation occurred prior to the institution of private property, and in fact was the very foundation of private property (in Western history, Lerner locates this event during the period of the early Sumerian and Mesopotamian civilizations, 2200-1800 B.C.). Later, male subjugation of woman's sexuality resulted in class structure, and finally in slavery, the ultimate commodification of the human (well underway by the time of the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, 1752 B.C.). According to Lerner, men in the earliest societies were divided into classes relative to the amount of "wealth"—potentially fertile women—over whom they had hegemony. In this same historical period, men divided all women into two groups, one "respectable" or "honorable," meaning under the protection of a male, and the other "not respectable," meaning unattached to a male. The two kinds of women were frequently distinguished by the presence or absence of a veil, the wearing of which denoted the "good" woman and also marked this "honorable" woman as an article of property, which accounts for her protected status. Male-dominated society moved toward an increasingly abstract and increasingly masculine idea of God, culminating finally in the invisible-but-male Hebrew deity, who ordains that the expression of woman's sexuality for other than reproductive purposes is sinful (Lerner places the beginning of the writing of the Book of Genesis in the tenth century B.C., but believes the stories within it to be parts of an oral myth several centuries older).

Lerner's theory is frankly, admittedly, speculative. Her work has drawn criticism for what has been deemed a too-willful projection of contemporary feminist polemic onto a body of inconclusive (and inadequately researched) empirical evidence.⁷ However damaging such criticism may

⁶ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 8-10. The pages indicated present a summary of Lerner's argument and indicate chapters in which points are elaborated further.

⁷ Scholar Sarah B. Pomeroy, writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, 20 April 1986, voices the common concerns of Lerner's critics when she complains of Lerner's "subordination of principles of historical investigation to feminist politics." She objects to Lerner's construction of "a grandiose paradigm demonstrating the continually deteriorating position of women." Pomeroy takes Lerner to task for grouping "societies as different as the Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Amonites, Hebrews and Greeks as though they existed on a historical continuum and evolved from one another," and she complains that Lerner is led into some crucial misunderstandings because of her dependence on works in translation and secondary sources. In a review in *History: Reviews of New Books* (Jan.-Feb. 1987 [66-67]), however, it is precisely Lerner's "intellectual boldness, her bluntness and penchant for polemic" that Bernard Essen praises. Calling her work "vastly ambitious and admirable, even heroic," Essen goes on to laud Lerner for "her flair for theorizing and generalizing, sometimes outrageously," which would serve equally well as a description of Blake at his best.

be to Lerner's credibility as a historian, it in no way lessens the value of her work as an instrument for the interpretation of *Jerusalem*, for Blake's poem, avowedly mythic and even anti-empirical in its construction of history, is openly polemical. Blake's epics retain an engagement with literal history by virtue of the poet's implicit belief that utopian fantasy, by the suggestion of unrealized human possibilities, can provoke real change in the social/political world (in this respect, the poet's strategy remains unchanged since the *Songs of Innocence*).

Lerner traces the development of patriarchy in a historical sequence. Blake in *Jerusalem* displays a remarkable anticipation of the initial stages of Lerner's model. Blake, like Lerner, locates the beginning of "fallen" history in the patriarchal suppression and control of women's sexual behavior. He develops a notion implicit in Lerner's model into a cardinal point of his myth: the destructive dualisms of Western thought, which the poet has been bent on exposing ever since *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, are in *Jerusalem* revealed to be rooted in the primal separation of women into two camps, "good" (chaste) women and whores. The division of females into good women and bad women provoked the development of the moral code that Blake hates, with its radical separation of good and evil, heaven and hell, holy and profane, pure and defiled. In *Jerusalem*, the initial moment of this separation is depicted in Albion's separation of the "good" woman Vala, who is actually sinister, from the "bad" Jerusalem, whose only sins are her sexual openness and her capacity for self-sacrifice. The veil of Vala is perhaps the poem's central trope; it becomes in Blake's hands the symbol of everything that separates humankind from its salvation. In the end, Jerusalem and Vala are re-joined as a "whole" woman, Britannia.

The latter stages of Lerner's model, however, diverge from and even oppose Blake's vision. In *Jerusalem*, Blake would replace the patriarchy with a (male) brotherhood bonded by a covenant. The covenant of brothers is indeed a part of Lerner's structure, but for her it represents not the overthrow of patriarchy, but its ultimate consolidation. Blake's ideal brotherhood, in which women are shared among the brothers, contains all the qualities to which Lerner objects. Further, Blake doesn't appropriate female procreancy outright, but in *Jerusalem*, as in his earlier poetry, he denigrates "merely" natural and biological creation and seeks to subsume it under a "higher" creativity, that of artistic inspiration, a quality which is portrayed as decisively masculine, because it involves the (for Blake) quintessentially masculine ability to organize a "female" and passive perceptual world.

Lerner's sequential model of patriarchal history has as its culmination the production of a type of metaphorical construct that in her view has fundamentally distorted all Western thought. She describes this body of tropes as configuring "the symbolic devaluing of women in relation to the divine" (10). For Blake in *Jerusalem*, this hierarchical rela-

tionship is not considered a metaphor, but rather the principle by which the poet's mythic universe is organized; it is ultimately the one element in the Blakean cosmos that seems *not* to be trope, but a categorical imperative. The devaluing of the feminine is everywhere implicit in Blake's construction of the relationship of masculine self to female Emanation, and *Jerusalem* concludes with a vision of a post-apocalyptic world in which this hierarchy of self and Emanation is still firmly in place. Blake's vision is anti-patriarchal while still being hierarchically masculinist. In contemporary terms, Blake has made gender-as-a-social-construction identical with gender-as-essence. This is precisely the sort of transformation of a metaphor into a fundamental principle of existence which Blake in other situations recognizes immediately as Natural Religion.

Having struck a tone critical of Blake, let me rush momentarily to his defense. It would be disingenuous to take Blake to task for not meeting the standards of a later era in his treatment of gender, or to suggest that he was in some way worse on the issue than most other writers of the time (in fact, I am going to imply the opposite). To single Blake out for special personal condemnation would indeed undermine any sort of feminist argument predicated upon a belief in the socially-constructed nature of attitudes about gender. The purpose of this essay then, is not to establish Blake's sexism (that has been done by Fox, Mellor and others) or even to criticize it, so much as to demonstrate what a crucial role the notion of gender-hierarchy plays in the form and functioning of Blake's visionary cosmos. If it proves impossible in this analysis to suppress an occasional note of late-twentieth-century dismay, it is only because the poet *does* reject so many of the attitudes of his era that encounters with his sexist formulations, even after repeated readings, are always slightly startling. The fact that gender seems to be an exception to a general rule perhaps tells us less about Blake than about his and our culture.

However, if gender inequality is accepted as an organizing principle in *Jerusalem*, I believe the poem can be rescrutinized to yield up new insights. Blake's sexism is no less intricately imaged than the other parts of his myth, and his depiction of female characters, while by contemporary standards perhaps less progressive than other parts of his artistic world, is no less powerful. Indeed, I will imply below that, as with Picasso in our own era, these female portraits represent some of the most intensely rendered of Blake's "Visionary Forms Dramatic" precisely because of the anxiety they inspire in the poet.

I

The patriarch whose fall and redemption are the subject of *Jerusalem* is Albion, Blake's Universal Man. His fall was also described in *The Four Zoas*, but there the Zoas themselves (the components of Albion's unfallen self) took center stage. In *Jerusalem*, the Zoas are relatively minor play-

ers, and the focus is on Albion himself, his sons and daughters, and Jerusalem, "the Emanation of the Giant Albion," as the poem's title informs us. The first half of *Jerusalem* deals with Albion's fall into "Eternal Death." One of the most important models for the story of Albion's fall is the Book of Job, which Blake in fact illustrated near the end of his life. Like Albion, Job is a patriarch who loses his family and then has it restored to him. S. Foster Damon, in his book on the Job engravings, maintains that Blake's images interpret the Job story as an internal, psychological drama: Job doesn't lose his children to physical catastrophe, rather he loses their affection and respect due to his self-righteous morality.⁸ *Jerusalem* operates on a similarly psychological level: when Albion's Spectre and Emanation come to the Divine Humanity saying "We alone are escaped" (43:29, E 191), a direct reference to Job 1:15, they are not fleeing a massacre (as in the Bible story), but rather from Albion's own darkened psyche and the fallen world it generates around itself, "Albions darkning [r]ocks" (43:28, E 191). For Blake, as always, psychology constitutes geography.

Jerusalem begins with the fall of Albion already in progress. The Divine Vision calls out:

return Albion! return!
Thy brethren call thee, and thy fathers, and thy sons,
Thy nurses, and thy mothers, thy sisters and thy
daughters
Weep at thy souls disease, and the Divine Vision is
darkend:

(4:10-13, E 146)

Albion, like Job, has lost his family and been afflicted with disease. The problem, ironically, is patriarchy: in seeking to hold and protect his family, Albion has in fact lost them spiritually, because of his tyrannical possessiveness. Albion's specific error is to hide his Emanation from the Divine Humanity—that is, to restrict her sexual favors to him alone, the act which Lerner theorized was the crucial first move in the creation of patriarchy (the Emanation in this poem has characteristics of both a wife and a daughter). With this event, jealousy comes into the world: "So spoke Albion in jealous fears, hiding his Emanation" (4:33, E 147).

So *Jerusalem* begins *in medias res*, as does a classical epic. The fall of Albion will be recapitulated throughout the poem. In asserting patriarchal control, Albion has lost control; his sons, the products of patriarchy, now control England while Albion lies helpless in a dream of Eternal Death. The illustration at the bottom of plate 9 shows the fallen Albion prostrate on the ground.⁹ As Erdman notes, however, Albion's

⁸ S. Foster Damon, *Blake's Job* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1966) 3. This has become the generally accepted interpretation of the Job engravings. The Job series is also linked to *Jerusalem* by the "Druid" trilithons (Blakean symbols of Natural Religion) that appear in both sets of illustrations.

⁹ The reference is to Copy D, as reproduced in David V. Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974) 288. All

eyes are open, leading us to believe that his stupor is self-willed. The next plate depicts the fallen rule of Albion's sons, who are characterized by Morton Paley as "the objects of [Albion's] aggression disguised as justice"¹⁰:

And this is the manner of the Sons of Albion in their strength
They take the Two Contraries which are call'd Qualities, with which
Every Substance is clothed, they name them Good & Evil
From them they make an Abstract, which is a Negation

(10:7-10, E 152-53)

The separation of the "good" from the "evil" woman (in Lerner's terms, the veiled is opposed to the unveiled woman; in Blake's terms, Vala—her name, of course, punning on "veil"—is separated from Jerusalem) has led to a moral code of good and evil that becomes increasingly abstract, and which characterizes everything regarding the body as sinful. Vala and Jerusalem, body and spirit, are properly dynamic contraries; the Sons have separated them into negating opposites. These historical developments find their culmination in a god who is male and totally abstract/transcendent. The transformation of the patriarch into an abstract father-god means that patriarchy can live on even though the patriarch himself (or an overtly patriarchal religion) may appear to be dead, like the paralyzed Albion. Patriarchy continues to operate, reproducing itself with mechanical persistence: this is one significance of the turning of the "Starry Wheels," the activity of Albion's Sons. The Twelve Sons form themselves into "Three Immense Wheels" (18:8, E 163), because they are "Jealous of Jerusalem's children" (18:6, E 163), and covetous of their heritage as Albion's lawful sons by Vala.

The Sons want Jerusalem to be cast out because, in the words of Harold Bloom, "if she is reunited to man, their reign ends" (E 934):

Cast! Cast ye Jerusalem forth! The Shadow of delusions!
The Harlot daughter! Mother of pity and dishonourable forgiveness
Our Father Albions sin and shame!

(18:11-13, E 163)

The Sons complain that their father has destroyed the patriarchal family by his indiscretions with Jerusalem. With

plate numbers refer to the *Illuminated Blake* reproduction. In other copies, Blake changed the order of some of the plates in chapter 2. The order in the reproduction in *Illuminated Blake* corresponds to the order in *William Blake*.

¹⁰ Morton D. Paley, *The Continuing City* 221.

their cry for punishment, they think they are redressing their father's crimes; in fact, they are repeating them, because it was Albion who first declared Jerusalem sinful. In this ironic way, the sins of the fathers are visited on the children, and patriarchy replicates itself through the cycle of guilt and repression. The Sons pledge allegiance to:

Babylon the City of Vala, the Goddess Virgin-Mother.
She is our Mother! Nature! Jerusalem is our Harlot-Sister
Return'd with Children of pollution, to defile our House,
With Sin and Shame.

(18:29-32, E 163)

Vala and Jerusalem were originally one, in the form of Britannia. In casting Jerusalem out, the Sons are only furthering the initial act of Albion, who separated the two and covered Vala with the veil of patriarchal property.

This issue of property underlies Albion's plight:

His Children exil'd from his breast pass to and fro
before him
His birds are silent on his hills, flocks die beneath his branches
His tents are fall'n! his trumpets, and the sweet sound of his harp
Are silent on his clouded hills, that belch forth storms & fire.
His milk of Cows, & honey of Bees, & fruit of golden harvest,
Is gather'd in the scorching heat, & in the driving rain:

(19:1-6, E 163-64)

Albion's loss is here, as in Blake's Job illustrations, both internal and external. Albion's wealth is at once the true riches of the realized spirit and senses, and the material, projected forms in which the patriarch tries unsuccessfully to capture and hold those riches. The act of projection is in itself a loss: in creating wealth, Albion in fact loses it. His loss becomes a loss of riches as well as family (Albion's children are similarly both the disowned parts of himself and the real children whom he alienates by that act of disowning). Blake here anticipates Lerner's view that all wealth comes not from labor, as in Marx, but from male control of woman's sexuality, the act which for Lerner is the very origin of private property. The same imagery of loss of wealth pervades Albion's own description of his situation:

Shame divides Families. Shame hath divided Albion
in sunder!
First fled my Sons, & then my Daughters, then my Wild Animations
My Cattle next, last ev'n the Dog of my Gate. the Forests fled
The Corn-fields, & the breathing Gardens outside separated

(21:6-9, E 166)

Albion's complaint, earlier in the same lament, that "The disease of Shame covers me from head to feet: I have no hope / Every boil on my body is a separate & deadly Sin" (21:3-4, *E* 166), again links him to Job, who was likewise afflicted with boils. The boils of Blake's Albion/Job are really an inner "disease of Shame"; the loss of his children is not their physical death but the loss of their love and respect, and the loss of wealth and property is not only a material loss but, as noted above, the loss of the full realization of the spirit and of the senses in all their abundance. These losses come to pass as a result of Albion's desire to control the sexuality and fertility of woman. Albion now has control over woman, but has lost the capacity for sexual joy because sin and guilt are the vehicle of that control. He mourns "Vala! O that thou wert pure! / That the deep wound of Sin might be clos'd up with the Needle" (21:12-13, *E* 166), but it was he himself who made the vagina sinful when he made it the source of wealth. Albion eventually comes to look back nostalgically on a time when "Albion covered the whole Earth" (24:44, *E* 170) because woman's sexuality had not been divided and apportioned.

As Paley points out, Albion in Jerusalem "takes on many of the characteristics assigned to Urizen-figures in Blake's earlier works."¹¹ A plea by Jerusalem makes it clear that Albion has both Urizen's sense of sin and his capacity for reductive over-analysis:

Then spoke Jerusalem O Albion! my Father Albion
Why wilt thou number every little fibre of my Soul
Spreading them out before the Sun like stalks of flax
to dry?
The Infant Joy is beautiful, but its anatomy
Horrible ghastr & deadly!
(22:19-23, *E* 167)

Blake has actually made two significant switches here: not only has Albion been described in Urizenic terms, but Jerusalem speaks the same words with which Tharmas accuses Enion in *The Four Zoas* 4:29-33 (*E* 302). There, the (male) Tharmas complained of Enion's (female) jealousy. Blake's transfer of the speech to the female Jerusalem makes clear the paranoia behind Tharmas's declaration in the earlier poem: his need to dominate, rather than woman's jealousy, is the ultimate source of sexual guilt.

As with Urizen in *The Four Zoas*, the masculine triumph of Albion is actually a triumph of Vala. Albion pleads:

But come O Vala with knife & cup: drain my blood
To the last drop! then hide me in thy Scarlet Tabernacle
For I see Luvah whom I slew. I behold him in my Spectre
(22:29-31, *E* 167-68)

¹¹ Paley 198.

He has accepted the veil of Vala, which he himself imposed, as a final reality, and he is afflicted with an unbearable sense of guilt because his institution of sin has "slain" humankind's passional life. Albion can think of no remedy but to elevate Vala into a virgin-goddess and to offer himself as a human sacrifice. In terms of Lerner's historical model, Albion here is at the stage where patriarchy institutionalizes and encourages the worship of the mother-goddess; Babylon was such a civilization. Whereas Lerner sees the religion of the goddess as having both positive and negative aspects (the goddess is a powerful female, but her power is restricted to sexuality and fertility), Blake can see any goddess-worship only as a form of Natural Religion, demanding human sacrifice.

In order to replace this constant blood-sacrifice, Albion takes Vala's veil and uses it as a "Veil of Moral Virtue, woven for Cruel Laws" (23:22, *E* 168). This corresponds to a stage in Lerner's model where the religion of the goddess is suppressed and supplanted by the moral religion of the abstract and invisible father-god. This has the advantage for Albion of changing his position from that of accused to that of accuser: "every Act a Crime, and Albion the punisher & judge" (28:4, *E* 174). He can now condemn his offspring instead of vice versa: the patriarch has resumed his position of authority. The Cities of England make a last effort to redeem him, asking

What is a Wife & what is a Harlot? What is a Church?
& What
Is a Theatre? Are they Two & not One? can they Exist
Separate?
Are not Religion & Politics the Same Thing? Brotherhood
is Religion
O Demonstrations of Reason Dividing Families in
Cruelty & Pride!

(57:8-11, *E* 207)

The separation of "Wife" from "Harlot," in *Jerusalem* and in Lerner's model, is the source, the first separation from which other divisions spring. The patriarchal family is broken by this same chain of separations, but however broken, divided, "dysfunctional" in the current parlance, the patriarchal family still perpetuates itself through the mechanistic power of guilt. Albion, his fall complete, sinks down to the Rock of Ages, where he remains until the apocalypse.

II

Jerusalem and Vala represent Blake's most sophisticated development of positive and negative female figures, yet a problem inherent in this dichotomy from its first appearance in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* remains: to use Paley's words, "Blake's ranging of female figures along the lines of the Jerusalem-principle and the Vala-principle

threatens to become congruent with the old cultural bifurcation" that Blake ostensibly wants to protest.¹² Almost all the women in the poem are subsumed as "surrogates" (Paley's term) of Jerusalem or Vala. As surrogates of Jerusalem, Paley lists Erin, Dinah, Rosamund, Oothoon and Mary, each of whom represents "an aspect of redemption through female love."¹³ Vala's camp includes Rahab and Tirzah, familiar from the earlier poetry, and the malevolent Daughters of Albion, chief among them Cambel and Gwendolen (the one important female figure not connected to either Jerusalem or Vala is Enitharmon, about whom more later). In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake was intent upon questioning the validity of oppositional thinking altogether ("Excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps" [8:26, E 36]). The opposition of the two groups of women is a similarly false dualism, created by the deluded Albion. However, Blake's presentation of the inversion of the dualism as an apocalyptic revelation—Jerusalem, the bad woman is really good; the chaste Vala is really evil—has the effect of making the opposition seem authoritative, with only the specific terms of the dichotomy brought into question.

In dividing Jerusalem from Vala, Albion invents sin and accuses Jerusalem of its commission:

Jerusalem! dissembler Jerusalem! I look into thy bosom:
I discover thy secret places: Cordella! I behold
Thee whom I thought pure as the heavens in innocence & fear:

(21:18-20, E 166)

The echoes of Lear and Cordelia are appropriate (one of the Daughters of Albion is named Ragan as well): Lear was another mistaken patriarch involved in the division of property and the desire to possess *all* of his daughters' love. Vala is the real dissembler and hider of secrets; her secret is that the patriarchal division of women into virgins and whores is a deception. Albion accedes to the demands of Vala and his sons and daughters and casts Jerusalem out. Los later encounters her as he wanders the night streets of London, the domain of the impoverished (45:39-43, E 195). This is Jerusalem's appropriate place, because in casting out Jerusalem, Albion created private property and social classes (as in Lerner's theory), dividing rich and poor.

Jerusalem here links the division of women into two camps with the division of humanity into impoverished and wealthy classes. Vala wears the veil which is an ancient signifier of both the married woman and the priestess or nun (often spoken of as being married to the deity).¹⁴ The

¹² Paley 194.

¹³ Paley 185.

¹⁴ David G. Riede, "The Symbolism of the Loins in Blake's *Jerusalem*" (see n5) links the veil to the physical hymen "and . . . its simultaneous meaning as the cover of mystery" (553). The veil of the wife or

veil denotes that the woman is property, an item of wealth, but as such she is also under the protection of patriarchal power in either its secular or ecclesiastical form, and therefore enjoys certain privileges. The unveiled woman has no protector, no connection with wealth and consequently no status. Jerusalem therefore dwells among the wretched, where the Daughters of Los are building Golgonooza in the midst of the squalor of the fallen city of London:

Terrible their distress & their sorrow cannot be utterd
And another Daughter of Los sat at the Spinning Wheel
Endless their labour, with bitter food, void of sleep,
Tho hungry they labour: they rouze themselves anxious
Hour after hour labouring at the whirling Wheel
Many Wheels & as many lovely Daughters sit weeping

(59:28-33, E 209)

The Daughters weave to re-form the ancient work of Vala, who wove the veil of fallen nature. The spinning wheels they turn indicate the source of their suffering in the Starry Wheels of patriarchal Deism turned by Albion's Sons. Never before, except perhaps in "London," has Blake so clearly based his portrayal on real scenes of the exploitation of women in the London of his day. The Divine Voice searches for Jerusalem and finds her

closed in the Dungeons of Babylon
Her Form was held by Beulahs Daughters. but all
within unseen
She sat at the Mills, her hair unbound her feet naked
Cut with the flints: her tears run down, her reason
grows like
The Wheel of Hand. incessant turning day & night
without rest

(60:39-43, E 210)

This is the fate of women without a "veil," without the protection of a male.

Jerusalem dwells here because the oppressed necessarily know the reality of the spirit, the spirit being all they have because their physical life is bondage. Yet the suffering can become so intense that even the consolations of the spirit are lost: "Insane she raves upon the winds hoarse, inarticulate" (60:44, E 210). In despair, Jerusalem questions the existence of God, the "Human Imagination" (60:57, E 211). To comfort her, the Divine Voice tells her Blake's revisionist version of the story of Joseph and Mary, in which Mary

the nun is a kind of permanent hymen, which signifies the control and protection of the woman's sexuality by patriarchal institutions. "Once the veil is torn, the loins lose their all-obsessing importance," Riede goes on to say (557), describing Blake's apocalypse as a deliverance from the tyranny of genitality. In *Jerusalem*, Blake establishes the connection between this fallen genitality and the obsession with material wealth.

has been impregnated not by God but simply by a man other than her husband. Joseph at first throws her out as a harlot, but he hears the Divine Voice in a dream and realizes he must forgive Mary and take her back. Jerusalem realizes her essential humanity is still unsullied within her and takes heart: "Every Harlot was once a Virgin: every Criminal an Infant Love!" (61:52, E 212).

Blake has affirmed woman's right to a sexual freedom commensurate with that of man; but more importantly, Joseph has not only forgiven Mary, but renounced as well the fundamental privilege of all patriarchy: he has accepted as his own offspring the impending child of his wife by another man. Mary's song of freedom is a chant of female sexuality unleashed:

Then Mary burst forth into a Song! she flowed like a
River of
Many Streams in the arms of Joseph & gave forth her
tears of joy
Like many waters, and Emanating into gardens & pal-
aces upon
Euphrates & to forests & floods & animals wild & tame
from
Gihon to Hiddekel, & to corn fields & villages & in-
habitants
(61:28-32, E 212)

Blake's symbolism corroborates Lerner's view that patriarchal society is founded upon the control of female sexuality: the rushing torrent of Mary's freed libido in effect reclaims all the institutions and products of the society built upon the repression of that sexual force.

However, Blake, as much as any patriarch, *identifies* woman with sexuality, and treats the liberation of that sexuality as woman's total liberation. Blake envisions a good woman as either an ardent lover or nurturing mother. It is in the form of maternity that Mary offers consolation to Jerusalem: "Jerusalem recieved / The Infant into her hands in the Visions of Jehovah" (61:47-48, E 212). The long lament which is Jerusalem's last major speech in the poem makes clear her longing for the unfallen state which she experienced as a kind of universal maternity:

The Fifty-two Counties of England are hardend
against me
As if I was not their Mother, they despise me & cast
me out
London coverd the whole Earth. England encompassd
the Nations:
And all the Nations of the Earth were seen in the Cit-
ies of Albion:
My pillars reachd from sea to sea: London beheld me
come
From my east & from my west; he blessed me and gave
His children to my breasts, his sons & daughters to my
knees
(79:20-26, E 234-35)

In this state, the roles of lover and mother were appar-
ently conjoined:

the Lamb of God met me there.
There we walked as in our secret chamber among our
little ones
They looked upon our loves with joy: they beheld our
secret joys:
With holy raptures of adoration
(79:41-44, E 235)

Jerusalem in the illustration on plate 46 is depicted as just such an ideal conjunction of lover and mother. There Vala covers herself with the veil of mystery, and would cover the naked beauty of Jerusalem, who stands apart surrounded by three children.

Unlike Jerusalem, Vala is interested in power. Just as Blake does not imagine a good woman as other than a mother or lover, he likewise seems unable to see a willful female as other than evil. There are no women in Jerusalem who are strong-willed yet positive with which to balance the negativity of Vala and her surrogates. Blake does, however, integrate the malevolence of Vala with his analysis of the evils of patriarchy. Immediately after he separates Vala from Jerusalem, Vala is described as "spreading her scarlet Veil over Albion" (21:50, E 167). She is smart enough to see that the veil that disempowers also empowers; she can turn the patriarchal creation of sin against its author. Vala condemns Albion with his own invention, using the same words Enion spoke to Tharmas in *The Four Zoas*: "I have looked into the secret Soul of him I loved / And in the dark recesses found Sin & can never return" (22:14-15, E 167).

Vala celebrates her power in the aggregate form of the Daughters of Albion:

She cries: The Human is but a Worm, & thou O Male:
Thou art
Thyself Female, a Male: a breeder of Seed: a Son & Hus-
band: &
Lo.
The Human Divine is Womans Shadow, a Vapor in
the summers heat
Go assume Papal dignity thou Spectre, thou Male Har-
lot!
Arthur
Divide into the Kings of Europe in times remote O
Woman-born
And Woman-nourishd & Woman-educated &
Woman-scorn'd!
(64:12-17, E 215)

On one level, this speech is an apt and even feminist mockery of the pretensions of patriarchy ("Papal dignity;" "Arthur;" "the Kings of Europe") to some sort of divinely ordained masculine authority. Vala reminds Los that the edifice of his civilization is built upon the control of female sexuality. However, in the context of the entire poem,

we can see that the poet shares the patriarch's terror of being "feminized" by passive (i.e. "womanly") dependence on a woman for nurture and sexual gratification ("a Son & a Husband").

For instance, anxiety about the sexual power of woman predominates in Blake's depiction of the sacrificial altar of Natural Religion:

they sit naked upon the Stone of trial.
the Knife of flint passes over his howling Victim: his
blood
Gushes & stains the fair side of the fair Daug[h]ters of
Albion.

They pour cold water on his brain in front, to cause.
Lids to grow over his eyes in veils of tears: and caverns
To freeze over his nostrils, while they feed his tongue
from cups
And dishes of painted clay. Glowing with beauty &
cruelty:
They obscure the sun & the moon; no eye can look
upon them.

(66:19-21, 30-34, E 218)

This is the agony of Albion tormented by woman as depicted in plate 26, where Vala, Rahab and Tirzah wind his umbilical cord (or his bowels) into a ball. Woman is indicted as the agent of Natural Religion; her rejection of man causes the fall of the senses. In scenes like this, the indictment of the patriarchy recedes and woman seems to act as an independent agent of the fall.

Blake further condemns the female as the cause of war; the Daughters of Albion are

Ashamed to give Love openly to the piteous & merci-
ful Man
Counting him an imbecile mockery: but the Warrior
They adore: & his revenge cherish with the blood of
the Innocent

(67:19-21, E 220)

The Warriors then sing a song of homage:

I am drunk with unsatiated love
I must rush again to War: for the Virgin has frown'd &
refus'd
Sometimes I curse & sometimes bless thy fascinating
beauty

(68:62-64, E 222)

Certainly woman throughout history has been dangled before men as a prize of war, but Blake makes her the willful initiator of the conflict. Gwendolen, the Emanation of Hyle, confesses to as much a bit later: "I have mock'd those who refused cruelty & I have admired / The cruel Warrior" (81:1-2, E 238).

The entire drama of the Daughters of Albion triumphant takes place after Albion has collapsed onto the Rock of Ages. Blake seems to imply that with the patriarch unconscious, Vala, or the Female Will, runs amok. Still, the poet does juxtapose this nightmarish portrayal of female power against the sufferings of Jerusalem in the Dungeons of Babylon, and holding the two in balance, one could argue that Blake has in sum presented a myth that symbolizes the contention of Mary Wollstonecraft and other female writers of the era: while real women are exploited, men engage in the violent and tormented pursuit of ideal female beauty and the glittering wealth produced by woman's enslavement.¹⁵ Blake's remedy for this situation, however, is a problematic one:

they refuse liberty to the male; & not like Beulah
Where every Female delights to give her maiden to
her husband
The Female searches sea & land for gratification to
the Male Genius:

(69:14-17, E 223)

This passage is the culmination in Blake's poetry of a long series of declarations, beginning with Oothoon's famous speech in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (7:23-29, E 50) in which the female tolerance of male promiscuity is posited as a condition of the paradisaic state. Oothoon at least claims a corresponding sexual freedom for herself, but in subsequent poems (see, for example, Milton 33:1-9 [E 132]), where the Divine Voice reproaches the Daughters of Beulah for cutting off his sexual pleasures with jealousy) promiscuity is depicted as an exclusively masculine prerogative.

Blake's sexual paradise, Beulah, is a lower state than Eden, but still an ostensible improvement over our fallen world of Generation. In the latter world, Blake expresses an alternative to fallen reality through the actions of the character Los.

III

Los is for Blake the anti-patriarch, the character whose actions are meant to undo the negative heritage of patriarchy. In order to redeem Albion, Los must persuade him to put aside his patriarchal pride; to become a member of a brotherhood of (male) equals, as in the message of the Divine Vision: "I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and a friend" (4:18, E 146). Because "Los was the friend of Albion who most lov'd him" (35:12, E 181), Los calls the cities of

¹⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: Norton, 1988). Wollstonecraft succinctly refutes the canard that the beauty of women gives them a power over individual men that compensates for their powerlessness in society, commenting: "I do not wish women to have power over men, but over themselves" (62). Nelson Hilton in "An Original Story," 69-78 (see n3), provides a thorough summary of the circumstantial case that indicates Blake and Wollstonecraft might have known each other personally. Other female writers of the

England to help him restore Albion: "Brotherhood is Religion," (57:10, *E* 207), the Cities declare. In the poem's apocalyptic climax, Albion sees Los and Jesus become the same person, saying to Jesus, "I see thee in the likeness & similitude of Los my Friend" (96:22, *E* 256), and Jesus declares, "nor can Man exist but by Brotherhood" (96:28, *E* 256).¹⁶

In Gerda Lerner's model of history, however, brotherhood did not overthrow patriarchy; it refined and sustained it.¹⁷ In the Western tradition, this historical development is represented by the covenant made by God with Israel in Genesis and Exodus. Lerner argues that "The decisive change in the relationship of man to God occurs in the story of the covenant, and it is defined in such a way as to marginalize women."¹⁸ Women are definitively excluded from the access to God shared by members of this brotherhood.

Blake never uses the word "covenant" before *Jerusalem*, yet there it appears six times, including four occasions on plate 98, the poem's apocalyptic conclusion. The poet declares:

And I heard Jehovah speak
Terrific from his Holy Place & saw the Words of the
Mutual Covenant Divine

In the Forgiveness of Sins according to the Covenant
of Jehovah. They Cry
Where is the Covenant of Priam, the Moral Virtues of
the Heathen

(98:40-41,45-46, *E* 258)

For Blake this new covenant fulfills the true covenant of

period who shared Wollstonecraft's condemnation of the cult of beauty were Mary Anne Radcliffe, *The Female Advocate* (New York: G. Olms, 1980); Mary Hays, *An Appeal to the Men of Great Britain on Behalf of Women* (New York: Garland, 1974), and even the later and much more conservative Priscilla Wakefield in *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (London: Darton, 1817). Blake shares these writers' disdain for the cult of female beauty, but not their parallel exaltation of woman's rational powers.

¹⁶ The most extensive recent discussion of Blake's notion of brotherhood is in Michael Ferber's *The Social Vision of William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) 69-88. Ferber notes that "The prime source of Blake's ideas about brotherhood, as about so much else, is the New Testament" (69) so that "Spiritual brotherhood is a state where none are inferior or superior and all equally share in the benevolence and joy, a state of unity founded on, and symbolized by, the Eternal Man who walks among us, Jesus the Imagination or Albion the collective man himself" (84). However, Ferber notes that Blake was deeply interested in liberty and fraternity but "had almost nothing to say . . . about equality" (68), an idea whose implications for the female become clear when Ferber remarks that the Christian fraternity upon which Blake modeled his own idea of brotherhood "is a fraternity in the literal sense: the only full participants are male" (86), and that, though "Blake's fraternity seems not to exclude women," still "Blake was content to deploy the traditional symbols and analogies, which bore indelibly the stamp of the patriarchal society where they were established" (87).

¹⁷ Lerner 180-99.

¹⁸ Lerner 188.

the Bible, but cancels the covenant of morality, which he regards as heathen. The emphasis of the new covenant on the forgiveness of sins is consonant with traditional Christianity. Nowhere does Blake imply that this new covenant includes women.

Lerner notes that the key ritual by which the Judaic covenant was reaffirmed, circumcision, by its very nature excludes women. She maintains that it marks the male as the older of procreative power, countering the goddess-religions in which priests were either castrated or else forced to give the fruit of their sexual couplings to the goddess.¹⁹ "Circumcision" is another word that never appears in Blake's earlier poetry; in *Jerusalem*, as Edward J. Rose points out, it appears nine times, always as a positive symbol.²⁰ As Rose also notes, Blake goes to great lengths in the poem "to contrast circumcision with Virginité" (16), portraying the latter negatively: the Eternals cry out, "Establishment of Truth depends on destruction of Falshood continually / On Circumcision: not on Viginité, O Reasoners of Albion" (55:65-66, *E* 205). Virginité for Blake relates to the religion of the goddess in its castrating mode; its modern incarnation is the cult of female modesty and chastity. The same "female" religion is condemned when Los's Spectre and Emanation, observing Albion's fall, see "the Sexual Religion in its embryon Uncircumcision" (44:11, *E* 193). In the apocalypse, the Divine Vision is seen "Circumscribing & Circumcising the excrementitious / Husk & Covering into Vacuum evaporating revealing the lineaments of Man" (98:18-19, *E* 257).

It is not surprising that the female in *Jerusalem* is frequently portrayed as the barrier to this new brotherhood that Los would create: Vala attempts to delude Albion that she is the true Jerusalem, declaring that "the Divine appearance is Brotherhood, but I am Love / Elevate into the Region of Brotherhood with my red fires" (29:52 - 30:1, *E* 176). Albion shrinks from the revelation Los would show him, "Rending the fibres of Brotherhood & in Feminine Allegories / Inclosing Los" (44:18-19, *E* 193). In the poem's ultimate crisis, Los posits the impossibility of male brotherhood without the submission of woman: "How then can I ever again be united as Man with Man / While thou my Emanation refusest my Fibres of dominion" (88:12-13, *E* 246). Implicit here and elsewhere is the notion that the ideal brotherhood would involve the sharing of women, a development that might at first appear to abolish woman's status as property but actually compounds it. Jerusalem, Blake's ideal female, yearns for the ancient times when she was shared in this manner:

Italy saw me, in sublime astonishment: France was
wholly mine:
As my garden & as my secret bath; Spain was my heav-

¹⁹ Lerner 191-92.

²⁰ Edward J. Rose, "Circumcision Symbolism in Blake's *Jerusalem*," *Studies in Romanticism* 8 (1968) 16-25.

enly couch:
I slept in his golden hills: the Lamb of God met me
there.

(79:39-41, E 235)

Jerusalem maintains that *she* was the owner of these places, but in fact her act of ownership was to yield herself up to one and all as a lover. Blake here means this woman-sharing to be pure metaphor, but it is a metaphor founded on the derogation of the feminine in relation to the masculine, in contrast to the democratic, egalitarian metaphor of sharing brothers that characterizes the ideal relations of males to other males in the poem.

IV

On plate 86 of *Jerusalem*, Los struggles with Enitharmon in what Harold Bloom calls "Los's own crisis with his Emanation" (E 944). The crisis is in fact the crisis of Blake's entire mythic structure; a crisis provoked by the contradictions inherent in the concept of gender on which the poet has based his visionary universe.

There are hints throughout the first three chapters of the epic that Blake is directing the poem toward a revelation about the sexes. There are in *Jerusalem* more usages of the word "sex" and its derivatives than in all of Blake's earlier writings combined. The word is sometimes employed in a sense subtly different than contemporary usage: in these instances, sex and the sexual are pejorative terms, as when Los's Spectre and Emanation perceive "the Sexual Religion in its embryon Uncircumcision" (44:11, E 193), or when the "Spectrous Uncircumcised Vegetation" of the Ulro forms "a Sexual Machine: an Virgin Form" (39:24-25, E 186-87) or when Los denounces Vala as "The Sexual Death living on accusation of Sin & Judgment" (64:22, E 215). When Blake speaks of the sexual here, he in fact means the *anti*-sexual (Milton O. Percival points out that the fall into sex is for Blake a fall into chastity²¹). The Sexual Religion is the patriarchal religion of chastity and the repression of sex; that is why it appears in the form of an aged virgin. Blake calls the anti-sexual "Sexual" because he believes that the sexual personality as we know it is the product of repression. The sexual "Garment," or persona, is for Blake put off in the act of sex, in which the two participants momentarily become one. Hence, by engaging in unrepressed sex, we become less "Sexual"; this is why Los can say of Beulah, the realm of sexual consummation, "Humanity knows not of Sex: wherefore are Sexes in Beulah?" (44:33, E 193).

This unrepressed sex is for Blake necessarily polymorphous, not centered upon genitality. Los therefore denounces "Sexual Organization," which is a false organization of the body around genitality: "O worm of sixty win-

ters said Los / Consider Sexual Organization & hide thee in the dust" (30:57-58, E 177). Sexual organization is overcome in embraces which are properly "Comingslings: from the Head even to the Feet; / And not a pompous High Priest entering by a Secret Place" (69:43-44, E 223). Blake's oft-quoted denunciation of the phallic here links the phallic to the patriarchal "Sexual" Religion in which the male hierophant presides over a mystery which is really the hidden and subjugated sexuality of woman.

At first, the Blakean "Sex" may sound like the contemporary "gender": a culturally-defined set of differences, often arbitrary and unjust. However, Blake also seems to believe that beneath this false, culturally-constituted set of differences there is a real and essential system of difference. Blake, as much as the patriarchy he condemns, fears the collapse of sexual difference, an event that he believes will throw humanity into the chaos of Ulro—the hell-realm that Blake associates with hermaphroditism. The separation of male and female becomes part of the eternal artistic labor of Los, with whom Blake is more closely identified in *Jerusalem* than ever before. In order that "Rational Philosophy" and "Mathematic Demonstration" might be removed from the realm of abstraction where they possess the power of religious mystery, Los splits them into gendered forms:

And Los fixes them on his Anvil, incessant his blows:
He fixes them with strong blows. placing the stones
& timbers.
To Create a World of Generation from the World of
Death:
Dividing the Masculine & Feminine: for the
comingling
Of Albions & Luvahs Spectres was Hermaphroditic.
(58: 16-20, E 207)

It is highly significant that Los here is depicted as a "divider." Almost everywhere else in the poem, it is Albion who divides and Los who seeks to unify.²² The maintenance of male and female identities is essential to the world of Generation; sexual ambiguity hints not of a higher world but of a fall into the "hermaphroditic" hell of Ulro.

Jerusalem uses the hermaphroditism trope extensively, and Blake links hermaphroditism directly to the anti-sexual "Sexual" of the Sexual Religion (I will presently deal with the difference between Blakean "hermaphroditism" and "androgyny"):

Albions Emanation which he had hidden in Jealousy
Appeared now in the frowning Chaos prolific upon

²² There is only one other instance where division is used in a positive sense associated with Los: on 91:52, E 252, where Los alters his Spectre "Till he had completely divided him into a separate space." This separation of the Spectre is analogous to the necessary separation of the two genders in Blake's myth, each to its own "separate space."

²¹ Milton O. Percival, *William Blake's Circle of Destiny*, 117.

the Chaos
Reflecting back to Albion in Sexual Reasoning Her-
maphroditic

(29:26-28, E 175)

Albion, like Satan in *Milton*, has become "feminized" by his jealous failure to project his Emanation, which he then internalizes. Without the crucial difference produced by gender, Blake's system collapses into "frowning Chaos prolific upon the Chaos." It is therefore appropriate to see anxiety about gender underlying Los's tirades against the Female Will:

What may Man be? who can tell! but what may Woman
be?
To have power over Man from Cradle to corruptible
Grave.
There is a Throne in every Man, it is the Throne of
God
This woman has claim'd as her own & Man is no more!
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?

(30:25-31, E 176)

The female survives, hidden beneath the orthodox surface of modern patriarchal religion, which through repression makes female sexuality seem even more mysterious and secret than the ancient religions of the goddess. A bit later, the same Female Will is indicted for the latest development of Natural Religion, an anti-sexual, mechanistic Deism: "Is this the Female Will O ye lovely Daughters of Albion. To / Converse concerning Weight & Distance in the Wilds of Newton & Locke" (30:39-40, E 177).

Blake can only see any degree of female willfulness as a negative, "hermaphroditic" mingling of genders. However, he does seem to see the apparent contradiction between his ostensibly egalitarian beliefs and a visionary universe that derives its structure from a dualistic hierarchy of gender, in which one gender is central and primary and the other "emanated" and secondary. He briefly makes an attempt at a resolution of this contradiction near the end of chapter 3, in his exploration of the "Eternal States" of the Blakean universe, Ulro, Generation, Beulah and Eden/Eternity, previously charted in detail (and in terms of gender) in *Milton*. The poet mentions that Albion's Sons and Daughters "intermarry in Beulah / For all are Men in Eternity" (71:14-15, E 225). In this otherwise insignificant passage, Blake states outright something that his imagery has long implied: Eden/Eternity, the ultimate fulfillment of the human, is an entirely masculine realm. For the first time, Blake tells us the fate of women in paradise: they may enter, but only as males, leaving all female traits behind in the lower realms. This declaration does seem to indicate that Blake sees the need for some form of female equality in a redeemed, fully human universe. The problems, however,

are fairly obvious: anything feminine or female is implicitly an indicator of the fallen state. Blake possibly has in mind a strategy that Alan Richardson has identified as characteristic of male romantic writers: the attempt to "colonize" the feminine by appropriating traditionally female characteristics as a part of a new "higher" masculine self.²³

One can understand, then, the reluctance of Enitharmon to accept Los's "proposition" at the climax of *Jerusalem*. The most human of Blake's females, and the one most identified with Catherine Blake, Enitharmon has been strangely absent from the poem since her separation from the body of Los in 17:49-55 (E 162). For the second time in the poem, Enitharmon divides away from Los, implying an even deeper rift between male and female: "Two Wills they had; Two Intellects: & not as in times of old" (86:61, E 245). A state which in fact sounds like a condition of equality is lamented by the poet.

Los and Enitharmon begin a game of sexual hide and seek that recalls "The Mental Traveller." Finally, Los speaks his love:

O lovely Enitharmon: I behold thy graceful forms
Moving beside me till intoxicated with the woven laby-
rinth
Of beauty & perfection my wild fibres shoot in veins
Of blood thro all my nervous limbs. soon overgrown
in roots
I shall be closed from thy sight. sieze 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: I will
fix them
With pulsations. we will divide them into Sons &
Daughters
To live in thy Bosoms translucence as in an eternal
morning

(87:3-11, E 246)

Los is asking Enitharmon to help him control the "fibres" of sexual desire, to convert sexual energy into the "Sons & Daughters" of creative work. This is the offer that Enitharmon accepted at the climax of *The Four Zoas*; to

²³ Alan Richardson, "Romanticism and the Colonization of the Feminine" in Anne K. Mellor, ed., *Romanticism and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) 13-26. It can be demonstrated that Blake has indeed employed Richardson's "colonization" strategy in earlier poems: in *Milton*, for instance, Blake maps a metaphysics that in a traditional fashion defines time as masculine (Los) and space as female (Enitharmon). However, Los declares in 22:17 (E 117) that "both Time & Space obey my will" indicating that in Blake's apocalypse, male time *subsumes* female space. Again in *Milton*, masculine Time is the redeemer; he is "the mercy of Eternity," (24:72, E 121), while the female's place is vital but subordinate: "And between every two Moments stands a Daughter of Beulah / To feed the Sleepers on their Couches with maternal care." (28:48-49, E 126). The redeeming quality of female space comes into being only as a consequence of the creation of Moments of Time by Los.

assist Los in the creation of redemptive "counterparts" to the minute particulars of the fallen world. This time Enitharmon has a different answer:

No! I will sieze thy Fibres & weave
Them: not as thou wilt but as I will, for I will Create
A round Womb beneath my bosom lest I also be
overwoven
With Love; be thou assured I never will be thy slave
Let Mans delight be love; but Womans delight be Pride
In Eden our loves were the same here they are oppo-
site
I have Loves of my own

(87:12-18, E 246)

Blake allows Enitharmon's voice considerable autonomy, and she speaks well, perhaps even better than the poet realizes. For the first time, one of Blake's women speaks not merely willfully but in a manner akin to Mary Wollstonecraft: "be thou assured I never will be thy slave." When Enitharmon vows to "Create a round Womb" from the fibres of Los, she means that she would "naturalize" the sexual energies to deal with the needs of this world, not Los's ideal world of art. She subsequently gives a rationale for this: "In Eden our loves were the same here they are opposite." She concisely informs Los that the needs of men and women in an unjust world may be quite different. The prior statement of Enitharmon, "Let Mans delight be love; but Womans delight be Pride," echoes Gwendolen's earlier statement of 81:6. Blake begins to sound like the Restoration authors (whom he disliked intensely) who never tired of accusing woman of pride; he never suggests that pride might be woman's understandable response to a situation in which the female's only path to power is through beauty.

Enitharmon is meant to seem perverse in rejecting Los, but she sounds altogether reasonable. Her best arguments are saved for last:

thou hidest Vala
From her these fibres shoot to shut me in a Grave.
You are Albions Victim, he has set his Daughter in your
path

(87:22-24, E 246)

Enitharmon's analysis is superior to that of Los, who thinks he opposes Vala, but in fact practices a covert Natural Religion in the form of sexism. Los is not the foe of patriarchy, but rather, as "Albions victim," he has fallen into its trap: he thinks he will overturn patriarchy by replacing traditional legalistic authority with an authority linked to a principle of masculinity; in fact, this will only perpetuate the abuses of patriarchy in a new guise.

Los attempts to plead his case:

Man cannot unite with Man but by their Emanations

Which stand both Male & Female at the Gates of each
Humanity
How then can I ever again be united as Man with Man
While thou my Emanation refuseth my Fibres of
dominion.
When Souls mingle & join thro all the Fibres of Broth-
erhood
Can there be any secret joy on Earth greater than this?
(88:10-15, E 246)

Line 11 is key to the argument of those who maintain that Blake in *Jerusalem* is advocating androgyny; I will have more to say about it when I discuss Blake's concept of androgyny. That one very ambiguous line aside, Los is offering Enitharmon a bad bargain. She must receive his "Fibres of dominion," acknowledge his dominance, so that he can join with other men in "Fibres of Brotherhood"—in other words, Lerner's all-male society of the covenant, with women shared out among the brothers.

Enitharmon's response is redolent of Blake's *Europe*: as in that earlier work, the world is portrayed as a female hell, with woman as a demiurge, "This is Womans World" (88:16, E 247). The triumph of the Female Will brings about the final manifestation of Vala as "A terrible indefinite Hermaphroditic form" (89:3, E 248), the ultimate consolidation of the monstrous hermaphrodites of Blake's myth: the Covering Cherub. The Cherub amalgamates Rahab-Tirzah, the Whore of Babylon, and all of the "female-males" and "male-females" who block entry into paradise.

On the heels of this revelation, Blake makes a direct attempt to resolve the contradictions in his sexual myth. This he would do by putting forth a concept of gender as a fallen state, ultimately to be replaced by an androgyny that is to be distinguished from this fallen hermaphroditism. The fall is first described: "The Feminine separates from the Masculine & both from Man, / Ceasing to be His Emanations, Life to Themselves assuming!" (90:1-2, E 249). If "Man" is read as humanity, the statement might be read as a very contemporary formulation of the problem of gender as a reductive division of all that is human into a binary set of characteristics. Blake finds the source of this problem in the appropriation of what he calls "Universal Characteristics" by individuals:

For Los said: When the Individual appropriates Uni-
versality
He divides into Male & Female: & when the Male &
Female,
Appropriate Individuality, they become an Eternal
Death.
Hermaphroditic worshippers of a God of cruelty & law!
(90:52-55, E 250)

This doctrine of Universal Characteristics is an extension of the of States as presented in *Milton*: individuals pass through States, but must avoid total identification with any

single State. To identify with a State is to freeze ourselves into a fixed, immutable Selfhood and to lose touch with our total humanity. Gender is one of these States; to over-identify with a single gender ironically makes us "hermaphroditic": we end up internalizing the sexual Other rather than finding it outside our selves. However, I believe that the "androgyny" that Blake would set against this negative hermaphroditism can be demonstrated to be nothing more than the personification of the familiar androcentric voice of Western literature, that voice which feminist critics have repeatedly accused of representing a masculinist agenda in the guise of an ungendered universalism.

Earlier, Los declared "Man cannot unite with Man but by their Emanations / Which stand both Male & Female at the Gates of each Humanity" (88:10-11, *E* 246). Thomas D. Frosch, a champion of Blake as a proponent of androgyny, interprets the lines:

This is a difficult passage and line 11 is capable of supporting contradictory interpretations. Each man might have four gates, for instance, as paradise does, and his emanations might be both "both Male & Female," or themselves androgynous. As I understand the lines, however, the suggestion seems to be that each Edenic Humanity emanates what we might consider to be two sexual persons, a male and a female, at its points of communication with other human forms, as if each Edenic being, then, appeared to others a radically unified couple.²⁴

The difficulty that Frosch has in describing Blake's concept of androgyny is typical of critical attempts to define this elusive proposition.²⁵ Frosch is probably close to the truth in describing the individual in the awakened Edenic Humanity as a "radically unified couple," but it is a couple in which the male has (in Los's words) "dominion" over and in fact *subsumes* the female. At the climax of *Milton*, Ololon is in fact incorporated into Blake-Los-Milton. The subsumption of the female by the male in Blake's poetry has been remarked upon by Alicia Ostriker, while the same motif in Blake's visual art has been noted by Anne K. Mellor.²⁶ The closing plates of *Jerusalem* show this same strategy at work, and Alan Richardson's principle of the

²⁴ Thomas D. Frosch, *The Awakening of Albion*, 174.

²⁵ Camille Paglia in *Sexual Personae* (New York: Viking Press, 1991) 291-92, comments that in *A Blake Dictionary*, S. Foster Damon "makes a distinction between hermaphrodite and androgyne that makes no sense whatever to me. Damon and Percival believe that the sexes are equal in the androgyne but that the female dominates in the hermaphrodite," and she adds a bit later, "The words hermaphrodite and androgyne should be synonymous." In point of fact, any figure in the poetry that seems at all androgynous is labelled hermaphroditic and condemned. The beings described as androgynous, in the positive sense invoked by Damon and Percival, are figured as masculine.

²⁶ Ostriker (see n3) 163; Mellor, "Blake's Portrayal of Women," 151. The two articles, taking similar critical stances toward Blake's sexual politics, appeared in the same issue of *Blake*.

"colonization" of the feminine by male romantic writers again seems to be an entirely appropriate characterization of Blake's narrative.

Los at the climax of the poem never directly resolves his crisis with Enitharmon; instead he turns to confront the Spectre. Spectre and Emanation have been linked since the beginning of the poem; they were the two survivors who escaped Albion's fall in chapter 2, and plate 44 shows them flying side by side into the arms of Los. The effect of this connection is to link the female with that which is most negative in the (male) psyche: fear, anger, vanity, phallogentrism. Los subdues his Spectre in the famous "It is easier to forgive an Enemy than to forgive a Friend" (91:1, *E* 251) speech that occupies the whole of plate 91. Los's victory comes from the renunciation of personal vanity, "In unpitying ruin driving down the pyramids of pride" (91:43, *E* 252). Through the abdication of pride, "Los altered his Spectre" (91:50, *E* 252), and he triumphs over Spectre and Emanation simultaneously.

There is no corresponding scene in which Los deals with the challenge of Enitharmon. After his contest with the Spectre, she reappears, already defeated and lamenting: "The Poets Song draws to its period & Enitharmon is no more" (92:8, *E* 252). The female will be subsumed in the masculine identity of the awakened Albion. Los informs her that "Sexes must vanish & cease / To be, when Albion arises from his dread repose O lovely Enitharmon" (92:13-14, *E* 252), but what he really means is that *woman* (traditionally designated as "the sex") will vanish; there is no indication that Los's masculine characteristics will disappear or in any way be transformed. In Blake's myth, woman resists the end of sexual division because it means a loss of power for her. Since in Blake's redeemed universe the mending of sexual division means the subsumption and containment of the female by the male, it is easy to see why woman would resist.

The last element of woman to vanish is her maternity. Enitharmon wails to her sons Rintrah and Palamabron, "The Mothers love of obedience is forgotten & you seek a Love / Of the pride of dominion" (93:4-5, *E* 253). Enitharmon's comments again seem a disturbingly accurate critique of Blake's own project. The poet will overturn the traditional patriarchal control of woman's sexuality by subsuming that sexuality into a masculine creativity that is "higher" than mere "natural" procreativity. Los, the new patriarch, reassures his Sons: "Fear not my Sons this Waking Death. he is become One with me / Behold him here! We shall not Die! we shall be united in Jesus" (93:18-19, *E* 253).

The rest of the poem deals with the awakening of Albion. Britannia, the reunified form of Jerusalem and Vala, lies across his prone body and attempts to rouse him. She moans in contrition, "In dreams of Chastity & Moral Law I have Murdered Albion! Ah! / . . . behold ye the Jealous Wife" (94:23-26, *E* 254). It is this wail of female self-abnegation

that wakes Albion, at which point

England who is Brittania enterd Albions bosom rejoicing,
Rejoicing in his indignation! adoring his wrathful rebuke.
She who adores not your frowns will only loathe your smiles

(95:22-24, E 255)

This, alas, is the apotheosis of Blakean woman. Brittania is subsumed by the male: her entry into "Albion's bosom rejoicing," as depicted on plates 96 and 99,²⁷ implies an incorporation into the male body. Brittania does not reappear in the poem.

The depiction of a postapocalyptic world in the remainder of *Jerusalem* bears out the earlier pronouncement that in Eden/Eternity "all are Men." The poet hears the "Vision of Albion" speak; the Vision of Albion is, as Blake's faculty of "Vision" has always been since the *Songs of Innocence*, an irreducibly masculine ability to organize perception. The Vision of Albion is identified with "The Universal Father" (97:6, E 256): patriarchy is not wiped out; rather, authority has been apportioned "universally" among the male members of a brotherhood; it is the final stage in Lerner's developmental model of patriarchal history.

There is, however, a hint of the persistence of the female at the poem's conclusion:

All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth & Stone. all
Human Forms identified, living going forth & returning wearied
Into the Planetary lives of Years Months Days & Hours reposing
And then Awaking into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality.

And I Heard the Name of their Emanations they are named Jerusalem

(99:1-5, E 258-59)

It seems fitting that, in the very last line of the epic that the poet intended to be his greatest statement, Blake's proliferating myth should come to rest upon its central contradiction, a contradiction that remains unresolved: a system that wishes to unify and equalize all persons is founded upon the principle of the dominance of a masculine subject over an emanated and secondary female object.

²⁷ Mellor, "Blake's Portrayal of Women," 151-52, sees subsumption at work in Plate 99 in the masculine characteristics of the body of Jerusalem. I see the Jerusalem-figure as female, and attribute its masculine musculature to Blake's problematic draftsmanship and his too-assiduous copying of Michelangelo, but I see a clearer suggestion of subsumption in the way that Albion/Jehovah/Urizen gathers Jerusalem in, coupled with her disappearance from the poetry.

R E V I E W

Veils, Infinity, a Roof, and "One thought" in Contemporary Art

A Note on Four Exhibitions

BY D. W. DÖRRBECKER

At the brink of the new millennium, Blake still hasn't found that large readership in the German-speaking countries which Henry Crabb Robinson had expected to grow so rapidly when drafting the essay he contributed to the *Vaterländisches Museum* in 1811. Therefore, it comes as a surprise to find that over the past few years Blake's works have inspired a series of exhibitions by contemporary artists in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland which may warrant a brief report.

Supposedly, only few of the visitors who came to see Verena Immenhauser's installation "Beneath the Veil of Vala" at the Berner Galerie in 1988 were fully aware of the Swiss artist's understanding of the symbol of Vala's veil/vale and its complex meaning in the poetry and art of William Blake. And yet, anybody ready to engage with the aesthetic experience offered by that installation must have felt the urge to question the relationship between the veil and the veiled, center and circumference, form and formlessness, the cycle of natural growth and decay (reigning in Vala's vale) and the ideas of stability and of eternity (governing a realm that lies beyond it). Employing soft transparent wrapping foils, Immenhauser created an environment inside the small gallery space which at first sight seemed devoid both of calculated form and all specific content. However, the movements of the visitors quite literally breathed life into the room which was filled with draped "veils" (illus. 1) hanging from the ceiling and hiding the measured dimensions of the walls. The softly whispering and ever-changing folds of the thin and shining plastic veils remained entirely abstract in shape, but functioned as an appropriate representation of Vala's veil of nature. Their rippling-rustling texture lured the sense of touch and the ear, while their utter refusal of all representational concreteness, the complete lack of linear (and optical) solidity, and their shimmering, silvery reflections, irritated and fascinated the eye.

In a sense, this finely tuned metaphor of Vala's art of seduction seemed related to Marcel Duchamp's famous "spider-web" installation for the Surrealist exhibition at 451 Madison Avenue in 1942. But it also anticipated such "physical sculptures" as the "Bodycheck" contributed by Flatz to the documenta IX in 1992, or the labyrinth of measured time made from hundreds of clocks, hanging folding rules,



1 Verena Immenhauser, "Untitled," a figural veil/a veiled figure, executed in preparation of the installation shown at Berne, Switz., dimensions vary, 1988. Collection of the artist.



2 Dieter Löchle, "Stony Roof," pencil and encaustic painting, 50 x 35 cm., 1994. Collection of the artist.

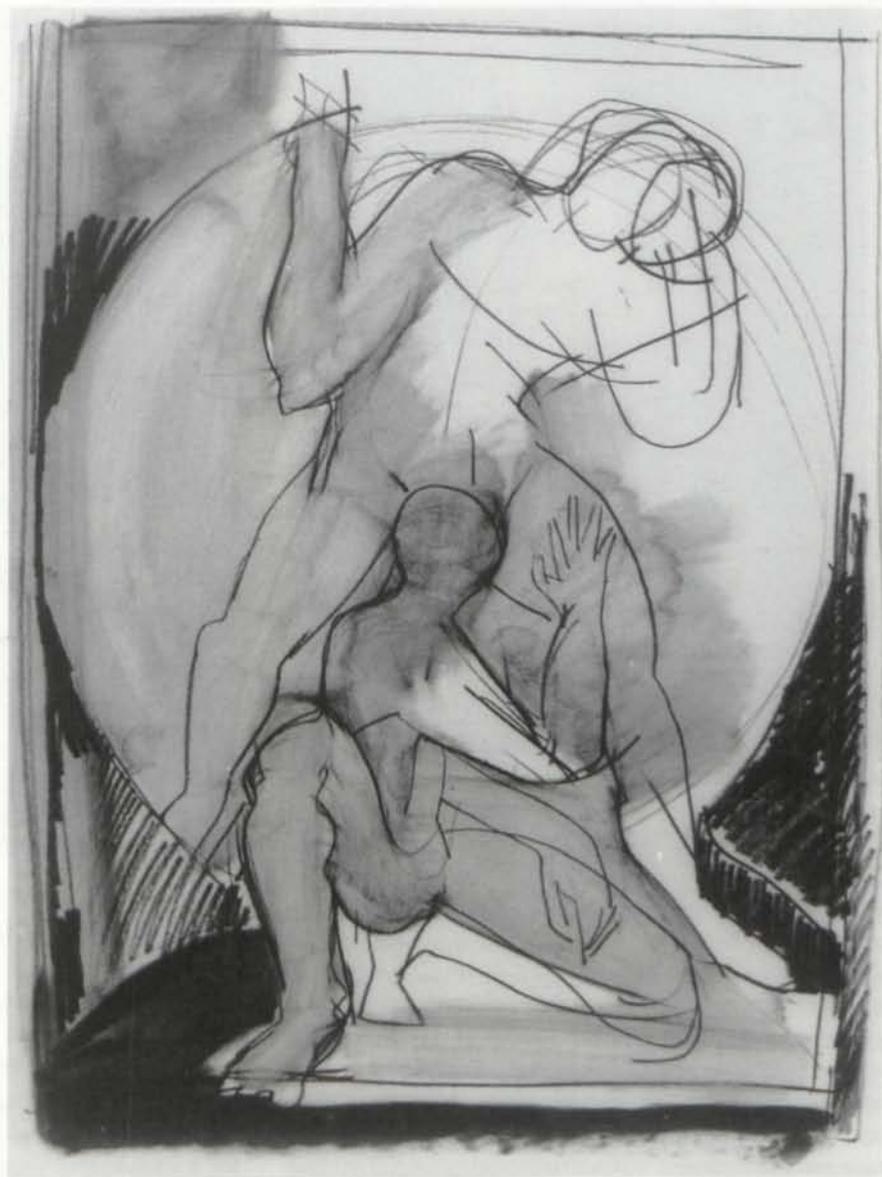
and "lost" digits that was shown by Cildo Meireles on the same occasion in Kassel. The magic and attractiveness which Blake and most of his (male?) readers fear in Vala was reflected by the artistic sorcery with which Immenhauser handled the insubstantiality of the translucent yet blinding and suffocating quality of her simple materials.

For his "1992 Infinite Painting on A Vision of the Last Judgment by William Blake 1808," shown in Berlin at the Zwinger Galerie, Nikolaus Utermöhlen mounted enlarged photocopies of Blake's "Vision" on thirteen aluminum panels (200 x 80 cm. each). The reproductions had been produced on a color photocopying machine which was manipulated by the artist so that a sequence of color variations resulted. Each panel (or, as Utermöhlen prefers to call them, each "spectre") displayed a different layering of the primary colors, blurring and distorting the clarity of Blake's original watercolor. Its design was thus supplanted with the cool glow of industrial colors which had been heightened by additional hand-tinted patterns and which produced the effect of a giant kaleidoscope. Utermöhlen's interest in the openness and mechanical "infinity" of possible color variations and in the configurations which can be assembled by grouping the aluminum panels on the gallery walls, pro-

duced a decorative color rhythm quite appropriate for a postmodern ice cream parlor. Sure enough, Utermöhlen's project may pass as yet another artistic experiment with the representational implications of technical reproduction and repetition. Moreover, the artist may well have hoped for a meaningful contrast between "classical form" and "modern technique" similar to the one achieved by, say, Jim Dine's appropriation of the Venus of Melos. However, I failed to trace any deeply felt conceptual relation between Utermöhlen's "Infinite Painting" and Blake's understanding of infinity or his idea of a Last Judgment. Rather, Blake's watercolor painting apparently had been chosen more or less at random, and the artist's references to a Blakean model served, in the end, as no more than a fairly banal attempt to dignify with iconographical content what was merely another more or less interesting experiment in replacing the old-fashioned brush with a xerox machine.

If Utermöhlen's central concern was that of a formalist, one will have to locate the works of Dieter Löchle at the other end of the spectrum. Under the title "Roof'd in from Eternity," his Blakean drawings, prints, and paintings were on show at the Tübingen university library in 1995. Almost devoid of color, Löchle's paintings relied on the simple opposition of darkness and light, created by black, white,

3 Dieter Löchle, "Milton," pencil on encaustic ground, 64.0 x 47.5 cm., 1995. Collection of the artist.



and thinly saturated yellowish washes. These almost unstructured encaustic color fields provide the backdrop for the artist's similarly simplified linear adaptation of Blake's figural language. Drawing with the brush, with pen and ink, or with black and white chalks in what seems a consciously retrospective manner, Löchle reinvents the imagery of the illuminated books. Visitors to the exhibition were allowed to gauge this reference to Blake's relief-etched designs in the modernized versions by means of a generous selection from the Trianon Press facsimiles of the illuminated books which was on show in the library's vestibule. Löchle handles his lines with great clarity and achieves solid, almost "architectural" compositions that are all based on only one or two figures (as in many of Blake's own illuminated pages). For example, the German painter has translated figural motifs from *Jerusalem* 41, *Milton* 21, the front-

tispiece for *Ahania*, and plates 10 and 17 from *Urizen* into his own pictorial idiom (illus. 2-3).

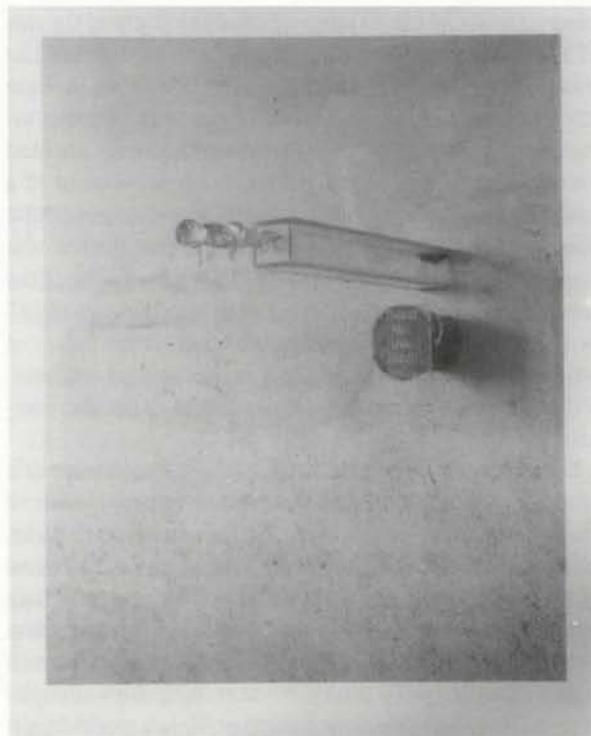
Occasionally, when confronted with the symbolic portrait heads and some of the eroticized designs which were included in the show, I felt struck by what seems a curiously straightforward approach to the problems and functions of contemporary visual representation, an approach bordering on the naive. However, Löchle's linear abbreviations of the "human form divine" generally work well enough as a modern interpretative response to Blake. Because the expressive use of bodily movements in Blake's designs is perpetuated in Löchle's pictorial homage, his images seem highly charged with symbolic energy and meaning. And it is here that they provide an antithesis to Utermöhlen's dominantly formalist concerns. At the same time, the austerity and abstract quality of Löchle's

draughtsmanship steer clear of the preoccupation with those “sublime,” “fantastic,” “weird,” and more narrative aspects of the art of Blake and Fuseli which have previously attracted the attention of other Austrian and German artists such as Günter Brus, Alfred Hrdlicka, or Horst Janssen in some of their exhibitions of the 1970s and 1980s.

Löchle's stylistic choices lead towards a relative independence of his images from their Blakean blueprints. But they draw the viewer's attention to such characteristics as the white-line technique—first in Löchle's own prints, drawings, and paintings, but then, on the way out and through the show-cases lined up in the entrance hall, also in Blake's illuminated prints. In this sense, “Roof'd in from Eternity” was a group exhibition, ideally suited for an academic library. Löchle not only paid homage to Blake, he also invited the visitors to find out for themselves what he had seen in Blake's colored relief-etchings, and how he had seen it.

An entirely different and certainly non-didactic approach was chosen for a fourth exhibition which presented a far more radical, avantgardist, and in its own way very exciting use of the raw materials provided by Blake for the making of contemporary art. The first major one-man show in Germany for the Spanish sculptor and installation artist Jaume Plensa was organized by the Städtische Galerie Göppingen in the summer of 1995. Plensa's art often combines the visual and the verbal in a surprising, some may say an absurd manner. While this relationship of image and text cannot be described as “narrative” in any common sense of the word, it succeeds in making familiar objects seem strange, and it creates “new” and challenging combinations which provoke the senses and the imagination. His recent work exposes the spectator to environments assembled from prosaic objects of the artist's own everyday life and from inscribed panels, boxes, or cages which are cast in synthetic resin. Together with two other installations, the Göppingen exhibition introduced Plensa's (as yet unfinished) project on Blake's “Proverbs of Hell” from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (illus. 4-5). Similar to Immenhauser's veils, but adding Blake's own words in blind-stamped letters on his polyester panels, Plensa's “Proverbs” provide a highly personal interpretation of Blake, the rich associations of which remain valid (or at least intellectually fascinating) even for an onlooker who is entirely unacquainted with the British poet-artist's works.

Most of the 1995 “Proverbs” consist of three elements, which are usually mounted at a right angle on the gallery's walls. The first of these elements is an object from the “hell” of the artist's studio work, such as a red plastic bucket which had been used in the preparation of the plaster Plensa employs in an early stage of his casting technique, or a cheap metal wastepaper basket which, one imagines, had once been filled with discarded sketches and studies for the artist's projects. The second element is a pillar, protruding



4 Jaume Plensa, “Proverbs of Hell 73: ‘Enough or too much,’” wall piece made from synthetic resin and a plastic bucket, 65 x 130 x 144 cm., 1995. Private collection, Barcelona, Spain; photo: Lluís Bover.

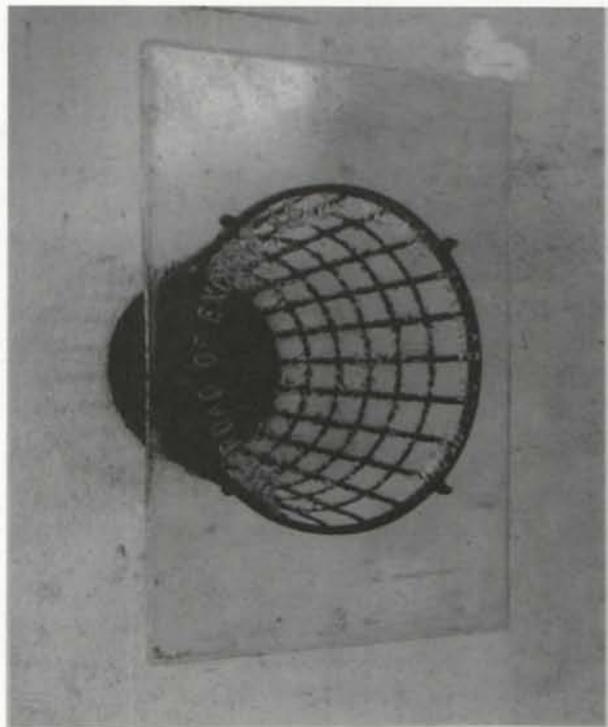
about three feet from the wall into the exhibition space. Attached to the top of this pillar, sometimes standing, sometimes dangling headlong, is a small statue of a naked child. Both the pillar and the statuette are cast from semi-transparent polyester resin. The naked child is placed in a position which seems to defy the law of gravity and often suggests that it is contemplating the object from everyday life and the third element, a cast polyester panel with Blake's proverb inscribed in relief. By reading/viewing, for example, “The busy bee has no time for sorrow” in the panel mounted on top of one of the waste-baskets, the small figures on their pillars supply the visitors with directions for the use of the entire installation.

At the same time the transparent three-dimensional figures prompt us to muse about the relationship between the various elements that have been combined for each of the “Proverbs” and outward reality—to ponder on the practical usefulness of a red plastic bucket, a usefulness which is lost once it is made part of a work of art—to realize that thereby it may, however, achieve a different function, and may as such become useful in a different sense—to contemplate the representation of the human figure in its relation to the abstract stereometry of the pillar-cube it is attached to—and, of course, to think about the continuing relevance of what Blake's devils have to say concerning the

nature, the social conditions and conditioning, and the role of the imagination in this world. One thing I didn't like about the exhibition at Göppingen: its title, "One thought fills immensity." In Plensa's work, just as in many other instances of contemporary installation and concept art (and even in Blake), formal repetitions, the reduplication of a specific motif or shape are of essential importance. I doubt, however, that an irony was intended, and that the title was meant to draw the spectator's attention to the filling of the "immensity" of the gallery space with just "One thought." Even if it was, "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom," and "Enough! or Too much" would have described Plensa's secular modernization of Blake more appropriately.

Each of these four exhibitions tells us about specific modes and possibilities of the creative appropriation of Blake's words and images. What Michelangelo was to Blake, Blake is to Löchle who—in the group of works discussed in the present note—literally/visually cites the elder artist's figural language and/or entire compositional arrangements. Not only is the artist consciously transforming Blakean models, he also wants the viewer to recognize his citations as such. Just as an editor or a critic of Blake's works might do, Löchle asks for the meaning which Blake's art may have for an audience separated from its initial production by two centuries. The tension between the historicity of the pictorial inventions and the actuality of their rendering in Löchle's "cover version," between the identity of the motifs and the discrepancy of the formal qualities of their representation is exactly where the "meaning" of these paintings and prints from 1994-95 appears to be situated. Löchle's insistence on visually confronting Blake's images (by means of the facsimiles included in the exhibition) with his own works demonstrates a historical awareness which in turn allows for linking his art with certain techniques of scholarly interpretation.

If Löchle's art is inspired by the "historical approach," Immenhauser's seems to provide a parallel with gender criticism. Those of the visitors to her installation who were alert to the Blakean connotations of Vala's veil, will have glimpsed at a critical and revisionist view of the role assigned to Vala in the poem which was named after her, in *Jerusalem*, and in almost any learned commentary on these works. Immenhauser, it seems, "reads" Blake against the masculine grain, and by doing so she opens up an alternative understanding of Vala and her veil which attempts to visually "explain" some of the fascination which Blake himself apparently felt when creating the mythic character. To take this just one step further, one might classify Plensa's sculptural montage of the "Proverbs" as an example of a "deconstructive" or a "hypermedia" art, the creation of an unstable artistic reality from seemingly unrelated textual elements, which in a continual flux combine and dissociate to form a variety of meaningful, yet "open" constellations.



5 Jaume Plensa, "Proverbs of Hell 3: 'The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom,'" wall piece made from synthetic resin and a brass object, 98 x 71 x 50 cm., 1995. Städtische Galerie, Göppingen, Germany; photo: Lluís Bover.

Now, does this mean that these contemporary artists work with scholarly methodologies in mind? Or that scholars unconsciously are creating their texts along the same lines that artists create their works? Though Immenhauser and Löchle have indeed written academic theses on Blake, such a conclusion would seem rather ludicrous to me. The construction of abstract analogies between art and scholarship as two "fruits" of the human mind still seems synonymous with comparing apples to peaches. However, to look at contemporary artists' reactions to Blake's words and images, and to draw such parallels, may still be a heuristically useful exercise, one that will remind the critic of the plurality of legitimate and potentially meaningful engagements with Blake's works.

Verena Immenhauser (b. 1939), *Vala: Arbeiten zu Blake*, Berner Galerie, Berne, Switz., 1-24 Nov. 1988. On show were the installation "Beneath the Veil of Vala" (as reviewed above), as well as a selection of the artist's "Vala" photographs and oil paintings (the latter somehow reminiscent of Cy Twombly's "Wilder Shores of Love"). There was no catalogue, but the exhibition was previously reviewed in *Der Bund* and by Ester Adeyemi, *Berner Zeitung*, 12 Nov. 1988.

Dieter Löchle (b. 1952), *William Blake—Roof'd in from Eternity*, Universitätsbibliothek, Tübingen, Ger., 3 Apr.-25 May 1995. The catalogue, with a note on the artist by Susanne Padberg, translations from Blake's poetry, and a commentary on Blake's prophecies by the artist, is being distributed by the Galerie Druck & Buch (Nauklerstrasse 7, D-72074 Tübingen, Ger.). The show was previously reviewed by Kurt Oesterle, *Schwäbisches Tagblatt*, 6 Apr. 1995: 27. On the occasion of the exhibition, and under the same title, two portfolios with reproductions of Löchle's designs and his prints in offset lithography were issued in a limited edition of 50 copies each (Tübingen, Ger.: Galerie Druck & Buch, 1995).

Jaume Plensa (b. 1955), "One thought fills immensity," Städtische Galerie, Göppingen, Ger., 2 July-6 Aug. 1995. The exhibition catalogue contains Blake's "Proverbs of Hell" and contributions by the artist, Werner Meyer, and Alain Charre (parallel texts in German and English).

Nikolaus Utermöhlen (b. 1958), 1992 *Nikolaus Utermöhlen "An Infinite Painting" on A Vision of the Last Judgment by William Blake 1808*, Zwinger Galerie, Berlin, Ger., 5 Sept.-10 Oct. 1992. In lieu of a catalogue, the gallery issued an "artist's book" in an exceedingly small (and expensive) edition. The exhibition has been briefly reviewed in *Die Tageszeitung*, 15 Sept. 1992.

MINUTE PARTICULARS

Seeing Thel as Serpent

BY HILDA HOLLIS

Thel's motto remains one of the most enigmatic aspects of William Blake's short *Book of Thel*. It is composed of a series of questions, the intent of which is unclear, and which only seem to provoke more questions:

Does the Eagle know what is in the pit?
Or wilt thou go ask the Mole:
Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod?
O Love in a golden bowl?

(i.1-4, E 3)

Most discussion focuses on the second pair of questions, and my argument begins with this set. Two major sources are widely suggested for these lines: Ecclesiastes and Milton's *Comus*. The former refers to the issue of mortality which is of paramount concern to Thel, and the latter bears a relation to Thel's virginal and frightened chastity. I suggest that, while contributing to our understanding of these lines, neither Ecclesiastes nor *Comus* comprehends the full or multiple meaning of Thel and its motto. Blake first composed these lines in *Tiriel* in a section which he subsequently deleted, and this original context suggests another metaphor which has implications for the whole of the later book.

When Tiriel first utters the questions about the rod and bowl, there is no clear reference to sexuality and certainly no allusion to *Comus*. Tiriel's concern with his old age and mortality echoes Ecclesiastes: "before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken" (12:6). But there are significant differences. Cord is replaced by rod, and neither wisdom nor love is associated with these objects in Ecclesiastes. Originally a single line, "Can wisdom be put in a silver rod or love in a golden bowl" (deleted from *Tiriel* 8, E 815), these questions occur in Tiriel's final venting of rage against his father. The anger expressed by Tiriel against power supported by a hypocritical religion is a familiar theme in Blake's work. Here Tiriel questions the universalizing myth of "Thy God of love thy heaven of joy" (del., E 815) invoked by a natural religion which turns Tiriel into a serpent. As a child, Tiriel claims that he was not given nourishment and milk by his mother, and that his father scourged him into weak infant sorrow. This treatment bred hypocrisy—"the idiots wisdom & the wise mans folly" (del., E 815). Elizabeth Stieg identifies Tiriel as a false prophet, "one who speaks in God's name to tyrannize over others" (296). Tiriel is brought to that hypocritical and limiting religion which Blake elsewhere identifies as feminine: "Compell'd to pray repugnant & to humble the immortal spirit / Till I am subtil as a serpent in paradise" (8.23-24, E

285). I suggest the transformation into a serpent that Tiriell undergoes is identical to Blake's intention in the drawing of a serpent at the end of *Thel*.

When Tiriell asks "Can wisdom be put in a silver rod or love in a golden bowl," he appears to allude to his father's scourging "off all youthful fantasies" (8.18, *E* 285) and to the replacement of his mother's milk and nourishment presumably by food served in a dish. As a metaphor extending Tiriell's personal experience, the silver rod and golden cup have wider reference to abusive political and religious authorities which can be identified with the sceptre and the chalice. Blake's condemnation and linking of King and Priest occur throughout his work. For instance, in "The Chimney Sweeper" from *Songs of Experience*, Blake connects "God & his Priest & King / Who make up a heaven of our misery" (11-12, *E* 23). This identification is also seen clearly in the alliance between the Archbishop and the sceptre-wielding King in *The French Revolution*. Tiriell thus inquires whether wisdom can come from a silver sceptre and if love can be found in a golden chalice. The gold and silver symbolize the hypocrisy with which these symbols are overlaid. In particular, the image of the golden bowl is striking since it recalls the Eucharistic cup representing Christ's sacrificial offering. But the golden chalice of a wealthy and selfish church in the face of poverty creates an image of contradiction. While wisdom and love are declared, their opposite is evinced. Gold and precious jewels are used in the same way in "I saw a chapel all of gold." Just as Tiriell is transformed into a serpent, this chapel breeds a serpent who vomits "his poison out / On the bread & on the wine" (13-14, *E* 467).

I suggest that we read *Thel* as a type of the Female Will, and, as such, as a metaphor for the limiting natural religion enforced by priest and king. *Thel*'s name is itself a Greek pun on *female* (*thel*) and *will* (*thel*).¹ Susan Fox argues that in *Thel* Blake depicts a feminine failure which

foreshadows the genderless failure of active desire Blake will develop in later poems: in the context of his other works *Thel* suggests not just the frailty of women, but the "feminine" frailty of all human beings. In *Europe* (1794), engraved five years after the *Innocence* songs and *Thel*, female characters represent not only the darker propensities Blake feared in women, but the technically genderless tyrannies of nature and religion as well. (511)

In later works, Blake consolidates his idea of Female Will and develops it in an explicit opposition to an active Will. While there is no male Will in this early poem, Blake depicts in *Thel* the attributes that he will later give to the separated female emanation.

¹ E. B. Murray draws attention to the popular contemporary recognition of *Thel* as Greek for *woman* after the publication in 1780-81 of Martin Madan's notorious polemic, *Thelyphthora* (see esp. 276 and n4).

Foster Damon draws our attention to two traditional ways of understanding *Thel*. While Damon argues that *Thel*'s fear of maturation and motherhood is an "obvious" interpretation of the poem, he also suggests that *Thel* represents a soul fearful of entering the world and hypothesizes that the *Book of Thel* is an elegy for a possible stillborn child of the Blakes.² In either case, Damon contends that *Thel* never reappears in any of Blake's later poetry, either because she is "far too nice a girl" (*Dictionary* 401) or because the poem lacks a universal application since "most souls do not refuse to be born" ("Blake and Milton" 94). In contrast to Damon, I argue that we do see a reincarnation of *Thel* in Blake's development of a fearful Female Will. The "*Thel*" who reappears is the one who corresponds to the first interpretation of *Thel* acknowledged by Damon to be obvious, but I place a more sinister interpretation on this girl who is "too nice." In *Jerusalem*, Los's thunderous query, "O Albion why didst thou a Female Will Create?" (56.43, *E* 206), is uttered in response to the Albion women's declaration of timidity: "We Women tremble at the light therefore: hiding fearful / The Divine Vision with Curtain & Veil & fleshly Tabernacle" (56.39-40, *E* 206). The women's statement of prohibitive fear recalls the near final lines of *Thel*: "Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy! / Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?" (6.19-20, *E* 6). Limited by her mortality, *Thel* separates herself from her fellow creatures and, by refusing to give, she becomes symbolic of self-oriented religion.

Rather than seeing an infinite world, *Thel* is bound by death, wanting to "hear the voice / Of him that walketh in the garden in the evening time" (1.14, *E* 3). In Genesis, when God is heard walking in the garden in the evening time, Adam and Eve hide themselves because they have disobeyed, and then God curses them with their own mortality: "for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19). The voice which speaks in the garden is punitive and utters death; *Thel* desires to be bound by this voice which insists on mortality.

Some recent critics read *Thel* in a positive light and see in her a rebellious female—a type of proto-feminist, years beyond Mary Wollstonecraft.³ Applauding *Thel*'s refusal to

² Damon finds support for this hypothesis in what he contends is yet another allusion to a miscarriage in Los's words to the Albion women in *Jerusalem*:

To the golden Loom of Love! to the moth-labour'd Woof
A Garment and Cradle weaving for the infantine Terror:
For fear; at entering the gate into our World of cruel
Lamentation: it flee back & hide in Non-Entity's dark wild.
(56.13-16, *E* 206)

Damon makes this argument in *A Blake Dictionary* (401) and "Blake and Milton" (94).

³ For example, Gerda Norvig argues,

For despite the evidence that Blake later on adopted a revisionary form of these same Christian ideals, my contention is

submit to masculine demands, sexual or otherwise, they suggest that Blake approved of Thel. It is important, however, to distinguish a feminist sympathy with Thel from Blake's attitude, and I would avoid the danger of falsely attributing a feminist agenda to Blake. Blake's work is not written in support of the 1990s hard won recognition of a woman's right to say *no*, but rather identifies the nay-saying virgin with natural religion. Alicia Ostriker's comment that "Thel is selfish, and a coward" (151), while not representative of most current feminist readings of Thel's actions, is probably closer to Blake's own reading of his creation.

Throughout the book, images identify Thel as a parody or false Christ. In the frontispiece, Thel is depicted as a shepherdess without sheep. Originally she is not without a caring role, but like the leaders of the church or false prophets, she is a false shepherd and abandons her sheep. In each of the illustrations, Thel does not act, but merely presents a formal imitation of her interlocutors' activities. In the second plate, the lily bows deeply because she is weighed down by her fruit—representing her generative powers and her gifts. Thel, in contrast, engages in a shallow ritual bow. While the cloud in plate 4 spreads his arms to drop his moisture, Thel spreads her arms over the baby worm at a safe distance from which she can give nothing to him. David Erdman comments that in plate 5 Thel "almost makes a cradle of her arms" (39). This empty cradle parodies the clod of clay lying on the ground and perhaps playing with the baby. Thel is like a golden bowl, for like it, she is a hypocritical imitation of loving kindness. While Thel does eventually enter the earth, she does not engage experience; she only observes, listens and then flees.

In *Thel*, the verses concerning the silver rod and golden bowl are preceded by two other questions: "Does the Eagle know what is in the pit? / Or wilt thou go ask the Mole" (i.1-2, E 3). The reference to the Mole, in connection with gold and silver symbols of religion and authority, recalls the only mole who appears in the Bible. Because of Blake's immersion in the Bible's prophetic books, this passage in Isaiah should be viewed as an important, though previously neglected, intertext:

And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his *idols of silver*, and his *idols of gold*, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats. (Isaiah 2:19-20; my emphasis)

that in *this* text he represented and endorsed a liminal view of the desiring self for the purpose of critiquing a philosophy detrimental to the energies of real women even as it served the so-called feminine values of an empirical, deistical patriarchal order. (271)

This passage speaks of powerful leaders taking refuge in the ground when "the day of the Lord" comes and of their realization that their limiting natural religion is not large enough. In particular, "The Lord will enter into judgement with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses" (Isaiah 3:14). Thel's visit to the caves of the earth is prompted by a personal fear of death or her own "day of the Lord" rather than a universal and apocalyptic one, but in these caves she also encounters terror in the face of insistent and unrelenting questioning. The silver and gold idols—the silver sceptre which pretends to wisdom, but really is a sign of self serving power, and the gold chalice which symbolizes not love, but self-love—are undermined by the questions which are asked.

The series of questions emphasizes Thel's dependence on her eyes and ears—her mortal senses. They query the bounds placed on love. In contrast to the motto's silver rod, Isaiah introduces a rod which is not limited and bound, and which will contain wisdom: "there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse . . . And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding" (Isaiah 11:1-2). In contrast to Thel whose "Ear cannot be closed to its own destruction/ Or the glistening Eye to the poison of a smile" (6.11-12, E 6), he "shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears" (Isaiah 11:3). Thel, however, is concerned with self, and she will not face the challenge posed by the questions which she encounters under the earth. Rather than entering into an active love which will confront natural religion, she flees. Thel attempts to escape her own mortality by entering the holes of the earth, but eventually she opts to return to her own enclosing, safe and dissembling world.

Donald Pearce argues that Thel's mistake was to have inquired of moles rather than eagles. He comments that the lily, the cloud, and the clod only encourage Thel towards a limiting natural religion since they do not have prophetic and spiritual vision. Similarly, Gerda Norvig asserts that Thel's "represented desire for a real female subjectivity is meant to undermine the powerful calls from her interlocutors to embrace a philosophy of repetitive and uncreative self sacrifice" (271). But the poem actually suggests that none of the characters of whom Thel inquires feels limited by their activities. All see their work within a wider and infinite spiritual framework: the lily looks towards eternal vales; the cloud lives on though vanishing to mortal sight; and the clod has an eternal crown. While these creatures are not bound by their physicality, Thel, in contrast, by engaging in imitative gestures, places herself under mortal bounds and within the "same dull round" (*There is No Natural Religion*, b, IV, E 2) so loathed by Blake.

⁴ See Ephesians 5:31-32.

Each of the creatures encountered by Thel—the lily, the cloud and the clod—is initiated into love. As Michael Ferber points out, the lily and the clod become brides of Christ while the cloud is united with the dew. The lily is visited from heaven, and the clod is bound with “his nuptial bands” (5, 2, E 5). Ferber argues that the cloud’s marriage, although more oblique, also suggests a transcendent marriage to God (45-48). Thel, however, remains a virgin and refuses to enter into this bridal role. The *Bride of Christ* is a title which the church claims for itself,⁴ but Blake’s assessment of official religion suggests that the church has not actually fulfilled this role. Likewise, Thel imitates love, but does not love. This false pretense reminds us of Tiriell’s self-description: “subtil as a serpent” (8.37, E 285). In order to achieve his ends he must dissimulate. Is this also the meaning of the enigmatic serpent at the end of Thel? As commentators have noted, Thel is not the child riding the serpent. Her disappearance from the illustration suggests the possibility that she, like Tiriell, has been transformed into a serpent. Eugenie Freed argues that the children riding the serpent may represent the lady and her two brothers from *Comus*. If Thel is understood to represent the moral law, then this identification is apt. Thel, as the moral law, carries the three children on her serpent-back.

By employing in *Thel* the pair of enigmatic questions from the deleted section in *Tiriell*, Blake is able to take advantage of their wide allusive potential in the new setting. Rod and cup are clearly sexual images, and the magician of *Comus* is recalled. The silver cord and golden bowl, symbols of mortality from Ecclesiastes, become important in the context of Thel’s preoccupation with death. But Blake also uses the image of rod and bowl, as sceptre and chalice, in order to introduce Thel as a metaphor for a hypocritical and limiting religion. Thel’s refusal to engage in an active giving role becomes clear as the depictions of her imitative and inactive stance progress throughout the poem. Her transformation into the serpent finally confirms her identity as Thel—*Female Will*.

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The Seduction of Self-Abnegation in *The Book of Thel*

BY DEBORAH MCCOLLISTER

In his 1961 analysis of William Blake’s *The Book of Thel* and *Tiriell*, critic Peter F. Fisher comments:

Thel is represented as a woman because she succumbs to mortality in a feminine way—that is to say, passively—by a retreat into wish-fulfilling fantasy. Tiriell is represented as a man because he succumbs in a masculine way, and actively pursues the lure of tyrannical power. . . . Both lose themselves—Tiriell by the path of tyranny, and Thel by the way of suicide. She gives way to the indolence which refuses to desire a human life, and he gives way to that aggression which fails to understand and realize it. (206)

In these characterizations, Fisher’s assignment of gender traits is intriguing: “the feminine way” is “passive,” and Thel’s refusal to enter human life is attributed to “indolence.”¹ Similarly, despite his revolutionary spirit, William Blake reflected his culture—one that believed woman’s essential worth lay in her ability to procreate and nourish others.² As Thel searches to discover meaning in the vapor

¹ Interestingly, in a 1989 assessment of *The Book of Urizen*, Paul Youngquist says that “an adolescent fear of sexual experience . . . precipitates the denial of life” [emphasis mine] in *Thel*. On the other hand, *Urizen* withdraws from eternity due to “something in the organization of the mind itself, some principle of self-preservation that paradoxically wills death rather than submit to the contingencies of existence” [emphasis mine] (90).

² Contemporary handbooks exhorted young ladies to sweetly accept their roles “of servitude to masculine desires and expectations” (Eaves et al. 80).

to her their own worth in the life cycle, a worth achieved through self-abnegation. My purpose here is not simply to translate the myth of Thel, but rather to discuss arguments for a mortal life of self-abnegation as presented in *The Book of Thel*.

Since the name "Thel" is derived from the Greek word for "will" or "desire," the implications for Thel's characterization are manifold. Some readers might see her as willful, while others might attribute her name to the desire for knowledge about life that motivates her.³ At any rate, early in the poem, Blake presents her as ripe for seduction from the safe Vales of Har, which Foster Damon defines as "the state of Self-love" (401). Her motto (i.1-4, E 3) reveals her desire to know—but only from secondhand sources at first. A. G. Den Otter, who classifies the forms of questions in *The Book of Thel*, observes that on the title page, the plate contains a bud that "slithers up to her knee," suggesting the temptation of Eve (646). The motto "hooks Thel's interest, managing successfully to guide her to the altar of sacrifice" (647). Blake's pictures of Thel present her as an adolescent; her incessant questions in the motto and throughout the work likewise convey a childish and innocent nature.⁴ In her innocence, she seeks to know what is in the pit, just as the Eagle and the Mole know, but she trusts a predator and a blind, limited creature for her answers. Her questions about Wisdom and Love, with their respective containers, a rod and a bowl, suggest her naive eagerness to explore a contained, mortal life. But in her innocence, she does not realize that both containers represent the necessity of procreation in the cycle of mortal existence.

Thel is also ripe for seduction because of her willingness to separate from her sisters, while not knowing who she is. The other Daughters of Mne Seraphim know their place—tending the flocks (1.5, E 3). Their dwelling, The Vales of Har, receives more attention in Blake's complementary work, *Tiriel*. It is a peaceful valley, ruled by the senile Har and his sister/wife, Heva, who "dwell in an extreme and childish old age, tended by Mnetha" (their mother/nurse). Har is "the God of Moral Law" who holds to "uninspired wisdom to enforce restrictive morality upon man." In fact, the dotard himself has authored the code (Sloss and Wallis 275-76). Although this pastoral setting offers relative safety, Thel is restless.

Thel's description of herself reveals another problem that contributes to her vulnerability to seduction: although she is essentially selfish, she does not possess identity. Refer-

ring to lines 10-18, Nelson Hilton observes: "Thel displays an essential aspect of lamentation: not going anywhere, not standing firm, but assimilating everything to its vision. Narcissus-like, lamentation centers on itself and so defeats its fulfillment" (30). Her description of herself in comparison to objects—typical of Blake's intentional ambiguity—further reveals a female who does not realize her essence. While she bemoans her destiny—should she be born—she first compares herself with "a wat'ry bow" (1.8, E 3). Such an object is beautiful, but exists only because of the light. "A parting cloud" (1.8, E 3) collects life-giving moisture, as Blake mentions later, but paradoxically, its absence is usually heralded by humans since it obscures the favored sunshine. "A reflection in a glass" is only a representation of the real object, just as "shadows in the water" (1.9, E 3) are not solid entities and can change with the ripples of the waves. The "dreams of infants" are not actual events; even their smiles (1.10, E 3) are pointless, since, as she has lamented earlier, they are "born but to smile & fall" (1.7, E 3). As she continues to catalog transient forms, the ambiguities continue. A "dove's voice" is sweet, but mournful; "transient day" enlightens, but grows dark; "music in the air" may be either joyful or funereal (1.11, E 3). In brief, even after Thel has described herself, we know that she will fade, but we do not know how or if the world will change when she does.

Finally, Thel may be easily seduced into the mortal world because she is ignorant of the harshness outside the Vales of Har. She uses "gentle" (ll. 16-17) to describe the act of dying/rebirth and the euphemism "sleep of death"; however, the vision she later experiences in the land of the dead (plate 8) shatters these expectations. Similarly, her expectations of "him that walketh in the garden in the evening time" (l. 18) reveal her naivete. Genesis 3:8 uses this phrase immediately after the fall of Adam and Eve and immediately before God reprimands the pair and casts them out of the Garden of Eden. Ironically, the voice she later hears in the land unknown is her own "voice of sorrow" (l. 117).

Blake has thus created a naive woman who asks questions restlessly, refuses to accept her place in the Vales of Har passively, sees herself only in vague terms, and expects to be treated consistently with gentleness. Moreover, the Lilly, the Cloud, the Worm, and the Clay each attempts to seduce Thel into mortal existence by appealing to her most outstanding characteristic—her need to have a unique and lasting place in the universe. In addition to the lines with which she has described her transience (ll. 12-15), an echoing refrain is formed by such lines as the following: "I vanish from my pearly throne, and who shall find my place?" (l. 41). "I complain, and no one hears my voice" (l. 51). "And all shall say, 'Without a use this shining woman liv'd'" (l. 69). Morris Eaves, Robert Essick, and Joseph Viscomi aptly note that "*The Book of Thel* is Blake's version of Ecclesiastes, with an innocent woman substituted for the melancholy patriarch for whom 'all is vanity'" (78).

³ Michael Ferber identifies many of the names in the poem by showing connections with other Blakean works and myths outside Blake; at the same time, he postulates that Blake may have alluded to traditional myths only to make fresh suggestions from those associations.

⁴ Morris Eaves, Robert N. Essick, and Joseph Viscomi point to Blake's "subtle uses of the interrogative [in his illuminated books] as a way to confound common assumptions, suggest alternatives, and engage the reader's imagination" (14).

Thel's primal need, then, to feel significant in the universe, is itself universal and thus common to both genders. Mindful of the culture of Blake's day, one can easily speculate as to the solutions the four natural beings would have offered a young male in Thel's state of mind: perhaps that he win a battle, or make his voice eternal through poetic expression, or accomplish some other substantial feat. However, the male Cloud, the male Worm, the female Lilly, and the female Clay offer her eternal life in exchange for what she can give to the earth in spite of, and because of, her feminine gender. As Den Otter comments: "Rather than satisfying Thel's concern for the meaning of things, these small educators [he mentions all but the Worm] redirect her focus to the *use* of things" (640).

An examination of the designs highlights the consequential tensions: In some, Thel "responds to her companions with imitative or sympathetic gestures [see pls. 4 and 6], much as she speaks about her similarity to them" (Eaves et al. 81). This very tendency to imitate and identify with her potential seducers is thus in conflict with her reluctance to acquiesce to their definition of her role, as is evident in plate 2, where "she stands apart as a spatial expression of her separateness and role as an observer more than an actor" (Eaves et al. 81).

The Lilly of the valley is the first entity to address Thel's problem. Quite simply, she suggests that Thel imitate her by sacrificing herself and accepting the cycle of life passively and even thankfully. Not only does the Lilly accept her lowly position, but she loves it (ll. 19-21). The Lilly, "So weak, the gilded butterfly scarce perches on [her] head" (l. 22), is like Thel in that she is a virgin (l. 31). But she gives herself to everything around her and rejoices to do so because "he that smiles on all" has told her to do so (ll. 23-25). She is "clothed in light" (l. 27) only to be melted later in the heat produced by the light (l. 28). She will dwell in "eternal vales" (l. 29) that are fertile, but remain in the place of death.

Thel sees irony in the Lilly's gift of self. The bloom that makes her beautiful and sweet-smelling attracts the innocent lamb, who devours her while she "sittest smiling in his face, / Wiping his . . . mouth" (ll. 36). But Thel admires the power that the Lilly's gift includes—the power to purify, revive, and tame, while being consumed (ll. 37-39). The last line about the Lilly reinforces her role as nurturer/giver: "[She] went to mind her numerous charge among the verdant grass" (l. 47).

Swinburne said that the Lilly, Cloud, and Worm teach that "the secret of creation is sacrifice; the very act of growth is a sacrament . . . each thing is redeemed from perpetual death by perpetual change" (quoted in Sloss and Wallis 2:267). Thel is impressed by the flower, but is not comforted and is not seduced quite yet into sacrificing herself. She has seen the example, but still laments her own uselessness (Bloom 56).

Compared with the obsequious female Lilly, the Cloud—a male figure—is quite bold and impressive. His "golden head" and "bright form" hover and "glitter" over Thel as he addresses her, and the import of the Cloud's exhortation to Thel lies in its sexual meaning. The Cloud supplies the moisture for the rivers where Luvah's horses drink. In other Blakean mythology, Luvah is the "mythical embodiment of the passionate and sexual aspect of man [who] repairs to the Vales of Har simply in order to rest and water his horses" (Abrams 64). The Cloud seems to feel important largely because he serves a god of eros.

Furthermore, seeing Thel's need to be significant in eternity, the Cloud describes his union with the dew and what it produces. He makes Thel identify with the female dew, whom he calls a "weeping virgin" (l. 61). After all, Thel's "gentle lamentation falls like morning dew" (l. 9). The Cloud's lofty language describes the union explicitly: "And [I] court the fair-eyed dew to take me to her shining tent: / The weeping virgin, trembling, kneels before the risen sun, / Till we arise link'd in a golden band and never part, / But walk united, bearing food to all our tender flowers" (ll. 60-63). In other words, the dew is seduced into an ecstatic experience, she is never alone again, and—most importantly—her ability to nurture tender flowers is validation for her being. The Cloud thus suggests that if Thel would yield herself to her proper function, she too could have the joy of fruitful existence.

Thel, however, recognizing that she has never nurtured, remains depressed (ll. 64-68). She asks the Cloud what she intends as a rhetorical question: "Or did [Thel] only live to be at death the food of worms?" (l. 70). Echoing the heavenly being who has earlier told the Lilly to rejoice in her ephemeral state (l. 25), the Cloud instructs Thel relative to the "blessing" of the Worm (l. 73). Just before the Cloud goes to find "his partner in the vale" (l. 78), he reminds her: "Everything that lives / Lives not alone nor for itself" (ll. 73-74). But before she can be useful, Thel must abandon her fear of the Worm. Brenda S. Webster acknowledges that critics often overlook "the implicit degradation and forced submission of the woman. . . . In the speeches of both Thel and the Cloud, the theme of degradation is condensed in the opposition of high and low, shining virgin and earth worm" (52).

The thought of the Worm—associated symbolically with both death and procreation—frightens the virgin Thel. So the Cloud shows her a worm that will woo her without frightening her. Appearing as a naked, helpless infant, the Worm immediately appeals to her repressed maternalism (Bloom 57). She speaks to it, but it can only weep in return (ll. 80-84). Of course, these cries touch her more than any of the speeches she has heard previously. The worm's seductive powers are so strong that, ironically, she sympathizes with the very entity that will devour her.

The Clod of Clay that appears and nourishes the infant worm further arouses Thel's maternal drive and her search for significance. Modeling self-sacrifice, the Clay exhales "her life . . . / In milky fondness" (ll. 86-87). Her first words to Thel exhort the ideals of sacrificial motherhood: "we live not for ourselves" (l. 88). Moreover, the Clay describes a relationship derived from the account in Genesis of the creation of man in which God began the human race by forming Adam from clay and breathing into him the breath of life. Though a humble entity, the Clay has gained eternity by joining God and bearing His children: "My bosom of itself is cold, and of itself is dark; / But he, that loves the lowly, pours his oil upon my head, / And kisses me, and binds his nuptial bands around my breast, / And says: 'Thou mother of my children, I have loved thee, / And I have given thee a crown that none can take away'" (ll. 90-94). The Clay does not understand this relationship; she simply lives and loves (l. 96). Thus, the Clay models the following message for Thel: Accept your role on earth, and do not question.

In plate 7, Thel's hidden face suggests the loss of identity implicit in maternal sacrifice, and as she cries again, she wipes her tears on her white veil (l. 97). Blake is apparently playing upon the phrase "vale of tears," for the virgin draws closer here to a vision of the end of life. Ironically, she cries to learn that God cares for the worm (l. 100), but the glimpse she soon receives of her ultimate destiny as a mortal reveals no benevolent God. The Worm and the Clay present danger for Thel, although they appear as innocent entities coming to the aid of a wandering innocent. Note, however, how the Clay's appeal to Thel gradually evolves from an invitation, to a suggestion, to a command: "Wilt thou, O Queen, enter my house? 'Tis given thee to enter / And to return: fear nothing, enter with thy virgin feet" (ll. 106-07). The last line is deceitful: Thel has much to fear because she is indeed a vulnerable virgin.

The Clod of Clay, who has modeled benevolent motherhood and told Thel about a benevolent God, is able to bring her to the brink of mortal experience—but only with the condition that the virgin can return to the vales of Har (l. 107). Here at last Thel sees her destiny: After entering earthly existence, she will indeed be eternal, but eternally dying, mournful, and—despite her usefulness as mate and mother—alone. Simply put, her sacrifice (in following the example of the female Lilly, dew, and Clay) will not bring her eternal peace. The intention of the Clay (and Blake) is ambiguous here. Although the Clay has seduced her into a terrible place, the revelation of that place allows Thel to know the truth and to reject her destiny on earth.

In the "land unknown" (l. 109), Thel witnesses the corrupted forms of two of her advisors. Before, the Cloud was "golden," "bright," and "glittering" (ll. 52-53), but the "land of clouds" is dark and foreboding (l. 113). The dew had once united with the Cloud, to "never part" and to bear food (ll. 62-63). Here the dew rests on graves (l. 114). These

ironies have been foreshadowed, however, as early as on plate 2, where a vine "forms a traditional emblem of marriage or education" but in outline also suggests a tombstone, and the figure of Thel observes two other figures, either in a moment of happy union or of rape, thus symbolizing Thel's own uncertainties about sexuality (Eaves et al. 81-82).

For the first time in the poem, Thel dares to listen to her own voice, now coming from her grave (ll. 116-17). It laments the sorrowful fact that her senses have "whirled her to destruction" (Bloom 61). The sensory images gradually grow darker and more sexual. The first sensory organ mentioned is the Ear (l. 118). After all, she has listened to others' voices. Brenda Webster observes: "A further image of the ear as a whirlpool that fiercely 'draws creation in' is linked to the Clod's womb-grave and foreshadows Blake's view of the ravenous earth . . . who tries to draw all existence into her voice" (56). Next is the Eye, and Thel asks why it cannot be closed "to the poison of a smile" (ll. 118-19). This question reflects the foolishness of the "pitying tears" (l. 97) that once trusted the benevolence of God (ll. 98-101). Other temptations to the Eye are then listed (ll. 120-22), along with the honeyed Tongue and responsive Nose (ll. 123-25). Finally, the mention of touch boldly reveals a daunting picture of sexual union: "a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire"—one that can place "a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy" (ll. 126-27)—is not the pleasant image that the united Cloud and dew earlier suggested to Thel. She learns that even in experience, she will find no fulfillment (Bloom, in Erdman 809).

The truth about her mortal initiation into the sexual experience has this result: "The Virgin started from her seat, & with a shriek / Fled back unhinder'd till she came into the vales of Har" (ll. 129-30). Alicia Ostriker says "She discovers that her fate is far worse than she imagined. Instead of merely fading away and dying gracefully, she will have to undergo a storm of passions and restraints" (154).

Blake's decision concerning Thel's fate was made after at least two years of incubation. Although the title page reads "1789," the same date as *Songs of Innocence*, textual critics believe that plate 6 was actually completed two years later, along with *Songs of Experience*. During this time, Blake decided that Thel would wander into the "land unknown" at the Clay's invitation, but that she would lose her courage upon hearing her own voice from the grave. Unlike Oothoon of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, she does not fly to her lover (Ferber 52-53).

A decade ago, G. E. Bentley, Jr. remarked upon a recently discovered sketch for *Thel*. The sketch indicates Blake's plan for two designs facing each other, with lines indicating text. On the left is a sketch of the brooding Thel that later became plate 7. On the right is a figure with outstretched arms, resembling the figure of Thel later printed as plate 6. Obviously, the designs were reversed for printing, and a struc-

ture resembling a Greek temple was discarded from above the Thel with outstretched arms, probably because this manmade object distracts from the context of the pastoral setting. Bentley postulates that in the early sketch, "Thel appears to be on the threshold of the Temple of the Earth, about to enter without fear" (139). But in the course of crafting this illustrated poem, Blake chose to have Thel enter reluctantly, only to flee in fear.⁵

Critics have noted the different ages of children riding upon the serpent in plate 8, suggestive of the process of maturation "in accordance with the use of snakes as emblems of natural life and mortality . . . [and] in the context of phallic symbolism, the design would seem to indicate a control over sexual experience by playful innocence." The reins also suggest "prudence controlling desire" (Eaves et al. 85). If the female driving the snake is Thel, she looks not so much frightened as determined, with a steady, forward gaze. Whereas Michael Ferber posits that the pictured serpent and children allude to Blake's early play *King Edward the Third*, where the prince says that his recklessness is like "the innocent child" who "unthinking, plays upon the viper's den" (62-63), I suggest that the serpent recalls the one in Eden that tempts Eve. Unlike Eve, however, Thel has harnessed and controlled the serpent and uses it to take her "unhinder'd . . . [to] the vales of Har" (l. 129).

Because she has been allowed to see the truth, the attempted seduction of Thel into the cycle of a mortal woman's life fails at last. She will not surrender her haven of virginity in order to live eternally in such a dark world. The sacrifice of her present self for a utilitarian, earthly self would be a mistake. Disappointed by her adventurous quest away from the valley, Thel chooses to live in a world governed by the dotard Har and his restrictive codes, rather than enter into a mortal body, encumbered by sensory temptations and death. In the vale, she faces the future of becoming like the eternally aging Har and Heva in *Tiriel* (Ostriker 151).

Or is her life in the Vales of Har necessarily full of dread? One critic has speculated that "Thel" is an anagram of "Lethe," the river of forgetfulness. Perhaps Thel will forget her cares and become more like her sisters. W. J. T. Mitchell suggests still another possibility: When Thel returns to the Vales of Har and to the "Daughters of Mne Seraphim," is she returning to "a land of infantile regression [with] . . . daughters of ineffectual memories (Mnemosyne) rather than inspiration?" Or could the prophetic Blake be predicting an age where "Daughters of Memory shall become the Daughters of Inspiration?" (83). Just as Thel has raised incessant questions, the conclusion of the poem and the enigmatic emblems in the illustrative plates raise questions

and offer few resolutions.⁶

One matter is resolved, however. Although Blake shows that Thel's only alternative to relative obscurity in the Vales of Har is for her to listen to the voices of Earth that tell her to yield herself to the cycle of life, he does give her a choice. With a loud shriek, his heroine, in effect, cries "No!" to the experience of the earthly woman.

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⁶ In their edition of *William Blake: The Early Illuminated Books*, Eaves, Essick and Viscomi contextualize the ending of *Thel*, noting the outcome of other female figures in Blakean works, and comparing what Thel learns—or fails to learn—with the doctrines expressed in Blake's annotations to Swedenborg, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *There is No Natural Religion*, the botanical poems of Langhorne and Darwin, and cultural ideologies of the day (80-81).

⁵ For a detailed discussion of the controversial dating of the plates in *Thel*, see Joseph Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book* 234-37 and 252-58.

N E W S L E T T E R

Jah Wobble Inspired by Blake

According to Robert Sandall in the *Sunday Times* for 22 September 1966 (*The Culture*, sec. 10, p. 28), rock singer John Wardle, aka Jah Wobble, is a "genuine eccentric who makes up in inspiration and audacity what he lacks in musical talent." His latest offering is *The Inspiration of William Blake* (All Saints ASCD 29), which delivers up Blake's poetry in a voice "somewhere between that of a panto villain and a loquacious London cabbie." In Sandall's opinion, Wobble's otherwise dubious performance is considerably aided by a persuasive band such that "the atmospheric charm of the music consistently draws you in, even while the poetry reading threatens to crack you up." [Eds.]

Armand Hammer Museum Exhibition of the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery

The Armand Hammer Museum Exhibition of the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery will open Tuesday, 14 January and run through Sunday, 9 March 1997. Prints from the collection of Robert N. Essick, which contains "an astonishing set of the first and second state proofs," will be displayed, and the exhibition, "in contrast to the one that was sponsored by the German Shakespeare Society in Bochum, Germany, last spring, will provide a stunning display of the engraver's art."

In conjunction with this exhibition, David Rodeš (Director of the Grunewald Center at the Armand Hammer) and Fred Burwick will offer a six-session non-credit lecture series for the general public on "Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery: Shakespeare Then and Now."

New Issue of *Romanticism On the Net*

Romanticism On the Net is a peer-review electronic journal entirely devoted to romantic studies. In addition to new articles and reviews in each issue, the journal includes calls for papers, descriptions of other academic journals, and links to other Web sites. One of the unique features of the Internet is that articles and reviews from previous issues are still easily accessible for consultation.

Romanticism On the Net can be accessed at the following Internet address:

<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385>

US mirror site: <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/mirrors/romnet/>

Editor: Michael Laplace-Sinatra; Assistant Editor: Michael Gamer

Blake's Notebook Facsimile Available

Edward Hamilton Bookseller in Falls Village CT 06031-5000 (whole address) is selling remaindered copies of the hardback edition of Blake's Notebook (ed. David V. Erdman and Donald K. Moore) for \$13.95 plus \$3.00 shipping (no matter how many you order the total shipping charge is \$3.00) (no tax except in CT). The stock number required is 062839. Checks only; no orders by phone/credit card.

Romantic Circles Web Site

This is to announce a new web site for research, Romantic Circles: Byron, Keats, the Shelleys and Their Contemporaries. Its prototype can be found at the following URL:

<http://www.inform.umd.edu/RC/rc.html>

According to the editors, Romantic Circles is organized as a meta-resource that will be openended, collaborative, and porous—maintaining and encouraging many potential links to other sites on the Web. As currently conceived, the site will be divided into three main entities: Electronic Editions, Scholarly Resources, and Critical Exchange. The last of these will include a real-time, interactive MOO, the Villa Diodati.

Two general principles will guide the development of the site: "We will value quality over quantity, mounting only resources produced and maintained according to high scholarly standards; and we will give priority to innovative, creatively-conceived resources that take advantage of the electronic medium in ways that could not be duplicated easily in print. We invite you to visit the site, read the prospectus, and see what we and our co-editors have planned for the coming months. Romantic Circles will be formally launched in November, to coincide with the NASSR conference in Boston. Until then, users are welcome to watch the site develop as we construct it and to try out features as they become available, including our NASSR '96 Conference pages." [Neil Fraistat, Steve E. Jones, and Donald H. Reiman, General Editors; and Carl Stahmer, Design and Technical Editor.]

Call For Papers: Carolinas Symposium on British Studies

The 24th annual conference of the Carolinas Symposium on British Studies will be held at Augusta State University in Augusta, Georgia on 4 and 5 October 1997. The Symposium provides an annual forum for the delivery of scholarly presentations and the exchange of ideas relating to all aspects of British Studies, including history, literature, art and architecture, government, dance and music.

While the Symposium is regionally based in the Southeast, participants from all parts of the country are encouraged to submit proposals for individual papers, full sessions, and panel discussions.

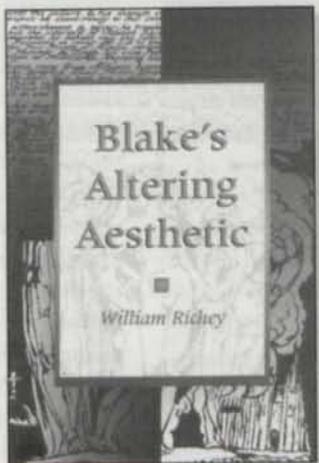
We also invite submissions for the student paper session from both graduate and undergraduate students, with a prize in each category.

Proposals or papers should be sent to Dr. William S. Brockington, Department of History, University of South Carolina at Aiken, Aiken, SC 29801 by 15 March 1997. Student papers, which must be complete, should be sent to Dr. Jacqueline L. Gmuca, Department of English, Coastal Carolina University, Conway SC 29526 by 1 April 1997.

Correction: Blake Archive

The URL for the Blake Archive given in the last issue was incorrect. The correct address is:

<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/blake>



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