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THE CHAINED BOY

Orc and Blake's Idea of Revolution

by

CHRISTOPHER Z. HOBSON

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1995

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

The Chained Boy: Orc and Blake's Idea of Revolution

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CHAPTER ONE

Blake, Social Myth, and Revolution

Blake's myth begins with a chained boy, who frees himself and calls all captives to do the same; it ends with a man, a blacksmith, who labors at his furnaces until the people as a whole awake, rouse the cities and counties of their country, and disperse the clouds of oppression. The story Blake tells, then, begins and ends in social upheaval, through the terms used and the meaning Blake gives to this upheaval are modified. Through his evolving treatments of the chained boy, Orc, Blake's changing view of revolution is largely revealed.

This, the overall shape of Blake's social myth, has never been told. To do so, today, requires rereading and recontextualizing his myth against a persistent current of depoliticization. Even with his earlier works, but particularly for the later ones — commonly read as "internalized" oracles of perceptual or psychic renovation — the social elements of Blake's myth have been slurred over by interpretive preferences for mystical, archetypal, and psychic readings. These readings focus on real aspects of Blake; his is a genuinely multilayered myth, rather than a purely social one in which interpretive errors could be set right by substituting a social "key" for others. In turn, Blake's political meanings have not been wholly neglected; they have been the focus of secondary, in part problematical schools of interpretation that have attained canonic, though less in-

fluential, status. But in the main, Blake's social elements have either been regarded as a feature of the "early" Blake, or treated as subordinate and derivative throughout his work. Some reasons for this approach might include the relatively established social positions of Blake's interpreters, ideological influences of our own time, assumptions about the political evolution of post-French Revolution radicalism, the decline of the socially radical poor people's Christianity that formed Blake, and the methodological tendency to binarize, which leads to placing one set of meanings, the "internalized" ones, above another in an assumed hierarchy. In order to arrive at a truly multifaceted interpretation, it is necessary to stress a social content, particularly in Blake's later work, that has been partly or completely lost.

The myth of Orc offers an extraordinarily fruitful vantage point for entering Blake's social myth as a whole and assessing his developing view of revolution. Orc is mentioned in nearly all Blake's prophetic works, and has a substantial role in most.[1] He first appears, in *America, in medias res* as adolescent boy in chains, whose identity as sexual, political, and religious revolt is made clear in the *Preludium*, plate 6, and plate 8, and whose relation to the revolutions of his time is detailed in the historical myth that these frame.[2] His birth and the story

1. He appears in his own name in most of the Lambeth prophecies, *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*; in the *Marriage* an unnamed analogous figure appears in the concluding "Song of Liberty," while Orc's presence is implicit in *The Book of Ahania*; *The Book of Los* concerns a segment of Blake's creation myth prior to his birth. A more distant analogue appears in the unengraved poem "Tiriel," while Orc is absent from the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *The Book of Thel*, and "The French Revolution" (which does not employ Blake's full mythic machinery).

2. Blake's works are cited to Erdman's *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, rev. edn. 1988 (*E*). Plate/page and line numbers are given as in *E*. In a few instances, page numbers in *E* and/or variant plate numbers are given; these procedures are explained in the sections on individual works in subsequent chapters.

of his binding are told in different versions in later works, several of which revert to and revise the central event of *America*, his bursting of his fetters. Orc further generates, midway through Blake's work, an alternative form as serpent. While this form is present as metaphor and in illustrations in earlier poems like *America* and *Europe*, Orc's serpent form enters the narrative proper in *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, though not in *Milton.* In these last major illuminated poems, Orc appears partly in his own right, but is also subsumed into other narrative entities. Each recasting of Orc involves a reconceptualizing of the issues of revolt with which he is associated. In his shifting roles, then, Orc registers a wide range of responses to a central intellectual problem of Blake's time.

To enter Blake's world through Orc is to venture onto contested terrain. While Orc himself has never before been the subject of a book-length study, he is an inescapable topic for those writing generally about Blake, and at least three general views of his significance have been offered in the major general studies of Blake. In one conception, Orc is an affirmative, if ambiguous icon of revolt in Blake's early prophetic works, which are also those written during the upward swing of the French Revolution. Then, in a shift sometimes seen in *The Book of Urizen* or *The Book of Ahania* (dated 1794 and 1795), but certainly presented in his serpent transformation in *The Four Zoas* (dated 1797, but expanded and revised through the next decade), Orc becomes a symbol of the futility of social rebellion as Blake turns — according to different views — to a religious or an inward, psychic conception of human transformation. In distinct versions, this view has been offered by influential early interpreters such as Bernard Blackstone and H. M. Margoliouth, and by major later writers such as Morton D. Paley (*Energy and the Imagination*, 1970). In perhaps a majority of

conceptions, however, Blake's view of Orc was fairly consistent throughout his career. Early and late, Orc exemplifies the inevitable, yet futile processes of earthly rebellion; he is repressed psychic-sexual passion forced into "the lower form of physical revolt," and does not represent a solution, since "revolution in the material world degenerates, till in its fury it loses all of its original meaning" (Damon, *Dictionary* 311). In the most elaborate version of this conception, that of Northrop Frye, Orc from the beginning emblematizes the cyclical character of natural processes, and thus too the futility of material revolution. Continually born as revolt, he continually evolves into his seeming opposite, Urizenic repression, only to be challenged — futilely — by a new Orc. Frye's "Orc cycle," adopted in countless subsequent commentaries, is still the dominant conceptualization of Orc's general significance. Finally, writers who have focused on Blake's continuing social radicalism, such as Mark Schorer and David V. Erdman, have seen Orc as a positive figure throughout Blake's poetry, though in his later work a limited one. Though not capable of rebuilding society by himself, Orc accomplishes the necessary destructive work of revolution, or "suppl[ies] the will" for the prophet Los (Schorer 291-92; Erdman, *Prophet* 255). These writers, however, play down the genuine transformations in Blake's handling of Orc in later work.

This study, closest to the third tradition but with major differences from it, sees Orc as an emblem of elemental resistance present throughout Blake's prophetic works. At one time Blake indeed sees this impulse — which he then treats as a unified one, without recognizing its conflicting mass and elite components — as adequate to accomplish the apocalyptic changes he envisages in society, psyche, religion, and sexuality. Subsequently, Blake reworks the Orc

symbol several times, differentiating its components, criticizing the inadequacy of mass elemental resistance, and attacking statist tendencies in revolutionary movements that turn against their own mass bases in submissive competition with established class power. Simultaneously, Blake begins to stress the need both for historical vision and for ethical commitments, couched in Christian terms, to guide — not replace — social revolt.

Differing views of Orc are naturally allied to differences on several related questions, such as the nature of apocalypse. Indeed, for a poet whose view of human transformation was focused through the lens of Christian apocalyptic, to discuss the social, psychic, providential, or human nature of apocalypse is equivalent to discussing the social or internal character of his belief system in general. Did Blake, then, in common with other Romantics, begin by attaching the millennial hopes of Christian apocalyptic to social events, specifically the French Revolution, and subsequently shift to a belief in internalized apocalypse, a view influentially argued by M. H. Abrams and endorsed by Morton D. Paley and others? Or, as Frye insists, and as his view of the "Orc cycle" as foundational in Blake's thought implies, was Blake's view of apocalypse internal and mental from the start? In Frye's terms apocalypse does not refer to any change in human social relations; rather:

> By an apocalypse I mean primarily the *imaginative conception* of the whole of nature as the content of an infinite and eternal living body which, if not human, is closer to being human than to being inanimate. (*Anatomy* 119; my emphasis)[3]

3. The passage articulates Frye's own idea of apocalypse. Yet it accurately describes his understanding of Blake's apocalypse in *Fearful Symmetry*, where the idea is not expressed so concisely. Indeed, Frye's conceptions in *Anatomy* are so consistently referred to Blake — he is cited as authority in support of

Or, finally, does Blake's view of apocalypse remain social and public *as well as* psychic and sexual, throughout his career? Some political readings, such as Schorer's, assume that Blake's political radicalism continued into old age but are uncomfortable with the increasingly religious bases of Blake's thought and tend to reduce them silently to secular equivalents; other studies, such as Stewart Crehan's *Blake in Context* (1984), counterpose Blake's late religion to his early politics, tacitly endorsing the Abrams-Paley view of his evolution. The Christian evangelism that is fundamental to Blake's conception of reality and his shifting views of apocalypse remain to be adequately dealt with from a political point of view.

Other issues related to Orc's significance, such as his treatment of Los, will be examined in the course of this study. Enough has been said already, though, to show that the discussion of Orc and Blake's views of apocalypse and revolution are related to far broader issues, two of which should be dealt with in a preliminary chapter: views of the character of Blake's symbolism, and of the French Revolution and revolution in general.

The Two Lines in Blake Interpretation

It will have been noticed that each of the issues mentioned above involves three views of Blake's approach: either he shifted in midcareer from social to psychic, conceptual, or religious concerns; or he focused on these from the start; or, finally, his commitments remained social to the end. Such a breakdown, of

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Frye's view in the sentence following this one — that it is fair to read the passage as based on Frye's understanding of Blake's meaning.

course, scants the complexity and subtlety of many studies, but it does identify general tendencies in Blake interpretation. In turn, this categorization can be simplified still further, since both of the first two trends agree that the ultimate direction of Blake's thought was toward an internalized, mental myth, a conception of psychic rather than social forces at war, then transformed and reunified. The remaining, alternative view would hold that these psychic faculties are also social and collective. There are thus two lines in Blake interpretation, an internalized and a social view of the scope and meaning of his works; and to these two lines correspond two views of the nature of his symbolism.

The more prevalent view, basing itself on some of Blake's statements in texts such as the early tractates, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and the *Vision of the Last Judgment*, assumes that his symbolism refers primarily to mental events. Once again, there is a division within this camp over whether Blake's symbolism was always primarily internalized, or became so after about 1795-1800. Proponents of both views would agree, however, that the zoa symbolism Blake developed in *The Four Zoas* refers chiefly to psychic divisions within the individual mind; that the later characters and terms superadded to this system, such as Milton's struggle against selfhood in *Milton*, or Los's against his Spectre in *Jerusalem*, concern mental clashes and struggles; and, as already partly indicated, that the religious conceptions and events so prominent in Blake's later works, such as the crucifixion and apocalypse, mainly signify events played out on psychic terrain.[4]

4. Despite this focus on the internal, most though not all interpreters agree that such entities in late Blake as Jesus and the Council of God (in *The Four Zoas*, with its equivalents in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*) refer to extrapsychic, indeed suprahuman entities. Hence, for most writers in the first "line" of Blake interpretation the story Blake tells is finally of the salvation of the individual mind, mediated by Christian providence. For others, however, God or Jesus is

Instances of such internalized interpretation abound. Thus for Peter F. Fisher, Blake "sought to redeem the entire perspective of history by an apocalyptic revolt in the ground of the human mind" (142). Terence Allan Hoagwood, whose concern is Blake's and Shelley's view of the mind, argues that if these poets "write of revolution, we must also admit that they refer this revolution to the mind"; hence, the subject of *Jerusalem* is "mind and its metaphor, history." Of the crucifixion of Luvah by Urizen in this poem, Hoagwood observes that "as the Zoas are in every man, this conflict . . . is intrapsychic," and he concludes, with reference to Blake's view of apocalypse in general, that Blake "calls an end to corporeal creation, not with literal fire and war, but with an intellectual revolution that occurs, at any time, in the human mind" (3, 4, 96, 99). Of particular note here are the assumption that the zoas are internal components of the individual psyche; the subordination of history to mind as mere "metaphor," to which I shall return below; and the idea that apocalypse may occur at any time, discussed in Chapter 6. W. J. T. Mitchell expresses this latter point through Blake's concept of "Eternal Death," which for him refers to "a stifled, unproductive life, immersed in the nightmare of history. The race with this kind of death can be won at any moment, for 'whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual' " (*Composite Art* 176). While my concern here is with Mitchell's idea of an implicitly psychic last judgment that can occur at any time, the internalizing assumptions of his argument are also visible in the idea that "Eternal Death," or engagement in the world of history and social struggle, is a choking nightmare.

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fully equivalent to "the human imagination," so that providentiality, as well, is intrapsychic. (As I shall discuss in Chapter 5, this conception of Blake's Jesus, though accurate in part, reads his texts in a limited way.)

To cite two of Blake's prominent uses of the "Eternal Death" idea, Los and Enitharmon do not go to a "stifled, unproductive life" in *The Four Zoas* VIIA, nor does Milton in the poem that bears his name — he goes, rather, to a supremely vigorous struggle for the redemption of humanity. I shall argue in a later chapter that it is precisely on the terrain of history, or "Eternal Death," that salvation occurs and must occur in Blake.[5]

For her part, Janet A. Warner approaches the idea of an inner apocalypse through a discussion of Blake's conceptions of "eternal" and "vegetative" forms. Arguing that for Blake — unlike Plato — these are both found in the same body, Warner concludes that "it is only our perception that differs. Fallen perception projects Fallen Form" (29). The implication that human renovation is accomplished through a change in perception is plain, and is made explicit in an earlier passage: the idea "of the real or eternal hidden within a false covering . . . places the issue solely in the realm of perception, in the perceiving of a form which is mental rather than material" (24). Helen McNeil, who did much a generation ago to clarify the narrative method of *The Four Zoas*, reaches conclusions similar to Warner's, Hoagwood's, Mitchell's, and Warner's through a con-

5. Mitchell quotes the *Vision of the Last Judgment* (*E*562), a much-cited passage (for another use, by Leopold Damrosch, see Chap. 6). Taken out of context, however, the quotation gives a misleading idea of Blake's conception. Morton D. Paley is more accurate in noting that Blake's last judgment "is meant as both individual and collective. Collectively, it occurs at a crisis in cultural history: 'When Imagination Art & Science & all Intellectual Gifts all the Gifts of the Holy Ghost are looked upon as of no use & only Contention remains to Man then the Last Judgment begins . . . ' For the individual, it may occur at any time [and Paley adds the passage quoted above]" (*Apocalyptic* 99). Even Paley's summary, however, misses the point that the collective crisis is more than cultural; "only Contention remains to Man" signifies the supersession of imagination, art, and science by war (as in the preface to *Milton*, copies A-B).

sideration of the reference of the zoa symbolism and the dramatic logic of the poem. Assuming that the zoas are psychic faculties and therefore that the poem depicts "the riot of mental powers in every fallen man," she notes that in it "impulse and act are simultaneous . . . since, in the nonphysical world of the poem, the articulation of a desire means that the desire is being acted upon" (390, 382-83). In other words, the use of a dreamlike dramatic structure becomes evidence that the poem *refers* to nonphysical reality, even though similar narrational methods can be used to social purpose in, for example, expressionist and surrealist writing. McNeil infers that the poem's purpose is to attain the "moment of psychic renovation," when the reader, "subject to the ravages of mental powers like those in *The Four Zoas*, is shown by example that he [*sic*] . . . can aspire to the relative unity of the poem's conclusion" (374-75). The internalization that takes place here is dual: not only does the poem's action refer to purely mental sufferings, but the moment of renovation finally occurs only in the reader's mind — not in social action or in the collective mind of humanity. This conclusion would be endorsed by many — it is implicit in Mitchell's and Warner's views, so far as Blake's poems help the individual mind to embrace truth or to perceive eternal forms. It is not a unanimous conclusion; in his own study of *The Four Zoas, Blake's Prophetic Workshop* (1993), George Anthony Rosso attacks this emphasis on change within the reader. Agreeing that Blake's poems first transform the reader's understanding, Rosso places them in the tradition of Christian *kerygma*, or exhortative discourse, wherein the individual who is saved is inspired to "go thou, and do likewise" in a move "from individual to collective conversion" (97, 151). Despite Rosso's argument, however, there is no doubt that the conceptions of the internal reference of Blake's symbolism, the mental locus of last judgment or apocalypse, and their limitation to

the reader's own mind remain dominant in Blake interpretation.

The examples given so far are drawn from what Donald Ault calls the "dominant paradigm of Blake studies" (xv), the group of influential, mostly commensurate works stretching from S. Foster Damon through Frye to Paley, Mitchell, and younger colleagues. As I use this phrase, its distinguishing features are a concern with symbolic or mythic interpretation of Blake's large-scale meaning and a definition of this meaning in largely psychic terms.[6] It is notable, however, that alternative approaches, such as Ault's own, share the internalizing assumptions of the "dominant paradigm." Ault's *Narrative Unbound: Revisioning Blake's "The Four Zoas"* (1987) set a new standard for Blake criticism in its close attention to the poem's textual complexities, polysemous qualities, inconsistencies, and contradictory narrative lines.[7] Ault also adopted a stance of radical skepticism toward all aspects of traditional Blake interpretation and insisted that Blake's poem be read solely on the basis of its own text. Extraordinarily fruitful in some ways, this approach was nonetheless limiting in others. Those that concern *The Four Zoas* specifically will be considered in my chapter on that poem, but of interest here are Ault's declared rejection of extratextual topical or literary reference, and a nonexplicit procedural decision to treat *The Four Zoas* as a dramatic narrative concerning named characters (albeit ones

6. Ault's definition (xv ff.) differs particularly in his inclusion of historicist and Marxist views in the "paradigm." But despite the canonical position of Erdman's *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, his view of Blake has not so much been assimilated by mainstream criticism as selectively cited; his, and certainly other Marxist and historicist works, represent a contending school, not part of one "dominant" view. Ault further identifies a concern with apocalyptic fulfillment as part of the paradigm, and considers that *The Four Zoas* undermines this idea; see Chap. 4 for discussion.

7. Jerome J. McGann was doing the same for the structure of *Urizen* at about the same time in his "The Idea of an Indeterminate Text" (1986).

that metamorphose repeatedly), rejecting symbolic or allegoric meanings.

The first decision, besides disregarding allusion and parody manifestly present in Blake's text, also disregards the political meanings — often, contested ones — that Blake introduced into his poem through allusions to pamphlets, journalism, cartoons, and Miltonic and biblical texts. To ignore intertextuality goes some way toward depoliticizing Blake's poem. The second decision means that Urizen, for example, is taken as *just* a character named "Urizen," rather than an emblem of abstract thought, moral law, "natural religion," monarchic power, etc. While this procedure avoids the all-too-frequent Blake-critical practice of applying one or more of these meanings as a gloss without thoroughly analyzing dramatic relations, it also makes psychological meanings more available than others. For example, when "Urizen" sees "women marching oer burning wastes / Of Sand in bands of hundreds & of fifties & of thousands" while exploring his domains (70:21-22), the women are identifiable *only* as "external projections of his own repressed sexuality" (Ault 222), since we know nothing explicit about "Urizen" that would allow us to view him as a slave-master. In reality, however, this interpretive method is less radically nominalist than it seems: it privileges one explanatory vocabulary, loosely Freudian, over others, for example Marxist or biblical-hermeneutic. We know nothing explicit about "Urizen" that identifies the women as sexual projections, either, but the decision to treat the poem's characters as socially disconnected psychic entities makes a psychological vocabulary seem less intrusive than others.[8] The para-

8. Ault's approach bears interesting similarities to Michael Riffaterre's in "The Self-Sufficient Text" (1973). Like Ault, Riffaterre undertakes a critical housecleaning, though with a different immediate target — what he sees as imported "psychological, Freudian or Jungian, symbolism" in readings of "The Sick Rose." However, he begins his own demonstration of a reading "aimed inwards" by appealing to understood cultural associations: "In occidental litera-

doxical result is that Ault's text shares at least one quality with the "dominant paradigm" it disavows, its interiority and rejection of social application.

If not psychically interior — since language is intrinsically communicative — another recent interpretive approach, the study of Blake's linguistic practices and language theory, is equally nonsocial in its specification of the domain of Blake's interests and the nature of the human reformation he projects. One strand of the "dominant paradigm" has been its stress on Blake's concern with artistic vocation. Starting from this emphasis, thematic interpreters such as Hazard Adams and students of Blake's language such as Nelson Hilton and Robert N. Essick have projected a Blake concerned, above all, with the constituents of language and the recovery of an "unfallen" language. So Adams writes that Los opposes "the spectral negative stubbornness of language," its tendency toward "generalization, abstraction, and dead trope," and concludes that for Blake "the devourer's language so dominated reality . . . that civilization itself was in danger unless the contrary mythic language of poetry and art rose to the challenge of spiritual warfare" (*Philosophy* 111, 116). In Essick's study of Blake's language theory, a focus on the constitution of the perceived world by language (12) leads to formulating Blake's aim as: "to reclaim or reinvent motivated [intrinsically referential] semiosis and thereby achieve, at least in the world of signs, a 'Resurrection to Unity' " (34).[9]

Salient in both these passages is the way in which language is conceived as an overarching determinant of social reality and pre- or supralinguistic aspects

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tures, one cannot speak indifferently of the rose or the cankerworm" (58, 60, 61). Riffaterre, then, simply prefers one set of extratextual associations to others.

9. Adams alludes to *Jerusalem* 36/40:58-60, in which Los constructs the "stubborn structure" of language; Essick to *The Four Zoas* 4:4.

of society (such as brute physical force) are simply ignored. Civilization deteriorates because of bad language — an idea containing an important partial truth, but here presented as sufficient to itself — and human recovery from fragmentation is available as a linguistic unification of word and object, perhaps independent of any social or even psychic change. Such conceptions have led to the idea that Blake's final aim is to create an open or dialogic language. Thus, one recent discussion of *Milton* concludes that the "Garment of War" passage at the poem's end signifies the creation of a "body of texts" with which Milton "wages mental war on the monologic and dictatorial within and without himself in order to rewrite, reweave history as creation"; the Garment of War "becomes *Milton*" (McArthur 44-46).[10] While the "reweaving" of history might be a more than linguistic act, this author's treatment concentrates exclusively on Blake's verbal patterns. The purpose of Milton's struggle becomes the revision of language and texts in isolation from other aspects of social life.

The substitution of language for social relations evident in these examples also characterizes what Steven Goldsmith terms the "large, growing body of criticism that is currently establishing a more or less deconstructive Blake" (141). Without going into detail, it can be noted that this approach joins earlier works in emphasizing the openness of Blake's texts and their resistance to closure. In a way that goes beyond earlier treatments, however, the deconstructive approach finds in "Blake's heresies against his own system" (Rajan 198) the subversion of authority that politically-minded readers had tried to find in his social utopianism. As Goldsmith shrewdly puts it, interpretation in this mode "concentrates on the undermining of authority within language systems and . . .

10. For my own consideration of this passage, see Chap. 6.

describes this linguistic activity in a loosely political vocabulary of insurrection and freedom"; it "stage[s] the subversion of authority and power in the formal space of the text" (205). Thus this approach, though from a different standpoint than the "internalizing" tradition, divorces Blake's works from social reference and confines their application not, indeed, to the mind, but to the text itself.[11]

At a deeper level than I have explored so far, ideas about the internal reference of Blake's texts are often based on assumptions about the subjectivity of his view of perception. One of the most thoughtful and well elaborated treatments of this topic is Hoagwood's in his *Prophecy and the Philosophy of Mind* (1985). Hoagwood grounds Blake's "interiority" (5) in two distinct though related discursive traditions. The first is that of active or subjective theories of perception, here traced from Descartes through Berkeley's response to Locke, to Hume (11-36 *passim*). Hoagwood identifies Blake implicitly with this tradition, and links it to his apparently subjective statements in *All Religions are One* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.* Secondly, Hoagwood reviews competing "spiritual" and "temporal" traditions in biblical and especially Revelation commentary, adopting the Cambridge Platonist Henry More, and Isaac and Thomas Newton, as exemplars of these trends (40-55 *passim*). Despite some qualifications, Hoagwood identifies Blake almost wholly with More and the "spiritual" tradition, according to which "a prophet strives for universality, transcending

11. Goldsmith's reading is partly an endorsement and partly a criticism of this trend; its main purpose is to reconsider Romantic treatments of apocalypse and to place them in the context of modern democratic politics and its Marxist critique. Accordingly, I postpone discussion of Goldsmith's work until my own concluding chapter, where these issues are taken up. In what follows I do not try to consider the whole body of deconstructive interpretations of Blake, but touch on some *inter alia*, especially (in Chap. 4) Donald Ault's quasi-deconstructive reading of *The Four Zoas*, itself influential in prompting the extension of this approach to Blake.

time and space," rather than expecting prophecy's historical fulfillment (52).[12] Hoagwood frames these discussions with two general assertions. First, though prophecy shows "multiplicity" and includes historical reference (5), Blake joins the prophetic tradition to "a philosophy of mind that reduces reality to ideas and ideas to the individual mind" (10). Blake, Hoagwood adds, quoting *The Four Zoas*, "firmly encloses his cosmic history 'in the Human Brain' " (10; *The Four Zoas* 11:16). Further, though he refers again to its "multiple perspectives" and notes the importance in the 1790s of chiliastic expectations about the French Revolution, Hoagwood concludes that prophecy's "final cause" (in the Aristotelian sense — its *telos* or end) "is intellectual revolution, and this revolution, like God, shall become manifest in history"; prophecy effectuates, "*in the mind of its recipient*, a revolution whose historical equivalent is the political liberation of mankind" (58; my emphasis). These arguments, it should be apparent, provide the basis for Hoagwood's view, already cited, that Blake's apocalypse is "an intellectual revolution that occurs, at any time, in the human mind" (99).

I have cited Hoagwood at length because he argues cogently for a view presented less rigorously by many others. Hoagwood's discussion could provoke

12. These considerations lead Hoagwood to a swipe at Erdman: "To the present, a class of readers blithely subsumes visionary art under the name of political prophecy, treating each visionary poem as if it were a willfully obscured news announcement" (50). Such a comment can be turned the other way. When Blake insistently refers to Jerusalem's villages dying of famine, to impressed sailors "fearing our officers more than the enemy," to the forging of "swords; arrows; cannons; mortars / The terrible ball," to Albion's oak forests covering the globe, etc., it takes a certain "class of readers" — unfortunately, very numerous — to assume that solely (even primarily) mental meanings are obscured *under* the news announcements. Hoagwood's treatment conflates two issues: topicality vs. generality, and materiality vs. spirituality. The polemics cited here are mainly (not exclusively) generalized, but insistently material. (See *Jerusalem* 60:27, 65:36, 73:11-12, 89:23 and discussions in Chaps. 5-6.)

several different responses. One would be textual: in contrast to the idea that Blake effects a revolution "in the mind" that in some unspecified way corresponds to political liberation, I will argue that Blake's narrative conclusions repeatedly point to or describe some insurrectionary *act* as the endpoint of what in the late works, at least, is a long and arduous mental preparation. In this sense his conclusions prepare the reader to carry out similar actions. More germane to my present discussion, however, is an examination of the mentalist view that provides the basis for Hoagwood's internalized reading. Hoagwood's linkage of Blake to Descartes, Berkeley, and Hume is too close in one sense, and in another does not go far enough. It is too close because the mind-centered conceptions of these philosophers, especially Descartes and Hume, spring from epistemological concerns that Blake does not evince; it does not go far enough in that, if all reality is ultimately mental, then the mind contains both ideas and "external" reality. These points are related. Blake, that is, is not saying, with Hume, that we have sure knowledge only about sensations and ideas in our minds; he is saying that mind contains, indeed creates, all reality, both "mental" and "material." In this case there is no longer a basis for speaking of Blake's "interiority." If, indeed, cosmic history exists "in the Human Brain," then history is not a "metaphor" for mind, but a product of it, as are dreams and fantasies; a historical revolution is no less mental, in this sense, than a psychic one. The dualism of mind and external world on which the conventional reading of Blake's "interiority" rests does not exist in his system.

Equally important, Blake is not — or not exclusively — concerned with the operations of the individual mind, but with the mind of "man" in the aggregate.

Both this and the previous point are implicit in the early tractates and in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.* In arguing that "that called Body is a portion of Soul discerned by the five senses. the chief inlets of Soul in this age" (4, prose), the *Marriage* rejects neither the reality of the body (or matter) nor physical experience, but rather, mind-matter dualism.[13] In turn, such formulae as "All deities reside in the human breast" (*Marriage* 11, prose) provide no reason to limit their meaning to the individual breast; the context, indeed, is the conceptions held by ancient *societies*, and the deities are collective conceptions. *All Religions are One*, similarly, presents a closely reasoned argument both against mind-matter dualism and for the universality of what Blake calls "Poetic Genius" (principles 1, 2, 4), said to be the source of both body and material reality (principle 1). Blake's point, then, even in these relatively early works, is not that material reality "really" consists of ideas in the individual mind, but that materiality derives from a faculty of mind, "Soul," or "Genius" shared by all people and things. This idea, in turn, is made more explicit in the late conception of "Universal Man," introduced in *The Four Zoas* (3:6).[14] Leopold Damrosch has accurately noted the implications of this conception: "Universal Man includes everything that Newton or Locke would call 'objects' within his subjectivity," so that "the psychic experience of universal Man is not subjective at all" (332).

Read carefully, indeed, the passage on the "Human Brain" that has been used as authority for the interiority of Blake's myth (and the action of *The Four*

13. Janet Warner makes this point in a different context, that of Blake's garment imagery (*Language* 23).

14. The reference to "universal Poetic Genius" in *All Religions are One* (principle 4) is one of the few times Blake uses the word "universal" before *The Four Zoas.* "Universal Man" and related ideas like the "Universal Brotherhood," "Family," or "Humanity" are mentioned eighteen times in this poem,

Zoas) implies the reality of social experience, institutions, and oppression. The passage occurs as part of Los's sexual conflict with Enitharmon in Night I. Los declares, in part:

> I see the shower of Blood: I see the swords & spears of futurity
> Tho in the Brain of Man we live, & in his circling Nerves.
> Tho' this bright world of all our joy is in the Human Brain.
> Where Urizen & all his Hosts hang their immortal lamps (11:14-17)

At the least, the twice-repeated "Tho" explodes the neat reduction of all experience to mentation, and creates a tension between the mental and social: "Tho" the zoas live in the brain of man, Los foresees the social future of war and murder. Beyond this point, the passage is saying that the physical universe (the lamps, or stars) is in the brain. Two meanings are available for this idea. One is that the present universe is perceived by the brain. A second is that the entire cosmos *exists* as part of the experience of a fully conscious humanity — the same idea conveyed, as loss, by *Jerusalem*'s repeated formula, "But now the Starry Heavens are fled from the mighty limbs of Albion" (75:27). No doubt both meanings apply, but neither obviates the point that the real social world of blood and terror comes to exist in the "Brain of Man." Further, the brain is that of "Man," inferably the Universal Man of 3:6. Conventionally, this man has been treated as a generalized model of the individual, so that the warring zoas and their derived or "fallen" forms, including Los and Enitharmon, represent psychic faculties. The wars and oppressions recounted in the poem then appear as allegorized versions, metaphors, or externalized derivations of mental con-

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Milton, and *Jerusalem*.

flicts. Clearly this view (roughly how Hoagwood and many other commentators see *The Four Zoas*) is one meaning of the poem. Equally, however, the "Man" may be seen as social man, humanity in general. In this perspective, "we" become large human populations; the zoas and other characters become populations, social groups, and institutions; and the blood, swords, and spears become individual and social violence and oppression. This view — not contradictory to the first — is encouraged by the fact that Los's speech is immediately followed by Enitharmon's prayer to Urizen to establish on earth "War & Princedom & Victory & Blood[,]" the institutions of human social oppression (line 24; see Chap. 4).

These points go beyond Damrosch's observation that the Universal Man transcends subjective or solipsistic interpretation. They establish social reference to human populations, social institutions, and oppression as one fundamental meaning of Blake's narratives, including his later ones, *The Four Zoas* and, I will argue, *Milton* and *Jerusalem.* This is, of course, the "second line" in Blake interpretation, represented variously by Erdman's *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*; by historical-materialist readings of individual works such as those of Jackie DiSalvo and George Anthony Rosso; by historicist interpretation of Blake's political and artisanal contexts, as by Jon Mee and Stewart Crehan; and, at least in part, by interpretation centered on what Joseph Wittreich identifies as the prophetic tradition in English poetics, an approach that has insisted on Blake's public, exhortative role.[15] To establish the social reference of Blake's

15. See DiSalvo's *War of Titans* (1984), Rosso's *Blake's Prophetic Workshop* (1993), Mee's *Dangerous Enthusiasm* (1992), Crehan's *Blake in Context* (1984), and Wittreich's "Opening the Seals: Blake's Epics and the Milton Tradition" (1973) and *Angel of Apocalypse: Blake's Idea of Milton* (1975), all cited later in this work.

symbolism is, or should be, to establish it as "dynamic" and "multivalent" in a way based on, but adding to, Damrosch's rich and complex discussion in *Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth* (1980). Damrosch stresses, first of all, the multi-layered quality of symbolism, Blake's in particular, pointing to the interplay between conventional (culturally established) and arbitrary (individually created) elements, and thus between public and private meanings (68, 80). He further distinguishes between "iconic" symbols, those "perceived as having a natural or 'real' relation to [their] associated meaning[s]," and "dynamic" symbols, like most of Blake's — those "understood not for what they are but for what they do," such as the zoas, which "cry out for psychological interpretation" (79-80).[16] The indefiniteness of this description draws Damrosch into a third discussion, of the multivalent character of complex symbols such as Blake's, i.e., their ability to carry multiple and shifting meanings (105). Despite his insistence on this quality, however, Damrosch is most comfortable with psychological meaning, and he insists, "Blake's myth is above all else psychological" (122).

It is just this reduction of multivalency to a dominant psychic valence that must be resisted. Blake's characters, and most of his symbolic entities, such as Golgonooza, are endowed with psychic, social, sexual, vocational, and religious-philosophic meanings. Los, for example, functions as prophet, as paternal authority, as ego or consciousness, as artist, and as material laborer, in overlapping religious-political, familial, intrapsychic, vocational, and social-class contexts (the last often ignored or treated as figuration for one of the others). These contexts are narratively supplied and usually two or more are simultaneous, which is why thematic paraphrases ("Los, or Prophecy, confronts Orc,

16. Damrosch bases the concept of iconic symbolism partly on work by Victor Turner (79n.).

the Spirit of Revolution") sound reductive. Yet some use of these shorthand references, ideally a complex use, is unavoidable; the embedding of the characters in narrative does not mean that they can be treated simply *as* characters, no matter how psychologically complex. Orc, though readily identifiable as rebellious adolescent, also embodies infantile Oedipalism and social rebellion, as well as (in some contexts) the apocalyptic resurrection of the dead — itself to be understood in both religious and social-class terms. Orc is related in even more complex ways to his avatar, Luvah. And his moments of crisis and transformation involve all these levels of significance simultaneously. Moreover, as if overlapping psychological, class, apocalyptic, and other meanings were not enough, Orc, Los, and other characters function in at least three ways: as individuals, as abstract qualities, and as large collective populations — social groups and classes.

Above, I noted that the social aspects of Los are often ignored or treated as figuration. (The same could be said of other characters.) In part, this disregard occurs because of a regular attribute of Blake's verse. References to social life and material production are frequently introduced in what poetic convention encourages us to see as a metaphoric way, as figures for other, especially abstract, processes and qualities. Yet, when examined more closely, the references can be seen as denoting material reality; in a reversal of poetic convention, what seemed to be the metaphoric vehicle appears as tenor, and the assumed tenor as vehicle. This vehicle-tenor reversal is basic to Blake's poetic syntax. Since, in conventional poetics, concrete images drawn from daily life are most often used to designate immaterial processes, the reversal usually, though not always, functions to reveal the material bases of social life.

One of the clearest examples of this reversal, because it occurs on the

more explicit level of simile rather than that of metaphor, comes on plate 6 of *America*, which narrates Orc's prophecy of liberation. Orc's speech opens with images of resurrection drawn from the Gospels and Ezekiel (see Chap. 3). These references are then extended by simile: the reviving bones, "breathing! awakening! / Spring *like* redeemed captives with their bonds & bars are burst;" (lines 4-5; my emphasis). While it is possible to read the simile directly — resurrection is like the freeing of prisoners — the general contexts of *America* encourage a social reading, and probably most readers perform the reversal I am speaking of: the liberation of prisoners is like a resurrection. (Further, it is an anagogic reference to the general resurrection, and suggests that this may occur *as* a liberation of prisoners, slaves, etc.) Blake, it is true, does not direct us which interpretation to choose, and the tenor-vehicle reversal may sometimes appear arbitrary. Despite this caution, the technique occurs often enough that it may be seen as a consistent Blakean practice, and that we may exclude an easy pluralism; Blake is *not* encouraging us to read "both ways," but to *reverse* convention and uncover social meanings. Blake's procedure has an almost mimetic quality: as, in our own lives, social structures often influence us without being directly manifested, the hiding of social meanings under more abstract ones is a feature of daily existence that his structures mimic — and their reversals help expose.

In *Milton*, for example, plate 21 describes the river Ololon, dwelling-place of Milton's female counterparts, and describes their lamentation, heard in the dawn

> When Luvah's bulls each morning drag the sulphur Sun out of the Deep

Harnessd with starry harness black & shining kept by black slaves
That work all night at the starry harness. (lines 20-22)

Through its allusion to the sun as Apollo's chariot, the passage first encourages us to see the slaves simply as poetic machinery, part of a personification of the stars and night sky as harness.[17] Only belatedly, perhaps with the extremely concrete detail that the slaves work all night, does it occur to us to take the personification directly, as a specification of what the metaphor would mean if literally true: if the sun *were* a chariot, it would be maintained by slave labor, because myth is a projection of earthly social relations. But further, given Blake's fundamental point that the inanimate is human, the figure is saying that the cosmos as we know it *is* maintained by the labor of slaves. The same point would apply to a secondary meaning, Apollo as patron god of art. Finally, the passage's Miltonic antecedents should be noted. The sun as chariot rising from or sinking into the sea is a frequent trope in Milton. It is used both directly and in variation in a text Blake knew well, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (79-84, 225-44), which ends with the star of the Magi as Christ's "Car," attended by "Bright-harness'd Angels" (241, 244). In this context the Black slaves constitute a succinct comment both on what was left out of Milton's cosmogony — how are the angels' harnesses polished? — and on the role to be played by slaves in the apocalyptic transfiguration that Christ's first coming foretells. These extended meanings, however, rest on the primary one, that the rising and setting of the sun depends on the labor of slaves.[18]

17. The term "machinery" here is telling; Blake himself used it to refer to his epic apparatus (letter to Thomas Butts, April 25, 1803; *E*728), but would have been aware of the prejudices by which actual slaves were thought of as mere tools of production.

18. Essick and Viscomi note line 21 as an instance of Blake's anti-slavery

Among many other instances of vehicle-tenor reversal, one of the most prominent involves Los's forge and Enitharmon's looms. As I will later comment extensively on both images, I will note here only how these instruments of material production have — and have not — figured in Blake interpretation. The forge and its extension in later works, Los's furnaces, have been seen as emblems of art, imagination, and the human body. The looms have figured in commentaries on Blake's garment imagery as representing the "weaving" of fleshly integuments, in both deceptive and redemptive senses; in more recent criticism, in which weaving is taken as a figure for the production of written texts, they stand for artistic creation as well.[19] The one function of the forge/furnaces and looms that is almost never recognized is their own literal one as instruments of material labor. For example, in his highly illuminating study of Blake's garment image, Morton D. Paley notes "a full spectrum of meanings" for the weaving of garments, such as the assumption of flesh, erotic fulfillment, and its opposite, unsatisfied desire, without noting the literal one. Paley does comment on Blake's extensive knowledge of weaving (120), and notes that "for Blake the garment has a very literal existence as well as a symbolic meaning" (128). But his emphasis is almost entirely on weaving and garments as "figure[s]" for ideas

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sentiment, but without further comment (157). Elsewhere, Essick makes a point similar to mine in discussing Blake's figuration: "Oddly enough, Blake's species of allegory can carry us back full-circle to the literal — if . . . we take the substantives as literal references to animate creatures which can indeed . . . be seen in London's streets. If we allow Blake's tropologies this kind of freedom, then they tend to break down the interpretively useful but thin partitions between the literal and the figural" (*Language* 120). Blake uses Milton's poem as an extended subtext elsewhere, in the opening lines of *Europe* (see Chap. 3), so it is likely that an echo of it in his poem on Milton would be deliberate.

19. See Paley, "Garment" *passim*; McArthur 42-46; for views of the forge and furnaces, see Chap. 5.

that he sees as the "tenor of Blake's mythology" (125). Yet the passages he cites include descriptions of how "Satan Og & Sihon / Build Mills of resistless wheels to unwind the soft threads & reveal / Naked of their clothing the poor spectres before the accusing heavens" (*The Four Zoas*, Night VIII, 113:16-17, *E*376; Paley, "Garment" 129). Even without our knowledge of the "dark Satanic mills" of *Milton*'s preface as a parallel, it should be plain that this passage describes industrial production, a power-loom factory that unwinds the threads of flesh from the women and children who work the looms, and forms these threads into the cloth it weaves. The passage is metaphoric, then, not a literal description, and yet exploitive industrial production is its tenor, not the vehicle for some other meaning. The forging and shaping of metals and the weaving of cloth, then, function as emblems of material labor processes, treated sketchily at first in Los's smithing, and then elaborated in the forge/furnace and loom imagery into representations of typically male and female productive labor.[20] In turn, Los and Enitharmon need to be recognized, among their other functions, as figures for human material social labor, and in their collective aspect as emblems for laboring classes.

The reference of Blake's myth, then, is integrally social, in a way that the "first line" in Blake interpretation has not recognized, even when it has integrated specific bits of social interpretation as subordinate themes. Yet the myth's social meanings, as well as its overall meaning, are complex in a way that no narrowly focused reading can do justice to. First of all, Blake's social meaning is found in his large-scale myth, not simply or primarily in coded con-

20. They take on these functions with the elaboration of Blake's myth. Los's hammer and his smithing first appear in design and text in *Urizen*; Enitharmon's weaving in *The Four Zoas*.

temporary topical references. This myth is multidimensional even in social terms, superimposing a mythic history of society, a political reading of contemporary history, and a suprahistoric, but not asocial, myth of oppression, rebellion, and ultimate liberation. Blake conflates all these levels, so that, for example, Milton's perspectives in the closing days of the English Commonwealth become parts both of a fairly specific political commentary and of a mythic treatment of the prerequisites for apocalypse. Adding to its complexity, Blake's myth is both narrative and intertextual. While Leopold Damrosch is undoubtedly right that Blake's poems are "not discrete universes of special meanings," that his "myth is built up as a whole" (105), its meanings are always narratively concrete, and they change over time. Hence, a social reading should avoid the kind of interpretation, also rife in "dominant paradigm" commentaries, in which favored terms of interpretation are applied to selected quotations in a way that achieves a self-consistent reading by slighting the complexity of the text.

Two methodological aspects of Ault's work are germane here. One is its intensive, detailed close reading of Blake's text in narrative context, with full attention to its twists and contradictions; Ault's practice here is a model to be emulated, whatever the other problems of his approach. His resolute avoidance of terms drawn from the "dominant paradigm" is likewise instructive. These terms, if arcane to the general reader, are so familiar to specialists that they supply self-validating meanings actually drawn from an often one-sided interpretive tradition, rather than from a rigorous reading of Blake. Moreover, like the "dominant paradigm" as a whole, they favor "internalized" over social meanings. For these reasons I have tended to avoid even innocuous-sounding terms from the "paradigm," such as "fallen existence," and to define the senses

of the familiar terms that I do use from context. (No doubt my substitution of "oppressed" for "fallen" in most instances may seem tendentious to some, but at least it focuses the question where I want it.)

Finally, Blake's myth requires not simply the elucidation of social meanings for his symbols, but a genuinely multivalent interpretation — one that recognizes the interiority *and* exteriority, the individual *and* collective meanings, of the symbols. Here, Blake's text itself should be our guide:

> From every-one of the Four Regions of Human Majesty,
> There is an Outside spread Without, & an Outside spread Within
> Beyond the Outline of Identity both ways, which meet in One:
> An orbed Void of doubt, despair, hunger, & thirst & sorrow.
> Here the Twelve Sons of Albion, join'd in dark Assembly,
> Jealous of Jerusalems children, asham'd of her little-ones
> (For Vala produc'd the Bodies, Jerusalem gave the Souls)
> Became as Three Immense Wheels, turning upon one-another
> Into Non-Entity, and their thunders hoarse appall the Dead
> To murder their own Souls, to build a Kingdom among the Dead
> (*Jerusalem* 18:1-10)

These words, spoken by *Jerusalem*'s narrator at the conclusion of Los's confrontation with his Spectre and his survey of historical and present human oppression (plates 6-17), themselves pose the multiple references of Blake's symbology. The four regions, clearly, are those of the zoas — which, as discussed in a later chapter, are partly subsumed into Britain's four cardinal cities in *Jerusalem*. Each "Region," then, is a center of certain human faculties, but also a social center of actual human habitation. The crucial lines in the passage are the

second and third, which specify that what is outside these regions, or individual and social identities, is both "Without" and "Within," beyond the "Outline of Identity both ways" — in two directions, or senses. Apparently, then, what is separated from the self in humanity's existence is both intra- and extrapsychic — physical, or social. "Self," however, is not a positive idea in late Blake; the passage is criticizing the separateness of both inner and outer non-identities, as the source of the torments of line 4. The passage points, then, toward reintegration *both* of the warring aspects of the psyche, and of the individual psyche or soul with society, other souls, and the natural world. Further, the two "Outside[s]" meet "in One"; intra- and extrapsychic are coequal and ultimately indistinguishable, and form a single region of torments — in line 4, Blake uses three words whose primary references are psychic and two for which they are physical and social. The intra- and extrapsychic suffering now becomes, additionally, philosophic and social. Albion's sons, who have protean meanings in *Jerusalem*, are here joined in "dark Assembly," recalling terms used to define Satan in human social terms in *The Four Zoas*: "Congregated Assemblies of wicked men" (VIII, 104:30, *E*378; see Chap. 4). The wheels, in what we will come to see as a standard Blake conflation, are both those of the heavens and those of mills and machinery; hence they signify both the impersonal, dead universe of deist philosophy and a distinct, social kind of death. In addition, four pages later, they are the "Iron Wheels of War" on plate 22:34 and its design.[21] Finally, the murder of souls must in one aspect refer to psychic murder, the killing of impulse and its hardening, or deadening, into psychic rigidity and compulsion. But the Dead also, in a fairly clearcut topical allegory, signify earthly armies (e.g., in *Jerusalem*

21. For commentary on the plate 18 design, referring to line 7, see Paley, *Jerusalem* 158, and Erdman, *Illuminated Blake* 297.

47:4-11).[22] While such an allegory is not explicit here, the parallelism of "Without" and "Within" requires some such meaning.

Blake's terms, then, insist on their own psychic *and* social reference. This consideration places on a primarily social interpretation the responsibility of encompassing the complexity of Blake's conceptions. It also points toward an overcoming of the compartmentalization of interpretation, i.e., the tendency of different scholars to produce self-contained psychic, philosophic, linguistic, social, and other studies. Ideally, while concentrating on social-political meanings, a social reading includes other areas of meaning; it should also open itself to interrogation from these other areas of inquiry, as indeed it means to open them to interrogation. Ultimately, such an approach should lead to greater accountability among distinct approaches in interpretation.

Revolution and Blake Interpretation

Once it is established that Blake's myth is integrally social, we need to examine his specific view of society and revolution. To do so requires, as a preliminary, some attention to general ways of conceptualizing revolution, for, not surprisingly, interpretations of Orc and Blake's view of revolution tend to be bound up with views of revolution in general. My overall purpose in this section is to identify some typical ways of approaching issues of revolution, and the

22. Meanings of the dead in *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem* are extremely complex and variable. The meanings indicated here are found, e.g., in *Jerusalem* 21:48 (both senses) and 63:22, 33 (the first reference signifying primarily psychic petrifaction, the second modulating into a social sense as the following lines, 36-41, focus on European war). Elsewhere, e.g., at 55:12, the dead are simply those trapped among the things of this world (of "mortality"). The apocalyptic raising of the dead applies to all these meanings. In *The Four Zoas* the dead have additional meanings; see Chap. 4. Damon's discussion in the *Dictionary* (98-99) covers only a few of these senses.

French Revolution in particular, including liberal, Marxist, and other views, that are pertinent to how Blake is interpreted. My argument will be that Blake criticism has employed conventional and limited views of revolution, and that Blake's response to revolution has been read incorrectly because it follows a direction distinct from that of these views.

Such views have clustered around either of two general points on what, below, I identify and criticize as a conventional left-right continuum of responses to revolution. On the one hand, moderate and liberal positions near the center of this continuum, and, on the other, radical positions near its left end, have been influential in evaluating Blake. More specifically, one view at the revolutionary or left end of the conventional line — Marxism — has had a central intellectual influence historically in the period since Blake's and is, as we shall see, the subject of an implicit criticism by Blake, who found precursors of its conceptions in several of the intellectual traditions available to him, such as Christian apocalyptic and the Jacobin (and partly the English) revolutionary traditions. Blake's differences from the liberal-moderate evaluation of revolution, as often implicitly reflected in accounts of his poetry, will be addressed throughout my study; the counterposition between Blake and Marx will emerge more in later chapters and will be the focus of my conclusion. Because of these emphases in the chapters that follow, it is worth examining the left-right continuum itself and its adequacy or weakness for conceptualizing Blake's approach to revolution. My remarks here will begin by looking broadly at the liberal-moderate and radical-revolutionary responses to the French Revolution and revolutions in general, as conceived within this continuum, and will then focus on Marxist views more specifically.

The tendency to take the French Revolution as the basis for generalization has been encouraged by the way it has seemed to pose issues that surface repeatedly in subsequent upheavals. The Russian revolutionists of the early twentieth century used the French Revolution as a point of reference in just this way, in terms that are relevant to this discussion. Lenin accepted a parallel between his faction of Russian socialists and the Montagnards/Jacobins as the revolutionary "representatives of the progressive class of the twentieth century, the proletariat," and of "the progressive class of the eighteenth century, the bourgeoisie," respectively. In 1906, Trotsky extolled "the Jacobin, *sansculotte*, terrorist, Robespierrian democracy of 1793." Later, Trotsky explored parallels between the Stalinist and Thermidorean regimes in trying to explain the outcome of the Russian Revolution, variously conceptualizing Thermidor as a loss of class power by a plebeian class and then as a change only in the political regime of a bourgeois society; and he ultimately characterized Stalin's rule, by analogy with France, as a form of Bonapartism.[23]

Though I am not concerned here with the cogency of Trotsky's changing positions, his questions about the nature of Thermidor illustrate uncertainties

23. See Lenin, "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution" (July 1905), sec. 6 (*Works* 9:60); Trotsky, *Results* 54; for later positions, see, e.g., "Defense of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition" (September 1929), *Writings 1929* 278-82, 288; "The Workers' State, Thermidor, and Bonapartism" (February 1935), *Writings 1934-35* 173-75; *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937), chaps 5, 11. Lenin's uses of the Bolshevik-Jacobin/Mountain parallel are frequent; for the 1904-1907 period alone, see references in important works such as *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (May, 1904), sec. N; "Report on the Question of the Participation of the Social-Democrats in a Provisional Revolutiony Government" (third congress of the R.S.D.L.P., May 1905); and a speech on current tasks delivered to the fourth (unity) congress, April-May 1907 (*Works* 7:344, 8:393, 10:241), as well as in journalism.

about the role of social forces in the French Revolution, and perhaps other revolutions, that appear even in sophisticated political treatments. To what extent was the French Revolution a class upheaval, to what extent a rearrangement of political power within the same class? If it was a class struggle, how much was the contest merely between aristocracy and bourgeoisie, and how much, on the other hand, was there any reality to the idea that the revolution brought broad power for lower-middle and lower-class groups, the so-called *menu peuple* and sans-culottes? The answers given have focused on various aspects of the French revolutionary process, but those most salient for my discussion have turned on evaluations of the revolution's violence and on the class and political nature of the period of Jacobin ascendancy, most specifically the ten months of the Terror from September 1793 to July 1794.

Discussions of this period have reflected some of the definitions and questions implied in Lenin and Trotsky's discussions. Was the Jacobin regime (actually, until May 1794, the regime of the Mountain, a coalition of Jacobin and other forces) a determined, ruthless bourgeois regime (Lenin), or in part a plebeian democracy (Trotsky)? How are these questions related to the French revolutionaries' use of mass imprisonment and executions — were these directed by a plebeian government against aristocratic and upper-class enemies, or were they aimed against both these and lower-class groups by a basically bourgeois regime? Finally, what do these matters suggest about overall patterns common to other revolutionary movements, if any? To what extent is their essential process a political shift within existing elites, or from old to new elites, involving the short-lived liberalization of a repressive system and then a consolidation of repression by the new rulers? To what extent, on the other hand, has the revolutionary process involved an activation of groups in the middle and bottom of

society as a new social power? Trotsky, in a famous formula, defined revolution this way, as "the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny" (*History* 15) — what is commonly termed social rather than political revolution. But one notices the equivocation of "into the realm of," leaving plenty of room for both French and Russian Thermidors. The distinction between "political" and "social" revolutions is, of course, complicated by the fact that both processes may be involved — lower-class groups may intervene in the revolutionary process, yet end up only helping new elites to push the old from power and consolidate their own rule.

There are innumerable ways of analyzing and evaluating these ambiguities. One, however, is so well-established as to appear as common sense, and yet, on closer examination, is radically inadequate for understanding Blake's view of revolution; conceptions based on it have had a strong and distorting impact on Blake studies. This approach uses a right-left model, and evaluations that use this model can themselves be situated in its terms. According to this model, regimes occupy a continuum from extreme right through moderate, liberal, and left to extreme left. The points on the continuum are variously associated with social groups or classes, with resistance or openness to change, and with political ethics or tactics. Despite this multiplicity of reference, the continuum maintains its apparent simplicity by linking these variables in characteristic ways. Thus, "right" commonly signifies a regime that is upper-class, resistant to change, and repressive of the lower classes or common people; "left" is assumed to mean lower-class (by composition or program), dedicated to change, and insurrectionary (and, as it happens, prone to repressive violence when in power). Obviously this conception is an oversimplification, but it *is* an influential idea. The phenomenon of conservative reform,

for example — the deliberate opening of the political structure to disfranchised groups by conservative forces — is often difficult to deal with intellectually because it does not easily fit the terms of this continuum. Moreover, this model is actually related to the French Revolution and to eighteenth-century English liberalism; in a general way, it combines elements of the "Whig interpretation of history" and the politics of the French Revolution.

Standard ways of viewing revolution are often placed, themselves, along the same right-left continuum, from fully anti-revolutionary views at the right to fully pro-revolutionary at the left end of the spectrum. All these (including the views considered far-right, or reactionary, which will not concern me further) involve positions toward both social change and political violence and arbitrary rule. Views that accept or welcome change but reject or criticize violence and disregard of legality are seen as conservative, liberal, or moderate-left; those that champion social justice or power for workers and the poor, and that legitimate some degree of violence and dictatorship in order to get it, are seen as radical and revolutionary; "revolutionary" views are seen as "most extreme" in disregarding legality, in countenancing the use of coercive measures, and in supporting regimes that practice these methods. Once again, this classification oversimplifies — I will argue that it distorts or excludes an alternative way of conceptualizing the issues. And yet, it has been influential indeed. Many persons who consider themselves radical or revolutionary "place" themselves along this continuum and accept all the applicable terms, or try to. For example, many who would consider themselves radical find themselves in difficult intellectual dilemmas when regimes they consider progressive engage in apparently repressive actions. Others, who would usually be seen as "more revolutionary" or "farther left," experience no such uncertainties, and justify such ac-

tions in various ways — as a necessary defense of the revolution, as less extreme than the repression of the previous regime, as an acceptable instrument for achieving political goals, or a combination of all these. Overall, then, the right-left continuum, despite its reductionism, does characterize ways of viewing revolution and evaluating positions toward revolution that are held by many people, including many who consider themselves revolutionaries.

Both conservative-liberal and radical-revolutionary positions on the continuum have characteristic ways of responding to the ambiguities of actual revolutionary history, as exemplified in the eighteenth century by the defining moment of the 1793-94 dictatorship; and each of these responses has characteristic intellectual problems. For many writers not committed to a self-consciously left viewpoint, the systematic use of violence and political suppression by a revolutionary state is the hallmark of moral reversal and the erasure of any moral difference from the regime it replaced. One conception of this kind, which incorporates cyclic conceptions of history, accepts the claim that revolution has brought previously oppressed groups or classes to power, but finds in their embrace of violence a qualitative transformation into a regime indistinguishable from the old. While the uses of violence by revolutionary regimes might be attacked in various ways, this approach tends to see violence itself as naturally corrupting; in a formulation I will consider in a later chapter, "triumphant violence harden[s] into regressive power" (Ward 218). At its most abstract, this view creates an overall model of revolution as originating in rebellion, triumphing, and reproducing the repression it once opposed, and this is the central conception of Frye's "Orc cycle."

The approach I am tracing, however, does not necessarily depend on a theoretical model of revolutionary dynamics. An alternative, pragmatic-empiri-

cal version, exemplified by Simon Schama's 1989 study *Citizens*, discounts the notion that the position of oppressed classes has changed; it simply compares the prevalence of executions, false imprisonments, famines, etc., under old and new regimes, and evaluates the revolution's claims accordingly. The implication of both these viewpoints, in slightly different ways, is to rule out violent rebellion as an option for oppressed people in virtually any circumstances. The cyclic view does so directly, by postulating that the result of revolution must necessarily be a new power indistinguishable from the old. The pragmatic view reaches a similar conclusion more indirectly, on the basis of a comparative calculus of suffering. The logic of this method is that radical opposition becomes pointless: it is better to do nothing and accept the oppression one knows, since as many arrests of ordinary people, as much economic suffering, etc., are likely under revolutionary regimes as under those they replace — or, at least, no one can know the results of such a calculus in advance. Both views have defined historical roots: they reflect intellectual and popular reactions against the costs and uncertain gains of the French Revolution, in the first instance, and later revolutions as well. I am not, here, arguing against the validity of either of these conceptions, but simply pointing out that their scope reaches past the evaluation of any particular revolution to rule out revolutionary responses to repression in toto.

Like the cyclic conservative point of view, the most common left-wing view involves a conception of revolutionary dynamics based in part on what happened to the French Revolution. Roughly, this conception poses a social upheaval driven by deepening waves of popular rebellion that force liberalizing changes (as in 1789-91), then move increasingly toward mass popular social power expressed through what are assumed to be the most left-wing factions (here, the Mountain and specifically the Jacobins). At a certain point, however,

this effort fails because of objective obstacles to satisfying the needs of the poor, renewed counterrevolutionary actions on a domestic or international scale, the inability of plebeian groups to govern, or a combination of these factors. The result is either a restoration of the old regime, or a consolidation of power by the more conservative, socially privileged groups within the revolutionary system. While left-wing analysis, at least in intention, stresses the specificity of each revolutionary situation, this schema's core idea of a split between what is possible and the demands of social justice is probably generalizable to those revolutions that these analyses admit have failed.[24] And, as with the cyclic conception, this one finds echoes in Blake interpretation. David Erdman, for example, in response to the idea of an "Orc cycle" in Blake, has identified instead a cycle of "enslavement-liberation-reenslavement" that approximates this analysis ("New Expanses" 112).[25]

Left-wing analyses, like conservative ones, have characteristic ways of responding to the ambiguities of revolutionary development. One is to argue that the regime they favor is a genuine democracy (as in Trotsky's early view), or, at least, has popular support and/or acts "in the interest of" the common people. Idealizations of the Jacobins and even Napoleon were common among English revolutionaries of 1790-1815, as evidenced by the continued support for

24. This line of analysis is ultimately based on Engels's observations in *The Peasant War in Germany* (1850) about movements that take power when historical conditions are not mature: "[i]n the interests of the movement itself, [the leader] is compelled to defend the interests of an alien class, and to feed his own class with phrases.... Whoever puts himself in this awkward position is irrevocably lost" (135-36). The defense of regimes that govern in "unripe" conditions, however, has since become part of the tradition.

25. Erdman is speaking of *America* and concedes that something like Frye's "Orc cycle" may be appropriate for Napoleonic France (*ibid.*); but he also indicates (wrongly in my view) that Blake simply could not fit these developments into his myth (113).

an uprising in conjunction with a French invasion. As late as 1812 the returned deportee Maurice Margarot commented on Napoleon's defeat in Russia, "The liberator of the world and of England is stopped in his career of glory" (qtd. Hone 234).[26] Objectively, however, the identification of Jacobinism with popular power and/or influence is a questionable amalgam. By 1794 the Jacobins were striving to "reduce the sans-culottist democracy to the Jacobin standard," by engineering the dissolution of the relatively lower-class section committees and implementing a repression that "paralyzed popular political life" (S[oboul], "French Revolution" 500); by this time lower-class radicalism favored the Cordeliers (Hébertists), banned and executed in March 1794. A second line of left-wing response, more specifically Marxist, takes account of such facts but argues that the Jacobins were the most socially radical bourgeois regime possible in the given circumstances, and/or that they cleared the ground most thoroughly for the development of capitalism (and thus eventually for socialism). The implication, often not stated explicitly, is that the Jacobins should have been politically supported rather than other factions and in preference to their lower-class opponents.[27]

26. Margarot was one of the 1794 treason trial defendants "transported" to Australia (see Chap. 4). By 1812 he had been back in England for two years and could not have been out of touch with recent history.

27. In summarizing a broad line of argument I have necessarily slurred over nuances. Lefebvre's treatment in *The French Revolution*, vol. 2, extenuates much Jacobin repression circumstantially; Soboul in *The Parisian Sans-Culottes*, as well as his encyclopedia survey, quoted above, explains the Jacobin-popular split more coolly as a consequence of the Revolution's mixed class base; George Rudé in *The Crowd in the French Revolution* is more sympathetic to popular disaffection, though still basically pro-Jacobin. Differences extend, as well, to the revolution's political vocabulary. While both Lefebvre and Soboul give the standard definition of the sans-culottes as persons who did not wear the *culottes* or knee breeches of the old aristocracy and upper classes, Lefebvre gives the term a purely political sense: it is "a name applied to radical republicans" (xiv). Soboul, while stressing that the sans-culottes came from more than one class,

This line of argument ultimately involves a conception of teleogy that is worth outlining in some detail — if still only as a sketch — because of its analogues within Blake's Christian-apocalyptic tradition and because his attack on these analogues forms an implied criticism of their later appearance in Marxist thought.[28] It will have been noted that the "right-left" continuum discussed above does not include the Marxist classification of revolutions according to their class content, i.e., according to the social class whose rule they are said to make possible. This conception does in fact fit the right-left model, though in its own way. It poses a historical pattern (model) according to which socially dominant classes are situated on a time line that is also, implicitly, a right-left line. In the case of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century bourgeois revolutions, such as the French, the historically obsolete aristocratic class represents the right, while the contemporary bourgeoisie is the left, in the sense that its are historically achievable tasks that will revolutionize society (see Lenin's formulations). The proletariat, the class of the future then just taking form, comprises a part of the left, in the sense that its ultimate social interests can most nearly be met by helping to complete the revolution and perfect the coalescing bourgeois order. Within this pattern, the bourgeoisie itself is divided into right, center, and left, according to the clarity and ruthlessness with which bourgeois social aims are pursued. However, the class labels are not necessarily strictly empiri-

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treats them as a distinguishable social layer: their dress "served to distinguish [them] from the more elevated classes" (*Sans-Culottes* 18).

28. In the following discussion I wish to acknowledge a debt to conceptions in the concluding chapter of Hobson and Tabor, *Trotskyism and the Dilemma of Socialism*, largely formulated by my collaborator, Ronald D. Tabor, and developed further in his *A Look at Leninism* (1988) and work in progress on Marx and Hegel.

cal; Lenin, for example, considered the Mountain the revolutionary "representatives of . . . the bourgeoisie" although its main figures, Danton and Robespierre, were members of the smaller bourgeoisie, or what today would be called the middle class.[29] Hence, the idea of the Mountain or the Jacobins as "representatives" of the bourgeoisie involves a conception of representation that itself needs comment. On closer examination, the Montagnard leaders were political representatives of an ideal or theoretical bourgeoisie, in that they carried out what are theoretically denoted as bourgeois tasks. These included sweeping aside feudal restrictions; introducing unfettered property rights and legal, if not social equality; and vigorously defending the revolution by means that included, at certain points, restrictions on the rights of the *actual* bourgeoisie — such as the law of "forty sous," which allowed poorer people to attend section meetings, and the "maximum," or wage-and-price controls, though the latter were hardly enforced.

The social nature of the revolution and its leaderhip is seen as bourgeois, then, because of their apparent correspondence to a historical paradigm. This paradigm includes concessions at a certain point to the lower classes and poor, who play a necessary part in the establishment of the revolutionary state (given the timidity of much of the actual bourgeoisie). Yet the most appropriate role of these groups, in terms of the paradigm, is not to seek social power for themselves, or to fight for the most advantageous social position they can attain. Their role is — or should be — limited to those actions that carry forward the so-

29. Both were lawyers' sons and lawyers themselves before the revolution — Danton in Paris, in an official post that he purchased, and Robespierre in Arras, his home. Jacques Roux, another prominent Montagnard, was a priest; Hébert and Camille Desmoulins journalists.

cially possible revolution of the time, i.e., the establishment of bourgeois rule. One further paradox emerges here. While most Marxists would not call the Montagnard/Jacobin regimes proletarian or lower-class, neither would they say they were anti-popular or oppressors. Most specifically, they would describe these regimes as class coalitions between bourgeois and plebeian elements, and this view serves as an explanation both for the regimes' populist measures and for the half-heartedness of these measures. Yet this relatively favorable evaluation does not stem primarily from the Montagnards' popular measures, for it is prepared to explain their restrictions on popular rights as unavoidable; rather, the characterization of the Montagnard regime as progressive reflects the sense, derived from the historical paradigm, that such a class coalition is required for the thorough destruction of feudalism and the victory of bourgeois revolution, a necessary stage of social evolution.[30]

The Marxist conceptions outlined here have several implications. First, the "left" is redefined so that the term refers properly not to the groups with the most far-reaching aims (as in common-sense uses) but to those whose actions are most consistent and determined within the assumed paradigm of the histori-

30. The theory of successive historical modes of production, alluded to here, is found in various Marx-Engels texts, notably *The Communist Manifesto*, Part 1, and Marx's preface (1859) to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: "In broad outlines we can describe the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois methods of production as so many epochs in the progress of the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production [etc.]" (13). This passage also expresses, by implication, the idea that the transition to communism is scientifically predictable, further discussed in Chap. 7. Marx himself qualified the strict succession of modes of production in letters and later texts, and Trotsky challenged the separation of the stages, though not the underlying model, in his theory of "uneven and combined development." Nevertheless Marx's schema remains a dominant paradigm, and probably most of those who call themselves Marxists would subscribe to it in some form.

cally achievable; hence the term "ultra-left" for those who demand more equality than the paradigm allows. Further, the classification of what is historically possible is predicated on a pattern of historical development posited by Marxist social philosophy, a form of teleology that posits a succession of class societies ending in the abolition of class oppression and the creation of classless communism. But since only a minority, indeed a small and determined minority, perceives such a pattern in advance, the teleological conception, in pure form, justifies minority rule.[31] It does so by viewing those who perceive the teleological pattern as the representatives of the class whose rule is assumed to be historically necessary, even if they rule over and repress the actual members of that class (and others).

The connection drawn here between the Marxist teleological conception, the associated idea of ideological representation of a class, and the justification of minority rule is no mere logical extrapolation. While not all Marxist views would accept the connection, it can be derived from the basic Marxist paradigm, and for this reason I will look briefly at a version of Marxist theory that expresses the connection directly — that of Georg Lukács, which has been quite influential among intellectual Marxists. In the essays that form his 1923 work *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács attempted to give an overall theory of class consciousness, and proletarian class consciousness in particular. One of Lukács's central theses was that the genuine consciousness of any class is not the ideas of its members, but the ideas corresponding to its role as given by the

31. Of course, a belief in the Marxist paradigm can be combined with other political-cultural commitments, e.g., to working-class social action or, for that matter, to bourgeois parliamentary norms. I am outlining the pure form of the teleology, held by some; a tension exists between it and the other commitments, if any.

Marxist paradigm. Thus a representative of the class is not necessarily a leader or member of that class, but one who has the ideology of the class (i.e., which is judged proper to it). In the case of the working class, the Communist Party is assumed to have that ideology; the Communist Party, then, is the leader of the working class by virtue of its ideology, which (in Lukács's sense) *is* the true consciousness of the working class. Lukács writes that

> class consciousness consists in fact of the appropriate and rational reactions 'imputed' [zugerechnet] to a particular typical position in the process of production. This consciousness is, therefore, neither the sum nor the average of what is thought or felt by the single individuals who make up this class. (51)

For the proletariat, this "appropriate and rational" consciousness would correspond not only to its present role in production, but also to its historical role, assumed to be that of overturning class oppression:

> The proletariat only perfects itself [i.e., becomes truly itself, and hence its true consciousness must recognize this role] by annihilating and transcending itself, by creating the classless society through the successful conclusion of its own class struggle. (80)

In contrast, false consciousness "by-passes the essence of the evolution of society and fails to express it adequately" (50). True consciousness, then, involves a knowledge of the "evolution of society," and, for the proletariat, must be equivalent to recognizing its own role in destroying capitalism; opportunism — in the Marxist sense of the nonrevolutionary currents in the workers' move-

ment — "mistakes the actual, psychological state of consciousness of proletarians for the class consciousness of the proletariat" (74), and "denounces . . . the correct class consciousness of the proletariat together with its organised form, the Communist Party" (75).[32]

This cluster of ideas makes up a coherent whole. True class conscious is what is rational and appropriate for a class, according to its place in the Marxist analysis of society (51), and agrees with the evolution of society (50). Since society evolves toward the proletarian seizure of power (*passim* and 80), the "correct class consciousness of the proletariat" (75) is a consciousness of the necessity of this seizure; and since the Communist Party embodies this consciousness (assumption), its consciousness is the true consciousness of the proletariat. Hence, the Communist Party's consciousness *is* proletarian class consciousness — rather than what Lukács disparages as the "actual, psychological state of consciousness of proletarians" (74). The implication is that even when the Communist Party strips away the rights of the actual proletariat, as in Eastern Europe after World War II, its acts embody true proletarian class con-

32. In his 1967 preface to *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács criticized the idea of "imputed" consciousness as insufficiently grounded in economics (xviii-xx). But he did not say what change in the overall conception of class consciousness this grounding would produce, and he reaffirmed his intention "to chart the correct and authentic class consciousness of the proletariat, distinguishing it from 'public opinion surveys' . . . and to confer upon it an indisputably practical objectivity" (xviii). Moreover, he affirmed Lenin's formula (in *What Is To Be Done?*) on the necessary implantation of socialist class consciousness "from outside the economic struggle" (xix). As Lenin means that this consciousness must come from a Marxist understanding of the "relationships between *all* classes and the state and the government" i.e., from Marxist theory in general (*Works* 5:422; Chap. 3, sec. E), it is not easy to understand how Lukács's 1967 correction makes a difference to his overall view. Evidently, he felt that his formulation of the exact difference between sociological and "authentic" class consciousness was wrong, but not the conception itself.

sciousness, whose "organised form" it is. The combination of a teleological historical model and the idea of ideological class identity, then, leads to justifying minority and dictatorial actions as representing the true interests of society.[33]

These considerations are pertinent to my discussion in several ways. First, the French Revolution had its own version of large-scale slaughter grounded in teleological thought; while some of the factional executions and reprisals in Paris and the provinces may have been driven by purely pragmatic considerations, the Jacobins were probably also motivated by the certainty that their actions were consonant with "reason" and "virtue." Thus, only the specific ideology used to justify imposing minority will on society was different from the

33. While I have quoted from the 1920 essay "Class Consciousness," the same conceptions are expressed in the collection's centerpiece, "Reification and the Class Consciousness of the Proletariat" (1922). Here, for example, Lukács argues that "the new positive reality arising out of the dialectical contradictions of capitalism [i.e., the possibility of the seizure of power and the evolution of a classless society] . . . is by no means the invention of the proletariat . . . [but] rather the *inevitable* consequence of the process in its totality," which nevertheless can be realized only through "the consciousness of the proletariat" (204; my emphasis). Clearly Lukács means "appropriate and rational" consciousness; the historical possibilities are realized "only when the consciousness of the proletariat is able to point out the road along which the dialectics of history are objectively impelled" (197). The main purpose of the essay is to show how capitalist processes retard the formation of this consciousness; analysis of Lukács's treatment of this point is beyond my scope, but the political implication is to underpin the idea of the Communist Party as guardian of consciousness. Since the actual consciousness of proletarians can waver, the "guardian" conception leads to a corollary that Lukács draws explicitly in another 1922 essay in the collection, "Critical Observations on Rosa Luxemburg's 'Critique of the Russian Revolution' ": "It is essential for *the proletariat to use all the means at its disposal to keep the power of the state in its own hands under all circumstances*" (292; Lukács's emphasis). In evaluating this formula it should be remembered that the Communist Party is the "organised form" of proletarian class consciousness (75); it is the Communist Party, then, that should keep state power in its hands under all circumstances.

twentieth-century paradigm I have been discussing. Indeed, such conceptions had English as well as French antecedents, as will become clear in a later chapter. Further, Blake's own intellectual framework, Christian apocalyptic, contains its own form of authoritarian discourse based on the assumed certainty of privileged access to truth — a conception similar to the Marxist conception of historical teleology and inevitability, though distinctly grounded.[34] Blake, we will see, addressed the problems of political authoritarianism and the authoritarian implications of apocalyptic thought in various ways, especially in his later work. Hence, the teleological and authoritarian concepts I have examined in Marxist thought through the lens of Lukács's views crystallize elements in the thought of Blake's time that he knew and opposed.

Finally — and here I return to my present concern with the nature of Blake interpretation — the review just given may indicate the inadequacy of a simple "left-right" continuum to account for all views of revolution. The problems of the continuum when applied to Blake's views are an example. In its terms, the opposition between revolutionary and moderate views is centered on issues of coercion and terror while questions of popular power are blurred — or subsumed under the state power of one kind of regime, according to the conception of ideological class representation. Because the issues of popular power are lost sight of, it is difficult to understand why Blake might at one time have approved of revolutionary state violence, and the tendency is simply to deny that he did so; even David Erdman declares flatly, "Blake *never* advocates violence and terror. . . . He does not use the parable of the French Terror or anything like it" ("New Expanses" 113). Alternatively, for some writers, Blake's justification of

34. See the discussions of apocalyptic discourse by Derrida and Goldsmith (chaps. 4, 7).

violence becomes the topic of a negative criticism of his overall social values.[35] Further, since the continuum links revolutionary violence and ideas of total social transformation with state terror and the regimes that practice it, it implies that Blake's eventual rejection of the French Revolution must also have led him to reject violent mass action, to advocate reconciliation between rich and poor, and even to turn away from political commitments. Alternatively, if one stresses Blake's continuing concern with social rebellion, the continuum will imply that his critique of the French Revolution must have been a relatively limited one, confined, for example, to its Napoleonic phase. In both cases, it becomes difficult to conceptualize a later Blakean position that rejected both the Napoleonic and Jacobin phases of the revolution, not because they were too radical or violent, but because they lacked the vision to oppose the ruling system consistently and continued the oppression of the common people. It becomes difficult, too, to account for the late Blake's concern with issues of minority rule and coercion, whether manifested in Jacobin or English contexts. In perhaps a broader way, standard conceptions that utilize the "left-right" continuum tend to counterpose Christian love to revolutionary mass action, and so find it difficult to conceptualize a Blakean position that unites them and that sees in this unification a solution to the repressive implications of elitist and teleological conceptions of society.

Blake, then, combines political responses to revolution — as well as ethical and religious conceptions — in ways that do not fit a "left-right" classification, and so make clear the need for different terms. The intellectual framework in which I place Blake may be characterized as analyzing society and evaluating

35. This is the view of David Aers' "Representations of Revolution," discussed in later chapters.

social actions along a vertical rather than horizontal axis — it takes the social activity of the oppressed as its starting point, rather than assuming that a government at a specific point on the "left-right" continuum acts "for" the oppressed. Hence, it evaluates a revolutionary situation in terms of whether formerly oppressed people are gaining rights and social power — and how substantive and lasting these gains are — rather than "reading" the social affiliations of the regime from whether the ruling group is acting radically or cautiously, violently or nonviolently, or from the claims of the regime to represent the people or lower classes. This framework does not, then, accept the concept of ideological class representation. On the contrary, it tends to assume that accession to power and privilege separates leaderships from those they have represented; and in any case, it is suspicious of the coercive functions of the state, all too easily turned against those who have helped a regime into power. At the same time, this approach acknowledges that poor and oppressed people often do follow leaders from other classes. Since representation of this kind is often bad representation, this approach involves a readiness to criticize self-defeating, narrow-minded, deferential, or intolerant ideas of the oppressed, while taking them seriously as political-ethical commitments and not pigeonholing them as "false consciousness." Further, in what seems a commitment so vague as to be intellectually meaningless, yet is actually a fundamental political divide, this viewpoint is grounded in the life *of* the common people — either practically, in the sense that those who hold this approach live and work politically among the common people, or intellectually-morally, in that they understand ordinary people as political and moral subjects, not as recipients of changes made by an elite.

As an intellectual tradition, the framework I am describing is not specifically revolutionary — it encompasses simple communitarian self-help and can be found in the nonrevolutionary politics of mutual solidarity, as in guild and trade union activity. (More specifically, it was found in such activity once the French and Paineite conceptions of the "rights of man" became influential in these arenas; and of course, it was never dominant in them.) Indeed, the importance placed on moral and ethical commitments implies a revaluation of trends and persons often denigrated in left-wing analyses, such as charity workers among the poor. Such persons may in fact be more closely tied to the lives of poor and oppressed people, despite middle-class prejudices they may hold, than some radicals with fully elaborated class conceptions of society. This, perhaps, is one meaning of Blake's critical encomium in *Milton* to Wesley and Whitefield, discussed in a later chapter. However, this framework has its revolutionary traditions as well; in nineteenth and twentieth-century terms, they cover a spectrum of Christian-radical, antiauthoritarian-democratic, anarchist, and "ultra-left" attitudes to revolution. These attitudes stress, above all, the direct activity, social power, and self-government of workers and other oppressed people. They regard revolutions in which these groups do not gain full control of society as simply episodes in a long history of advances and defeats in the struggle for emancipation, not as "stages" appropriate to a specific historical period. This intellectual framework, then, lacks a teleology and regards the future as uncertain; it tends to substitute bonds of solidarity, ethical conceptions, and explicitly articulated utopian ideals for the assumedly immanent historical patterns of Marxism.

Like the cyclic-conservative and Marxist viewpoints, this one also has its

model of revolution and revolutionary failure. Like them, it begins with a rebellion of socially oppressed groups. But it disagrees both with the cyclic-conservative view that the triumph of the oppressed leads to their institution of a new oppression, and with the Marxist emphasis on domestic and external constraints that cause a revolutionary government's degeneration or collapse. The approach I am outlining sees the cause of revolutionary failure, instead, as the coming to power of an elite drawn either from a higher class or from a section of the oppressed classes themselves, but separated from that section by its further evolution. While this group may indeed face objective constraints on its options and threats to its power, these alone neither explain nor justify its actions. Rather, it adopts the methods and, with variations, the values of other social elites, specifically by identifying itself with the revolution and its own power with the power of the masses and/or the good of society. It becomes an oppressing power. But unlike what the cyclic reading assumes, its oppression is not an expression, even a distorted one, of the original mass outbreak. The oppressed people remain in the same position, oppressed. Despite heroic efforts — for *they* are the ones who die in insurrectionary attempts and in the defense against the counterrevolution — they have not become the rulers of society. The rulers, if not overthrown by internal or external counterrevolution, eventually consolidate their position, pushing the oppressed back from social and political advances they made when the situation was fluid — though not back to their position under the previous regime.

Since this viewpoint renounces teleology, it rejects the dehumanizing view that rationalizes the defeats of working people in derailed revolutions as parts of a necessary historical stage. But neither are the defeats sentimentalized or

made the basis for rejecting social radicalism, as in the pragmatic-empirical reading of the French Revolution. Rather, the defeats become part of a historical tradition, lessons carried forward to the next outbreak of revolt. As a twentieth-century exemplar of this view, the Belgian-born Russian revolutionist Victor Serge, put it in remembering the political companions of his youth:

> "What will become of us in twenty years' time?" we asked ourselves one evening. Thirty years have passed now. Raymond was guillotined: "Anarchist Gangster" (so the newspapers). It was he who, walking towards the worth Dr. Guillotin's disgusting machine, flung a last sarcasm at the reporters: "Nice to see a man die, isn't it?" I came across Jean again in Brussels, a worker and trade-union organizer, still a fighter for liberty after ten years in gaol. Luce has died of tuberculosis, naturally. For my part, I have undergone a little over ten years of various forms of captivity, agitated in seven countries, and written twenty books. I own nothing. On several occasions a Press with a vast circulation has hurled filth at me because I spoke the truth. Behind us lies a victorious revolution gone astray, several abortive attempts at revolution, and massacres in so great number as to inspire a certain dizziness. And to think that it is not over yet. Let me be done with this digression; those were the only roads possible for us. I have more confidence in mankind and in the future than ever before. (9-10)

This sensibility — socially revolutionary, anti-teleological, and grounded in the long history of popular struggle, defeat, and renewal — is visible as well in Blake.

I have kept this outline general, rather than trying to ground it in the

tenets of specific late-eighteenth century political groups, for two reasons. One is that it outlines an intellectually consistent way of responding to revolution rather than a specific description of any group or ideology. The second is that it is difficult to identify this tradition as existing within or before Blake's lifetime in a form on which he could draw readily. Blake does, indeed, draw on traditions of the communitarian poor, and echoes both of Winstanley and of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century communitarian doctrines such as Spencean land reform are evident in his work. He also shares in a tradition of socially radical antinomian Christianity, closely linked to the former, and his ties to this tradition, at least, are well known from treatments by A. L. Morton, Jon Mee (in part), and E. P. Thompson, while the overall millenarian milieu of his time has been elucidated by J. F. C. Harrison, Clarke Garrett, and others.[36] But these treatments have not grounded Blake in a specifically political tradition of response to revolution similar to the one I have outlined.

Nor is such a tradition clearly evident in the radical trends of the 1790s with which Blake may have had a tangential connection, and with whose ideas he was certainly familiar. The main radical organizations of the 1790s, the London and other Corresponding Societies, together with older groups like the Society for Constitutional Information, were characterized by a mix of some of the attitudes described here, such as a belief in the common people as an active force for reform, with other propensities such as a heavy emphasis on parliamentary reform, often personalistic styles of leadership, a fairly uncritical view of French imperial aims, and more. Similar points, different in detail, could be made about later radical manifestations such as the confused web of West-

36. See citations in Chap. 3.

minster reform politics in 1807-1812, the revival of mass reform agitation after 1817, the conspiratorial efforts of the Spenceans, and others.[37] Indeed, the political identifying labels used above, such as Christian-radical or anarchist, stem from a later period, and this point indicates that the cluster of attitudes I am discussing was only beginning to form, or was unformed, in the period of Blake's work. This set of beliefs emerges in European intellectual history in response to the defeat of the French Revolution — like the cyclic-conservative and Marxist perspectives, but with distinct content. It is a tradition that grew out of the intellectual issues of Blake's time, rather than one available to him in advance.

The evidence, however, is that Blake did respond to social issues in a way consistent with the approach or framework outlined here. This response, I argue, is one he developed over time. Specifically, his early prophetic works show a fairly direct identification of mass rebellion with the politics of the French revolutionary regime; at the same time, these works conceive of human liberation in a far deeper and more integrated way than does the revolution's mix of enlightenment and Rousseauan thought with classical and Mosaic antecedents. In *The Book of Ahania* we will see elements both of Erdman's "enslavement-liberation-reenslavement" paradigm and of the critique of radical authoritarianism I have outlined. In *The Four Zoas* the latter will be found in a fairly pure form, as part of a conceptualization of social, sexual, and psychic enslavement throughout history, and liberation in the present epoch. Finally, Blake's late prophetic works will show him changing the terms and deepening the content of his earlier social myth. The evidence for this interpretation will

37. See, variously, Thompson, *Making*, Part 1; Goodwin, *Friends*; Hone, *Cause of Truth*; Worrall, *Culture*.

emerge in later chapters as I explore Blake's uses, revisions, and partial supplanting of the Orc myth, after first discussing the currently dominant model of Orc's significance — Frye's, a product of the conservative-cyclic understanding of revolution.

Blake's adherence to this third paradigm of revolution explains many characteristics of his work, especially later works, that can seem like ideological binaries or like juxtaposed attitudes from different phases of his career, when seen from either liberal-conservative or Marxist standpoints. These include Blake's joining of psychosexual and social liberation, of Christian and class radicalism, of insurrection and forgiveness, of apocalyptic beliefs with ideas of mutuality and democratic discourse. Not all these ideas, of course, are taken up in post-Blakean versions of this paradigm; in particular, those drawn from the Christian apocalyptic tradition tend to be muted or secularized. Nevertheless, Blake's ideas have recognizable similarities to an emerging tradition that stressed the self-organization and autonomy of working people; that held a perspective of prolonged struggle with no teleological promise of success; that therefore emphasized ethical conceptions of solidarity, loyalty to class, respect for the individual, and, often, Christian community; and that, despite its long-term perspective, believed not in an incremental improvement of society but in its transformation, at an unspecifiable moment of popular awakening and revolt that would lead to the total equalization and democratization of social relations. This tradition can, of course, be criticized in various ways. My purpose, however, is not to justify every aspect of the tradition, but to identify an intellectual framework from which Blake's idea of revolution can be approached and in which it can be placed.

CHAPTER TWO

The "Orc Cycle" as Interpretation and Ideology

The dominant recent view of Orc's general significance is the "Orc cycle," the masterful construction by which Northrop Frye argued that Orc embodies inherent patterns of cyclic repetition. Orc, Frye says, begins as rebel but grows into his seeming opposite, Urizenic restraint, in a process that will repeat endlessly unless transcended by the attainment of higher consciousness. This development also entails a turn from political or social revolution (the Orc principle) to mental apocalypse.

Like much of Frye's reading of Blake, the "Orc cycle" has had enormous impact. Most major interpretations of Blake in the last thirty years have echoed or endorsed it, though often with qualifications. If Frye's construct has been less discussed in the last ten years or so, this may be partly because much Blake criticism has turned away from large-scale mythic interpretation, among other reasons because the interpretive issues raised by Frye and debated hotly in the 1960s and '70s have appeared settled. Yet, one finds even in recent work a continued litany of reference to the "Orc cycle" and its constituent elements.[1]

The "Orc cycle" has, of course, been much debated. Largely, however, the debate has involved the *scope* of the concept — whether it applies to all of

1. E.g. Paulson 108 (1983); Hilton 179, cited below (1983); Behrendt "Family" 38, 41 (1986); Wagenknecht in Miller, Bracher, and Ault 328 (1987);

Blake's prophetic works, as Frye and perhaps a majority of interpreters have found, or "does not exist as a completed pattern in the Lambeth books" and emerges only with Orc's serpent transformation in *The Four Zoas*, as argued by Morton D. Paley (*Energy* 80, 115) and others. This question was, for example, the focus of a running discussion in contributions and footnotes to the 1970 collection *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*. Several contributors argued for the applicability of the "Orc cycle" to such early works as *America* and *Europe*, while David V. Erdman and George Quasha disputed this claim. Erdman argued that *America* and *Europe* showed a cycle of "enslavement-liberation-reenslavement," not one of "rebellion-vengeance-tyranny," and hence did not fit Frye's model ("New Expanses" 112). Quasha questioned "the relevance of any cyclic symmetry" to *America* (263), characterizing Orc instead as a "Fiery Paradigm of Poetic Torsion" defined by images of nonrepetitive opening out and bursting forth (268 and *passim*). Yet Erdman (tacitly) and Quasha (explicitly) accepted the "cycle" in the post-Lambeth work, so that the challenge to Frye's idea remained limited.[2]

Swearingen 113n., 117 (1991); Rosso 126-27, 134-35, 150, and elsewhere (1993).

2. Quasha 264, 267, 272, 275-76; Erdman "New Expanses" 113-14. While Erdman does not in fact say that the "cycle" is found in later works, he gives this impression and was so interpreted by W. J. T. Mitchell in a footnote to his own contribution to the collection, "Blake's Composite Art" 80n. Mitchell's article endorsed the "Orc cycle" concept and offered one of the key pieces of evidence for it, the mirror-image poses of Urizen and Orc on plates 8 and 10 of *America*, discussed below; yet, impressed by Erdman's evidence against an "Orc cycle" in the poem's text, he added a footnote limiting the scope of his own remarks to the designs (79-80 and n.). By the time Mitchell published a revised version of the essay as the opening chapter of his *Blake's Composite Art* in 1978, he had altered his reading of *America* 8 and 10, and the endorsement of the "Orc cycle" was gone (9-10 and *passim*). But a price is paid for not making one's critique of Frye explicit: later treatments, some cited below, continued to endorse or echo Mitchell's initial treatment, ignoring his reformulation.

In these early commentaries the "Orc cycle" served as a marker of Blake's political attitudes. Those who affirmed it in the early works saw Blake as already ironic or negative toward Jacobin France and revolutionary violence, already conceiving apocalypse as mental transformation; those who denied it dated his criticisms of Jacobinism much later. Subsequent discussions by Michael Ferber (1985) and Jon Mee (1992) shifted the grounds of discussion. Affirming the presence of an "Orc cycle" in the Lambeth books, and so inferring that Blake was critical of Jacobinism from the start, Ferber nonetheless insisted that Blake was committed to a collective, social apocalypse in both early and late works (174-77). Mee found implications similar to those of the "cycle" in the *Preludium* of *America*, but not in the body of the poem or in such other works as *The Book of Ahania* (143-44, 190-92).

The result of such discussions has been a rough consensus that an "Orc cycle" appears in Blake's later work, with continuing uncertainty over whether it is also found in the early work, and over its political meaning. Although I wish to challenge this consensus, it has in part supplied the terms of my discussion. In what follows, I examine, first, the "Orc cycle" as presented by Frye and echoed by some more recent writers; next, the related questions of the affinity of Orc to Urizen and of Blake's snake symbolism; and then the issue of Orc's cyclicality in Blake's later work. I close with a consideration of the possible intellectual derivations of the "Orc cycle" conception.

Despite its wide influence, the "Orc cycle" is almost entirely a product of Frye's imagination, not Blake's. Frye's construct fails the most conservative of all methodological tests, that of textual and graphic evidence. While the idea of an "Orc cycle" is not totally without foundation, Blake does not present Orc as

having a cyclically recurrent existence, does not suggest that he develops organically into Urizen, and does not, through the snake symbolism frequently used to characterize him, associate him either with the idea of periodic renewal or with that of eternal recurrence. Many of the secondary elements of Frye's Orc paradigm, repeated by other interpreters — elements like Orc's crucifixion and his resemblance to the ouroboros or tail-eating serpent — are also erroneous. Blake is, to be sure, concerned with repetition in history, but he does not use Orc, as character or symbol, as a vehicle for exploring that problem; and when he does become concerned with the possibility of cyclic recurrence of Orclike characters, he uses a separate system of reference to embody these concerns. Orc is and remains, for Blake, a multivalent symbol of oppression and opposition, though what this means and Blake's attitude toward it change radically in the course of his career. The "Orc cycle," then, tells us less about Blake than about his interpreters, and about the ideological uses to which a critical construction can be put.

Frye's Epic Machinery

At the risk of going over familiar ground, it is necessary to recall Frye's formulation of the "Orc cycle" in some detail. The cycle is a recurrent process in which life is "born as Orc, ages as Urizen, dies as Satan, . . . and is reborn in another Orc" (234).[3] Historically, Orc stands for "the power of the human desire to achieve a better world which produces revolution and foreshadows the apocalypse" (206). Yet:

> If we turn from human history to nature . . . we see that revolution, in

3. Citations of Frye not otherwise identified are to *Fearful Symmetry.*

> the sense of a renewal of energy and the power of life, is not haphazard but cyclic. . . . [Imagination strives] to see in the death of a man or in the decline of the day and year an image or reproduction of the original Fall, and in the return of human and natural life an image or prototype of the ultimate resurrection. . . . Orc, then, is not only Blake's Prometheus but his Adonis, the dying and reviving god of his mythology. . . . Orc dies as the buried seed dies, and rises as it grows. . . . If Orc represents the reviving force of a new cycle, whether of dawn or spring or history, he must grow old and die at the end of that cycle. Urizen must eventually gain the mastery over Orc, but such a Urizen cannot be another power but Orc himself, grown old. (207-208, 210)

Thus, if the desire "to achieve a better world" is expressed through revolt, it will undergo a natural life cycle in which its rebellious impulses, "grown old," become repressive, or Urizenic.

To this set of associations connected with diurnal, seasonal, and life cycles, Frye adds a second set based on the snake imagery often used for Orc, which he links both to the idea of eternal recurrence and to the crucifixion:

> The serpent with its tail in its mouth is a perfect symbol of the Selfhood: an earth-bound, cold-blooded and often venomous form of life imprisoned in its own cycle of death and rebirth. . . . [T]he zodiacal sun . . . symboliz[es] the fallen conception of eternity as indefinite or endless recurrence. The image for this is the circle; and the serpent in a circular form with its tail in its mouth is therefore a perfect symbol of the zodiac, being so employed by the Druids. (135, 140-41)

> Orc, or human imagination trying to burst out of the body, is often described as a serpent bound on the tree of mystery, dependent upon it, yet struggling to get free. The erection of the brazen serpent in the wilderness therefore represents in disguised form the more clearly symbolic story of the earlier poem.[4] The energy of Orc which broke away from Egypt was perverted into the Sinaitic moral code, and this is symbolized by the nailing of Orc in the form of a serpent to a tree. This was a prototype of the crucifixion of Jesus, and the crucifixion, the image of divine visionary power bound to a natural world symbolized by a tree of mystery, is the central symbol of the fallen world. (136-37)

On the basis of these identifications — Orc as a cyclic process of organic death and renewal, Orc as symbol of visionary power "bound to a natural world" yet "struggling to get free" — Frye builds a widening series of associations. The "coming of Jesus is one of [Orc's] appearances" (129); others are Prometheus (137), Adonis (207, 225), Samson (215), and Moses, St. George, and "Albion in his fallen aspect" (225). In perhaps his broadest application of the idea, Frye explains the "Seven Eyes of God" of Blake's later myth, which he sees as historical periods, as manifestations of the "Orc cycle." "Each runs from a youthful Orc to an aged Urizen," beginning with "the birth and binding of Orc," a period of "works of imaginative power," proceeding through an era of "sophisticated rationalism . . . under the symbol of Urizen," and finally dying in a paroxysm of war and tyranny "symbolized by the crucifixion of Orc, in the

4. Frye's reference to an "earlier poem" may be to *Paradise Lost*, mentioned in the previous paragraph, or to Genesis; the brazen serpent refers to Numbers 21:6-9. Its associations in Christian art are discussed in Réau, *tome* 2:1, 208-209, and 2:2, 485.

form of a serpent, on the tree of mystery" (211). Thus when Frye views the "cycle" as the life cycle of a culture, Orc appears twice, once in its youth as creative force (evolving into Urizen), and once in its old age as rebel and victim. Frye is particularly insistent on Orc's crucifixion; he refers to the "crucifixion of Orc as Jesus" (212), mentions "the brazen serpent hung by Moses on a pole, which was accepted by Jesus as a prototype of his own death," as a referent for Orc's crucifixion as "hanged serpent" (213),[5] states that "Orc dies on the cross" (228), and reverts to the idea frequently (215, 223, 283, 299).

Naturally, not every aspect of Frye's formulation has been adopted by later critics, even those who directly acknowledge their debt to him. But it is striking how much *has* been taken over, often wholesale. Leopold Damrosch, discussing Blake's use of snake symbolism, endorses "the 'Orc cycle' (as Frye has definitively named it)," and appends the passage quoted above, on Orc as bound and nailed serpent (106-107). In a discussion of Gnostic traditions in Blake, Hazard Adams, without specifically citing Frye, and while restricting the scope of the "cycle" to Blake's later work, repeats several key elements of Frye's formula:

> The crucifixion of Orc in Blake's prophetic books takes up this whole curious [Gnostic] tradition. In the earlier prophetic books Orc is political and spiritual regeneration. . . . In the later prophetic books, Orc has

5. The biblical referents are, again, Numbers 21:6-9, and John 3:14. Frye similarly remarks in a later essay that "the final triumph of Urizen was symbolized by the hanging of the brazen serpent (Orc) on the pole, a form of the 'accursed tree' " ("Keys" 182). Frye's summary of the historic-mythic periods to which the "eyes" correspond is given in *Fearful Symmetry* 128-35, and again at 360-61. Note the similar formulation of their internally cyclic structure in "Keys" 184.

> become a cyclical concept . . . and we find much irony in his Gnostic connections, his activity being circular and confining like the tail-eater. Blake's texts are not Gnostic or occultist, but in the crucified serpent and the tail-eater he employed two venerable devices and took advantage of the ambiguity that over time they began to harbor. . . . The serpent temple of *Europe*, identified with the body of Albion's thought, has vestiges of the traditions I have mentioned and expresses the connection in Blake's mind between sectarianism and the cyclical figure that the revolutionary Orc eventually became. ("Synecdoche" 56)

And Nelson Hilton, though not concerned with the "Orc cycle" per se, refers casually to its various elements: "Frye hints at the common chain when he observes that as early as *The Book of Ahania* (itself dated a year after *The Book of Urizen*), 'Blake is becoming increasingly aware that by "Orc" he means something inseparably attached to Urizen' "; "The 'Orc cycle' begins and ends in an *orb*, a fear-filled symmetry" (75, 179).[6] Other writers, similarly, adopt various elements of Frye's system: the Orc/Urizen equivalence; Orc's crucifixion with its referents to Christ and the serpent on the pole; the relevance of the tail-eating ouroboros.[7]

6. See 69, 74, and 226 for other formulations recalling Frye's. Hilton's "common chain" refers to his suggestion that the chains binding Orc are the same as the "linked infernal chain" of Urizen's spine (*Urizen* 10:36); the argument by Frye to which Hilton refers (*Fearful Symmetry* 214) is that Blake's substitution of Fuzon (a son of Urizen) for Orc in *Ahania* shows his growing sense of Orc's identity with Urizen. Morton Paley interprets the same substitution in a contrary way, as showing that in *Ahania* Blake intended to leave Orc's redemptive potential open (*Energy* 81).

7. See, for example, for Orc-Urizen equivalence: Bloom *Apocalypse* 234-35; Mitchell "Composite Art" 79-80; Tannenbaum 47-48; Wagenknecht 190, 228, 295-96; Wilkie and Johnson 111, 130, 144 and elsewhere; Wittreich, *Angel* 53-54. For Orc's crucifixion or nailing to the tree, see: Bloom *Apocalypse* 245;

Frye's construct has become so widespread that parts of it sometimes enter commentary as unexamined assumptions. Ronald Paulson, for instance, notes that artworks of Blake's period frequently show alteration that is "cyclic and repetitive . . . It is cyclic when Blake's Orc overthrows and then becomes Urizen, but in many ways the two are indistinguishable from the start" (7). Later, he reads *America*'s frontispiece, which shows a hulking, winged figure he calls "Orc" serving "to patch the very breach he has made in the tyrant's wall," as indicating that the rebel ends by "serving as his own counterrevolutionary . . . or as a tyrant in his own right" (103-106). In Paulson's discussions, the ideas that Orc becomes Urizen in a cyclical development and that he ends as "counterrevolutionary" or "tyrant" are traceable to Frye, while the belief that he "overthrows" Urizen perhaps derives from Anne K. Mellor's suggestion that he "conquers" Urizen in plate 10 of *America* (148). Nowhere in Blake, in fact, does Orc succeed in overthrowing Urizen, and Paulson misses the irony of the *America* frontispiece: the huge figure is chained, a *defeated* Orc if he is Orc at all.[8] Aside from their accuracy or inaccuracy, such comments indicate the

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Grant "Visions" 178; Paley, *Energy* 80; Rose "Goodbye" 136-141 (with other aspects of Frye's paradigm); Wagenknecht 221-22 and elsewhere. For the ouroboros, see Ward 217. Paley associates cyclicality with Orc's coils, though not referring specifically to the ouroboros (*Energy* 79, 122, and *Apocalyptic* 78).

8. The figure has been variously identified; Paulson follows Erdman in *Illuminated Blake* 137. Nowhere else, however, is Orc shown with wings; moreover, in some copies (e.g., M, at the Yale Center for British Art; B, at the Morgan Library) the ringlets of hair that fall between his knees look more like a snout. (If they are ringlets, they are parted in the middle, another departure from Orc's usual iconography.) Hagstrum reads the figure as "Poetic Genius" enslaved in the age of classicism and aristocratic art — an equally fanciful notion but an indication that the figure is not self-evidently Orc (*Poet* 99). Besides Mellor, another possible source for the idea that Orc overthrows Urizen is Sloss and Wallis 2:212; they refer to *The Four Zoas* Night VIII (misreading a passage that describes Urizen's terror at Orc's strength), and they do not suggest that Orc becomes Urizen.

seductive power of interpretive paradigms. In Paulson's discussion — and it is not a trivial error — second-order thinking based on extrapolation from critical formulations displaces first-order thinking based on Blake's words and designs.

Something of the same character happens in Frye's own analysis. Even before one examines the evidence for it in Blake's texts, two characteristics stand out in Frye's system. The first is that it is unusually dependent on its own internal logic. In the first long quotation above, Frye's argument is internally generated in a series of "if-then" statements: "*If* we turn from human history to nature, . . . Orc, *then*, is not only Blake's Prometheus but his Adonis . . . *If* Orc represents the reviving force of a new cycle, whether of dawn or spring or history, he *must* grow old and die at the end of that cycle" (207-208, 210, my emphasis). Frye does not show that Blake's texts require us to make the turn to nature, but once Frye has made it, he derives conclusions and new premises from it until, at the end, it becomes self-confirming.[9] Related to this characteristic is what Leopold Damrosch tartly calls "a kind of pan-mythic eclecticism in which every symbol accumulates analogues like a snowball" (107).[10] Frye himself

9. In a similar passage, Frye identifies Orc as a dragon-slayer and notes that dragons are symbols both of the diurnal swallowing of the sun and of national tyranny: "The dragon-killing is thus a drama both of the reviving powers of nature and of a freedom from some kind of social oppression. *Putting the two things together*, we get the principle that such a revolution as is occurring in America is a natural renewal of life in society. . . . *If this is so, then* human history, no less than the natural world, has a cyclic rhythm of decline and revival, and history takes the form of a series of cultures and civilizations, each with its own rise, maturity, and fall" (209; my emphasis). It is Frye, however, who has "put together" the two meanings of dragon-killing in such a way as to suggest cyclicality; he does not show that Blake does so.

10. John Howard, who rejects the "Orc cycle" in the Lambeth prophecies, usefully criticizes Frye's conflating of myths and of early and late Blake (*Infernal Poetics* 228, n. 1, and 238, n.1).

avows that the "Orc cycle" refers to "the entire process of life and death which goes on in our world" (234). As noted above, for example, Frye considers the fallen Albion a manifestation of Orc: "Orc is the *equivalent* of Albion in his fallen aspect" (225, my emphasis). This identification blurs the degree to which different characters in Blake have distinct functions — Orc represents certain *faculties* of "fallen" humanity, as do Los, Enitharmon, etc., while Albion stands for humanity (sometimes the British people) *en bloc*. Further, equating the "Orc cycle" with life in this world as such allows the "cycle" to mean almost anything: an Orc who is everything is one who is nothing in particular. Frye's disconcerting inclusiveness lets those who accept the "Orc cycle" adopt widely differing emphases in discussing it, and even differing definitions of the "cycle" as a whole.[11]

When we try to verify Frye's statements about the "cycle" by turning to the texts, we encounter a kind of environmental disaster, in which rusted and broken epic machinery crowds the landscape, obsolete and nonfunctional, leaking contaminants into the soil. First and most important, Orc is never presented in any of Blake's texts as having a cyclic existence, that is, as growing old, dying, and returning. The two key pieces of evidence for such a conception, Orc's

11. It is variously summarized as referring to a "cycle of revolt aging into repression" (Bloom, *Apocalypse* 252); "the withering of desire into restraint" (*ibid.* 289); "treadmill stories in which promising new beginnings fade away into ancient errors" (Grant "Envisioning" 318); a process in which "the zeal of the martyr and rebel provides the energy for acts of persecution and repression" (Wilkie and Johnson 150); "a ceaseless conflict between Energy and Reason" (Wagenknecht 2); and even "the familiar Orc cycle of a creation-fall leading toward an eventual apocalypse" (McNeil 374), a characterization that applies to the whole of Blake's view of the world. Such sloppy characterizations can easily be blamed on their authors, but Frye's own imprecision facilitates them.

transformation in *The Four Zoas* and "The Mental Traveller," are discussed later, but to keep my argument clear I will note that in *The Four Zoas* Orc does not age organically into Urizen, nor is he crucified — in Night VIIA, at least, he splits into serpent and human forms, and he returns in human form in *Milton.* "The Mental Traveller," for its part, presents one version of an Orc-like existence, not a definitive statement. Among the Lambeth books, *America* shows the bursting of Orc's chains, *Europe* what may be his birth, *Urizen* his birth and binding, and *The Song of Los* his chaining on a mountain. None shows a cyclic return; though the reference in *The Song of Los* 3:20-21, "time after time / Orc on Mount Atlas howld," could conceivably be so interpreted, the overall action in the poem is that Orc remains chained during a *single* sequence of historical decline that is traced through Jesus, Mohammed, and the middle ages, to the eighteenth century — there is no indication that Orc appears more than once. Orc, further, is never described as growing old and dying (Frye 210) or as aging into Urizen (234), nor is Urizen ever described as an older Orc (210). The strongest arguments for Orc-Urizen equivalency before *The Four Zoas*, in fact, rest on iconography and will be considered below, though some have been made on the grounds of verbal echoes and other correspondences.[12]

12. David Wagenknecht, for example, compares *Four Zoas* VIIB, 91:5-9, in which Orc is likened to an earthquake, with strikingly similar imagery used by the Urizen-like figure Tiriel in the unengraved poem of that title, probably written in 1789 (5:4-7). Already in *Tiriel*, Wagenknecht concludes, "the interpenetration of Orc and Urizen in Blake's imagination was clear" (296). However, Tiriel is not himself described in earthquake images, but calls on the earthquake in cursing his sons — in effect invoking the aid of an "Orc." To establish an "interpenetration of Orc and Urizen," one would need to show that Ijim, the Orc-like figure in *Tiriel*, is like Tiriel. The two characters are quite dissimilar, though Urizen-like and Orc-like qualities are distributed between them in ways unique to this poem (see Chapter 3). Some of Ijim's language ("Impudent fiend said Ijim hold thy glib & eloquent tongue," 4:36) does sound like Orc in *The Four Zoas*, but specifically the Orc who is still defying Urizen.

Orc, though frequently described as a serpent on a tree, is never described as "bound" to it or "struggling to get free" (Frye 136-37); whenever he appears on the tree, whether in positive or negative contexts, he is free of physical bonds, and usually active:

> The terror answerd: I am Orc, wreath'd round the accursed tree:
> The times are ended; shadows pass the morning gins to break; (*America* 8:1-2)

> he [Urizen] made Orc
> In Serpent form compelld stretch out & up the mysterious tree
> He sufferd him to Climb that he might draw all human forms
> Into submission to his will (*The Four Zoas* VIIA, 81:3-6)

Orc is further never described or shown crucified — anywhere in Blake. He is not shown "[dying] on the cross" (Frye 228), or nailed or tied to a tree or a cross, either in human or serpent form. Orc in his human form is described and shown bound or chained to a rock or mountain, or under the earth (*America* 1 and elsewhere), occasionally nailed to a rock (*The Four Zoas* V, 60:28, and VIIA, 79:1, 17-18), but never bound or nailed to a tree. Fuzon, after he is felled by Urizen, is nailed to a tree (*Ahania* 4:5-8), as is Luvah in *The Four Zoas* (VIIB, 92:13), but these characters are best regarded as analogues rather than incarnations of Orc.[13] The images of Orc on mountain or rock, both verbal and

13. For Fuzon and Orc, see Chapter 3. Luvah, of course, is Orc's "Eternal" form. The context in *The Four Zoas* VIIB presents a complex trope in which the defeat of Orc in battle is likened to the nailing of Luvah to a tree (and hence to Jesus' crucifixion), rather than describing a literal nailing of Orc-as-Luvah to the tree. This view is supported by the consideration that the passage in which the nailing occurs (91:24-93:19) is not part of the narrative proper, but an interpolated song by the "Elemental Gods" or "demons of the deep" (91:23,

graphic, do liken him to Prometheus, who, in turn, was frequently identified typologically with Jesus; Frye considers both figures "allotropic forms of Orc" (137). To identify Orc's Promethean binding as crucifixion, however, would seem to require some fusion of imagery, as when Prometheus is shown bound to a cross in a seventeenth-century woodcut or, in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, the Chorus compares present social conditions to "a pillow of thorns" for Prometheus's head (I:563).[14] Blake, in contrast, avoids using emblems such as the crown of thorns or the cross in his depictions of Orc.

If Orc as human youth is not shown crucified, what about his analogue, the snake? No snake in a design that can be shown on other evidence to refer to Orc is "hanged" (Frye 213), nailed, or chained to anything. As Frye and others have discussed, the serpent on a pole or cross is a traditional typology of the crucifixion, and Blake does show a serpent nailed to a cross in his illustrations for *Paradise Lost*, in "The Everlasting Gospel," in an associated epigram, and in

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93:20), as noted by Donald Ault (267-68 and gloss).

Verbal echoes tend to link some of these disparate contexts. Thus, when Los "*naild* him [Orc] down binding around his limbs / The *accursed* chain" (*The Four Zoas* V, 60:28-29), the words I have emphasized create echoes with Orc "wreath'd round the *accursed* tree" (*America* 8:1) and with Fuzon's "corse . . . / On the *accursed* Tree of MYSTERY / . . . *nail'd*" (*Ahania* 4:5-8), tending to associate the active serpent-Orc of *America* with the nailed or chained child-Orc of *The Four Zoas* V and the nailed Fuzon of *Ahania*. The question however is how to evaluate (how to *hear*) these echoes: whether to say the binding of Orc is *like* the crucifixion of Fuzon and that the active snake-Orc is *like* the bound child-Orc, or to say that the snake-Orc and child-Orc *are* crucified. As much as we pay attention to Blake's verbal overlaps and links among episodes, we ought also to pay attention to the contextual differences that should prevent our simply conflating distinct situations and actions.

14. Both examples are drawn from Curran, *Annus* 55-56; see also Korshin 235, 364n.

his pencil drawing of the Last Judgment (c. 1809) and its accompanying descriptive text, but these designs and texts are not associated with Orc. It is also true that Orc (implicitly as serpent) is described at several points as wreathing the tree, and that in some Gnostic traditions the snake on the tree in Eden is regarded as a type of Christ. In such traditions the serpent is redemptive because it induced Adam and Eve to disobey the creator of the fallen world; by extension, Jesus, who also sought transcendence of this world, could be regarded variously as an incarnation or an analogue of the serpent.[15] Not all Gnostic traditions, however, made this further identification, and in any case such a parallel does not allow us indiscriminately to treat any textual or iconographic depiction of the serpent on the tree as a reference to crucifixion. (Indeed, in Blake's later iconography, where the serpent symbol is handled more traditionally, such an approach can be seriously misleading.)

As these particulars perhaps imply, Blake does not describe "the coming of Jesus [as] one of [Orc's] appearances" (Frye 129). The major place in which Orc is likened to Jesus is in *Europe*, whose text invokes and parodies Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," but most critical treatments do not accept a straightforward identification of Orc in *Europe* with Jesus (see, e.g., Tolley 120, 125, 143-45). Further, Blake's point is precisely *not* that the spirit of Orc, ironically adumbrated in the birth of Jesus, died and returned in a natural cycle, but that it was perverted by the historical development of Christianity (the 1800 years of Enitharmon's sleep), failed to mature, and bursts forth in the upheavals of Blake's time. Orc in this poem is born *once*, is entrapped in a sleep of 1800 years, and emerges to preside over "the strife of blood."

15. See Jonas 92-94. Adams "Synechdoche" 54-55 has a brief summary, and Frye refers to the serpent-Jesus identification in *Symmetry* 137.

More broadly still, Blake does not present the "Seven Eyes of God" as a series of "Orc cycles." Blake's references to the "eyes" do not describe what happens within them. Frye's argument that each is internally organized as a cycle, as well as his view of them as historical epochs, depends on his identification of certain events in the Lambeth mythology with successive "eyes." Thus, Frye reads Orc's binding on Mount Atlas in *The Song of Los* as referring to the beginning of the third or "Elohim" cycle, centered in Africa (212-13), the end of *Urizen* as signifying the end of that cycle (213), and so on. The events of these books, however, do not support Frye's schematic outline of successive phases within each cycle (birth and binding of Orc, sway of Urizen, cultural collapse and crucifixion of Orc), and Frye's readings depend on casual and unconvincing identifications.[16] For example, he tells us that

> The African civilization comes to a close with the collapse of the third or Elohim cycle, recorded in the story of Adam and Eve, in which the two great symbols of the dying Orc, the cursed serpent and the tree of death, make their appearance. This is described at the end of *The Book of Urizen.* (213)

Though Orc is associated with a serpent in *Urizen*, the reference is not to the dying Orc but to his ontogeny in the womb, as worm, serpent, fish, etc. (19:20-

16. Indeed, Frye's reference to *The Song of Los* is contradictory in its own terms. If Orc's birth and binding (not described in the poem) are interpreted as occurring with the start of the Elohim cycle, which for Frye concludes with the fall of Adam and Eve (130, 213, 360-61), then one "cycle" extends to the European present; on the other hand if they occur with Orc's first appearance in the poem, between Plato and Jesus (3:19, 23), there is no textual basis for assuming earlier appearances of Orc coinciding with the episodes of Adam, Noah, Moses, etc., or for associating this poem with the Elohim cycle. (It might be noted, too, that Frye misplaces Orc "under" Atlas (212); he is bound "on" it, 3:21.)

36). There is no tree, Orc being chained on a mountain, apparently the same one as in *The Song of Los*, where he will remain until Blake's time; *Urizen*, in short, does *not* describe Orc's death, and its ending refers to the exodus, not Adam and Eve. Overall, there is no support in the Lambeth books for the idea of successive appearances of Orc corresponding to successive historical periods. I shall return below to the question of how Orc is depicted in Blake's later works.[17]

Rather than being cyclic, then, Orc is born once, bound once, and remains bound throughout historical time until the eighteenth century (see Chapter 3).[18] Hence, Orc represents not a cyclic upsurge but the energy that is bound with the repression of sexuality and the creation of oppressed populations and classes. No doubt, in history, this energy has been partially released in many failed revolutions, but Blake does not use Orc to represent these prior upheavals in his

17. Blake refers to the "eyes" in *The Four Zoas* I, 21 [19]:9-15, and lists them in VIII, 107 [115]:41-51, *Milton* 13 [14]:17-27, and *Jerusalem* 55:31-33. Frye's idea that they are "Orc cycles" may derive carelessly from Milton O. Percival, who associates Orc's appearance with Terah, the twentieth of the twenty-seven "heavens" and "churches" listed in *Milton* (37:35-43) and *Jerusalem* (75:10-20), which cover the span of time from Adam to Luther (Percival 120-22). Orc is not mentioned in these passages, but apparently Percival has relied on his appearances sometime between Moses and Jesus in *The Song of Los* and *Europe* to place him there. In Blake's sequence, however, Terah is followed by Abraham (Terah was Abraham's father) and then Moses, so that Orc's appearance is at least two "churches" later than Percival says. (In *Urizen* he appears sometime between the organization of matter and the exodus, but there are no internal markers at all for this time period.) I cannot account for Percival's error, but in any case he does not suggest that Orc reappears cyclically; that is Frye's addition. Further, the "eyes" are not identical with the "heavens" or "churches"; they are mentioned in connection with them in *Milton* 35:64-65, but in a way that distinguishes rather than fuses these symbols.

18. In different works, the timing of these events and their details differ; see Chap. 3.

symbolism; the Orc who breaks his chains at the start of *America* has been bound since the rise of civilization.

A number of treatments have invoked aspects of Frye's "Orc cycle" in examining such questions as whether the Lambeth works show an equivalence of Orc and Urizen or whether Orc's snake symbolism implies cyclicality and similarity to Urizen, and I will examine these questions next.

Orc and Urizen in Lambeth: Some Manifestations

Blake's treatment of Orc in the Lambeth books has received intensive commentary. Much of it has attempted to undermine the opposition between Orc and Urizen, so striking at first glance, by demonstrating subliminal linkages and correspondences between the two, primarily in the designs. Several problems emerge in such readings: whether to treat textual and design echoes and overlaps as straightforward identifications or as ironic counterpositions; whether to regard similar elements in portions of text and design that appear to refer to "fallen" and "regenerated" states as undermining and cancelling one another or as showing transformation of one state into the other; and whether to link portions of text and design referring to Orc with those referring to Urizen.

The first two problems can be illustrated through some of the issues raised in critical discussions over plates 8 and 10 of *America* (figs. 1-2). In these designs, commonly identified as showing Urizen and Orc respectively, the two figures appear in virtual mirror-image: Orc's left knee is raised, as compared with Urizen's right; his left hand is higher, as compared with Urizen's right; his body leans to his left while Urizen's leans to his right; but Orc's head, like Urizen's, is turned to his right (the viewer's left). Urizen appears against a background of

rocks and dark sky, with ocean waves below the text area, Orc against a background of flames. In an influential discussion in 1970,[19] W.J.T. Mitchell, though noting that the pictures have "completely opposite effects" — the naked Orc seems "to rise and burst outward" while the white-robed Urizen "produces the effect of contraction".— nevertheless argued that the similarity of their poses "provides us with a visual equivalent of what Northrop Frye calls 'the Orc cycle' " by establishing "the essential identity of the rebel and his oppressor" ("Composite Art" 79). Seemingly a straightforward reading of how gestural figuration can alter and undermine surface content, Mitchell's point was by no means incontestable, even within the narrow parameters of gestural analysis. Simultaneously with Mitchell, Janet A. Warner read the mirror-image poses in a subtly different way.[20] For Warner, the raised-knee, extended-arms posture is Blake's "gesture associated with the Poetic Genius"; in Urizen this faculty "has become part of a repressive system" while "[h]is mirror image on plate 10 [Orc] reflects his other self, the imaginative power of creative desire" (94). Warner's summation, "Orc's pose mocks Urizen, for they are adversaries, but it also links them" (94), admits the connection between the two, but in the context of a larger mental faculty that Orc represents genuinely while Urizen stands for its "perversion . . . into authority" (92). Relevant as well is Warner's distinction in relation to other designs between flaccid and extended fingers, a gesture she calls "creative fingers" from its use in Michelangelo's figure of God creating Adam (96, 102). Though Warner does not say so, Orc's hands are more tensile

19. Subsequently endorsed by Wittreich (*Angel* 53-54), Tannenbaum (47), and Paulson (103).

20. I cite Warner's *Blake and the Language of Art* (1984), of which pp. 87-105 are a revised version of her 1970 "Blake's Use of Gesture." The passages I cite are identical in both versions.

than Urizen's, subtly differentiating their gestures. The right hand, especially, shows a downward turn with extended fingers (two can be distinguished), and resembles the gesture called "Respuo," or "I reject," in the drawing manuals Warner cites — an appropriate gesture for Orc (Warner 51, 57).[21]

Despite the greater flexibility of her reading, Warner's supposition that pose and gesture have fixed meaning must itself be questioned. Warner bases her view on Blake's appropriating, in his designs, dozens of motifs taken from seventeenth and eighteenth-century art manuals, some of which he may have studied as an apprentice. Citing his use of this visual "vocabulary," Warner claims for Blake a "knowledge that he spoke through his art a common language that all men [*sic*] could understand" (4). Such a language would be what Robert N. Essick, basing his discussion on Saussure, calls a "motivated" language, one in which signs bear a necessary relation to their referents (*Language of Adam* 10, 20-21, and Chap. 2 *passim*). It would utilize a universal, unvarying, and objectively determinable set of emotive meanings of poses and gestures; or, at least, in terms of eighteenth-century language theory, Blake would believe that it did, so that investigation of his sources would show what he thought he was saying with pose and gesture. Warner's own language suggests that she is making one of these claims. In practice, though, she shows only — and very skillfully — that Blake drew on well-established models. But in this case, Blake's language was not "motivated" in Essick's sense, but "conventional." Interpretation must then take into account not only conventional meanings — though these are a starting-point — but also the ways these meanings are deflected and recontex-

21. The gesture is also seen in the Orc figures manacled to the ground in plate 1, and bursting from the earth in plate 2; in the latter, the downturned hands help Orc lever himself up.

tualized by Blake's handling, by other designs and texts to which they are juxtaposed, etc. Warner concedes as much implicitly, noting that Blake may use "the same form" to show "dramatically opposed states" (91). This concession, however, makes her assignment of fixed meanings to given poses appear somewhat arbitrary. Indeed, to support her argument that Orc on plate 10 may have negative meaning, Warner has recourse to general critical constructs: "as a representative of the cycle of time [Orc] could hardly be the completely redeemed man" (104). The identification of Orc with cyclic time comes not from Warner's discussion of figuration but from Frye's paradigm, and is another example of its remarkable power to determine how Blake is read.

We would do well to heed Mitchell's warning that it can be treacherous to read "fixed, iconic meanings" into Blake's figuration independent of the overall design ("Composite Art" 72 and 73n.). By the same token, the similarity in Orc's and Urizen's pose has no fixed meaning; as Morton Paley argues elsewhere in discussing plate 76 of *Jerusalem*, interpretations that focus more on gestural particulars than on overall emotional impact may miss Blake's essential point (*Continuing City* 113-18). In short, while the similarity in Orc's and Urizen's poses is *in* the design, the interpretation to be given to it is not. In a subsequent reconsideration, indeed, Mitchell argued that the plates show a "transformation" of the "aged figure of plate 8 [into] the flaming youth of plate 10" (*Composite Art* 10). Though the transformation can also be read in reverse, Mitchell stresses the opposition between two states rather than their identity. Mitchell's reconsideration is not necessarily correct, but it is a *possible* reading, consistent with the gestural echo in the designs.[22]

22. Damrosch gives a similar reading despite his overall endorsement of the "Orc cycle" (278). Other interpreters who reject Mitchell's initial view include Erdman (*Illuminated Blake* 146), Behrendt ("Family" 37), and Crehan

This point connects with an aspect of Blake's overall method that Hazard Adams points to, the use of "analogy, that is, the idea of a fallen form of unfallen truth" ("Synecdoche" 53). In a slightly broader sense than Adams indicates, Blake frequently presents "fallen" forms and their "unfallen" counterparts in counterposition to one another. This kind of analogy occurs, for example, at the end of *The Four Zoas*, when Blake repeatedly echoes in an apocalyptic context details that occurred earlier in a "fallen" context.[23] At first disconcerting in their resemblance to previously-established negative imagery, these repetitions accumulate until we realize that Blake is systematically reprocessing these images in transformation. Such oppositional analogies happen repeatedly in Blake, inasmuch as every aspect of an apocalypse must take up and recast some similar element of the pre-apocalyptic world.[24] One danger of a criticism that is oriented toward correspondences between contrasted types is that it can overlook this type of opposition. An example is Leslie Tannenbaum's "Orc cycle" reading of *The Song of Los*, which depends crucially on identifying the snake imagery of human degeneration in the poem's first section, "Africa," with the snake imagery of Orc's rebellion in the second section, "Asia." Tannenbaum's argument, in part, is that Har and Heva in "Africa," who diminish into

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(247).

23. Examples include the Cloud of the Son of Man (IX, 123:27-29) and the "ten thousand thousand springs of life" of the final page (138:3), which echo the cloud from which Luvah descends in Ahania's vision (III, 40:1-41:3) and the "ten thousand thousand . . . spirits" accompanying Urizen (I, 12:32). Such echoes are easily read as negative irony rather than positive analogy. Indeed, their meaning cannot be determined in isolation, but depends on one's sense of Blake's overall meaning.

24. For discussion, see Evans 321. This view is now less fashionable than a deconstructive reading of such oppositions as cancelling one another, but the regularity of the negative-positive reversals favors Evans's view.

serpents, are types of Cadmus, who slew a serpent only to become one himself. Correspondingly, Orc's appearance as a "serpent of fiery flame" in "Asia" (7:28) refers to Hezekiah, who smashed Moses's brazen serpent as an idol (2 Kings 18:4) yet is later called a "fiery flying serpent" (Isaiah 14:29). Hence "the pattern of the man who destroys the serpent only to become a serpent himself . . . emblematiz[es] the cycles of fallen history" (197). Tannenbaum does not call attention to the very different assumptions behind Ovidian and biblical myth, the possibility of reading the biblical serpent imagery positively, or the apocalyptic overtones associated with Hezekiah, whose illness in Isaiah 38-39 leads directly to the messianic prophecy of Chapter 40. Tannenbaum's point, presumably, is that the echoes of Har-Heva undercut any such messianic reading, but this ignores the possibility that the echoes are intended as repeating the material of human degeneration in the opposed context of regeneration.

A visual example of positive-negative analogy, which also confirms that gestural similarity does not indicate identity, is the correspondence between the figures in Blake's designs for plate 13/16 of *Milton*, referring to Milton's self-sacrificing return to the "Sea of Time & Space," and for "The Spiritual Form of Pitt guiding Behemoth."[25] Both designs show a standing figure with arms ex-

25. The *Milton* design, which differs in detail from copy to copy, appears as plate 13 in A, B, and C, and 16 in D, and follows *Milton* 14 [15] in the Erdman text; it is reproduced in *The Illuminated Blake* 232 (copy A); in Wittreich, *Angel* plates 10 (copy B) and 11 (copy D); and in color in Essick and Viscomi, pl. 13 (copy C) and supplementary illustration 4 (copy D). Even color reproductions, however, do not do justice to its sublimity, achieved in D (at the Rosenwald Collection, Washington, D.C.) through the use of rose and gold coloring for the sun and its corona, with gold flecks in the rays, and echoed in Milton's halo of bright rose fading to gray-pink and gray-gold, with an aureole of gold flecks between the first and second rings. Milton himself, "flesh" and rose, with blue-gray offtints, continues the predominantly rose coloration. The Pitt design is reproduced as Butlin 651, dated 1805 (?). See the full description by A. G. B. Russell (1913) included in Paley *Energy* 190-91.

tended down and out at nearly the same angle. (Pitt is striding, Milton's posture varies in different copies from a clear forward stride to more seemingly stationary poses.) Milton's hands, both turned downward, are about to drop his belt and robe; Pitt's left hand turns down and points to the violence of war below him, while his right loosely holds a thong that appears to control Behemoth. Both figures have haloes; Pitt's consists of three concentric rings, two with figures within them, and Milton's has three rings in copy A (those in B, C, and D are less defined). Milton stands on bare earth with a rising sun behind him, Pitt among figures of war and the beast Behemoth. Milton is naked, Pitt clothed, but the same difference exists between Orc in *America* 10 and Urizen in 8 and neither this nor the differences in background have stopped commentators from discovering their "essential identity." My point is not the nearly self-evident one that the Pitt design uses the Milton figuration ironically. Rather, it is that gestural similarity can never establish thematic identity between figures. Indeed, if Blake had the Milton figure in mind when doing Pitt, or vice-versa, he may have intended to comment on two related points: that Milton's historical legacy did, in Blake's view, have points in common with Pitt's; and that Pitt is the Satanic opposite of the transfigured Milton whose "unexampled deed" is shown in plate 13/16. Gestural similarity, then, can be used to establish transfiguration and opposition as well as similarity. In the same way, in the *America* designs what has been read as essential similarity can — and in the context of *America* as a whole, should — be read as juxtaposition of opposites.[26]

26. Wittreich comments on the Pitt painting (and its companion "The Spiritual Form of Nelson guiding Leviathan") in the context of his comments on the "Albion Rose" engraving, arguing, against conventional interpretation, that the latter comments negatively on revolution and thus that the Pitt and Nelson portrayals do not "parody" but rather "echo and extend its vision," though the Albion figure is merely "erring" rather than "demonic" (*Angel* 68-69 and n.).

Another text and design that have together become a crux of "Orc cycle" interpretation, like *America* 8 and 10, are those of *Europe* 10 (fig. 3). Discussions of this plate show the pitfalls of carelessly associating portions of text and design referring to Orc and Urizen. On this page, in the context of the retreat of the "fiery King" (a type of Urizen) to the serpent temple at Verulam, Blake interrupts his narrative to describe the involution of perception and the consolidation of rationalistic thought. The dense associations of this passage with druidism, the supposedly druid serpent temple at Avebury, and rationalism figured as Bacon's seat at Verulam have been well established; of concern here is the possible reference to an "Orc cycle" in the key lines:

> Thought chang'd the infinite to a serpent; that which pitieth:
>
> To a devouring flame;
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Then was the serpent temple form'd, image of infinite
>
> Shut up in finite revolutions, (10:16-22)

Though the immediate narrative context concerns the "fiery King," numerous writers have found in this passage an emblem of the "Orc cycle" and/or the

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Neither Wittreich nor Paley, to whom he is replying (*Energy* 195-96 and elsewhere), notes the similarity between the Pitt and *Milton* designs. I am convinced by Wittreich's overall reading of the "Albion Rose" engraving (48-69), though not by some details of that reading; I would, however, place the engraving not in the context of a condemnation of revolution throughout Blake's career, but in that of his awareness of the failure of the French and American Revolutions, and his turn toward pacifism, in the period of the engraving. (It is dated 1803-1810, at least for the final state, by Bindman [479]; Essick's study of the design's evolution argues that the moth and worm were added after 1803 [*Separate Plates* 24-29].)

cyclic nature of revolution. Frye initiated the association of the text with revolution and the reading of the serpent temple as an ouroboros form (S. Foster Damon, in contrast, was aware that it is not one). For Frye, the temple is "a monument to the fall of man . . . the creation of the world in its present 'out there' form. This form is that of the law, the basis of which is revolution in its mechanical sense of revolving wheels, the symbol of which is the *ouroboros*, the serpent with its tail in its mouth" ("Keys" 187). The connection with the "Orc cycle" is not explicit, but is implied by Frye's earlier statement that "every revolt of Orc in history has been 'perverted to ten commands' " ("Keys" 184); the "ten commands," the Mosaic law, link Orc to "the law" as expressed by the serpent temple.[27] Echoing Frye, Hazard Adams, as noted earlier, connects the serpent temple with Blake's use of the ouroboros symbol, and argues that the temple "expresses the connection in Blake's mind between sectarianism and the cyclical figure that the revolutionary Orc eventually became" ("Synecdoche" 56). For Harold Bloom the lines signify man "doomed to be 'shut up in finite revolutions' " and show that "Blake already understands the cyclic nature of political revolutions" (*Apocalypse* 156).[28] Michael J. Tolley, too, sees in the temple a reference to political revolution: "In this system [i.e., of Verulam], revolution is only a turning round of the wheel" (137). From a left-wing standpoint, finally, David Gross strikingly agrees that the serpent reference is to Orc, though he believes the lines portray Urizenic misperceptions of revolution: for the "cautious conservatism of the status quo . . . [the] visionary project of human

27. Frye is referring to Orc's complaint that *Urizen* has perverted "fiery joy" to "ten commands" (*America* 8:3). Frye's overall thesis leads him to transfer the perversion silently to Orc. For Damon, see *William Blake* 345, discussed below.

28. See 152-56 for Bloom's useful discussion of plate 10 as a whole.

emancipation, is seen as a serpent" (11).

The linkage between the serpent temple and Orc, however, is not nearly so simple. Orc is not mentioned on this page, and the passage is directly discussing Urizen's limits on thought, not Orc's. The temple, too, is associated with Urizen, and not just because of its overall thematic function. Its center is at Verulam (St. Albans), north of London, and it embodies the domination of north over south (10:5, 27-30); in *Europe*, though not in later work, Urizen's realm is the north (3:12, 11:5), while Orc appears in the east. If there is a specific link between Orc and the Urizenic themes in the text, it must occur in the design for the page, a serpent that stands on its tail and lifts its body, coiled seven times, up the left margin, with its crested, flaming head at the top. The coils have been connected by Tolley, among others, with the supposed seven cycles of history, i.e., the "eyes" (136-37). But unless we take *any* snake design as referring to Orc, the identification depends on connecting the plate 10 snake to the presumedly revolutionary rearing serpent of the title page, itself usually seen as Orc (fig. 4). The two designs have been read both in conjunction and in opposition (for example, by Hagstrum, *Poet* 102 and Erdman, *Illuminated Blake* 168, respectively).[29] Whichever identification is adopted, however, the plate 10 serpent must be recognized as distinct from the one on the title page, which is more sinuous and usually different in details of coloring, and in which the flaming crown-crest, the most sinister aspect of the plate 10 design, is absent.[30] Ei-

29. For a linkage of the two plates that also connects them with *The Four Zoas* 73, see Essick and LaBelle xii.

30. Several examples show a consistent tendency to differential coloring, regardless of which snake is brighter. In copy E, in the Rosenwald Collection, the differences are especially marked. The title snake is an overall mottled brown with bright red and blue pointing, as well as some darker red, green, and a little yellow; red and blue are most striking in one's first impression. The snake appears baleful but joyous, an effect enhanced by its garnet-red tongue

ther the two snakes are to be seen as opposed, though significantly similar; or the Orc-serpent of the title-page has been varied in a Urizenic way, but without canceling out the serpent of the title, who unwinds from his repetitive coils (if they are to be read as repetitive) in a fashion that suggests potential forward movement, not circular motion. If one chooses to read the plate 10 snake as a reshaping of the title snake, then these plates of *Europe* are an early attempt to represent graphically the revolutionary degeneration that Blake was to explore more fully in *The Four Zoas*. But in any case they do not show that Urizen is

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and its red eye with blue lid. The landscape and lettering continue the bright impression: the hills are pink, the earth mainly tan, the sky blue and off-white with a tan wash, and the lettering a bright light blue. The plate 10 snake is mottled brown with tan-yellow, dark green, and medium dark blue details, and some dabs of red; its sunburst is bronze and pink-bronze. Altogether the effect is considerably darker than the title-page. Copy A, at the Yale Center for British Art (figs. 3-4), has similar brilliant effects on the title page, which again contrast with darker coloring (though with a fiery head and crest) on plate 10. In Copy G, on the other hand (Morgan Library), the title snake is mainly mottled brown and darkish green, with some dark blue and lighter brown-garnet. The sky and hills are yellow-tan and two shades of gray, respectively. The serpent on 10 is mottled brown with medium green and some lighter brown and touches of red-brown, but no true red; the flames are yellowish-brown. An effect of scaly glitter is achieved by leaving highlights uncolored. In overall effect, the title-page is more highly colored than plate 10, but the contrasts are much less vivid. In copy B, finally (private collection; Dover facsimile), the title snake is mainly earth-colored, with some touches of garnet and green, while the plate 10 snake is brighter, mainly brown but with much yellow, some red-garnet, and touches of green. These examples also show that it is difficult to generalize about coloring, which differs in every copy. The differences appear not to reflect changing assessments of the French Revolution. In Bentley's conjectural dating, copies E and G are assigned to 1795, B to 1796, and A to 1805 or later (*Blake Books* 146); Joseph Viscomi's redating puts B, E, and G in 1794 and A in 1795 (376). Viscomi, it should be noted, argues against the view that differences in coloring from copy to copy in an "edition" printed together show altered intentions (142 and Chap. 16 *passim*); my argument concerns differing color effects within a copy.

"Orc himself, grown old," or that the upheavals Orc stands for "inevitably" end in new tyranny (Frye *Symmetry* 210, "Keys" 184), because the text provides no reason to read the two pages as a chronological succession. The designs taken together present more than one possibility, rather than a single unambiguous meaning.

Moreover, both text and design of plate 10 must be read in conjunction with their contexts. In the text, the serpent temple of plate 10 is counterposed to "the flames of Orc," which consume the Urizenic "Guardian" (12:12, 16, 32), and Orc is never described as a serpent (both Los and the "shadowy female," however, have "snaky" hair); the opposition is between serpent (temple) and flames.[31] Serpents do appear in conjunction with Orc in the marginal and interlinear designs, but their forms oppose that of the plate 10 snake — they are uncoiled and extended. At 14:31, for instance, opposite Enitharmon's "Arise O Orc," a snake does arise in the right margin, joined by two others below the text, one growing out of vegetation; and in line 34 the *y* in nature's "revelry" underlines the word in a snake-like flourish (fig. 5). If indeed the coils in a snake design are taken to signify cyclic repetition, these snakes, the ones most closely linked with Orc, offer an answer to the idea that he represents mere cyclicality, since they are not coiled.

Finally, with the aid of a forward glance, we can be more definite about the associations of the serpent temple and the marginal serpent design with the characters of Blake's myth. In *The Book of Ahania*, after Urizen is wounded in the genitals, his damaged sexuality takes the form of a serpent which he subdues and fashions into a bow of vengeance; in Night VIII of *The Four Zoas*, Urizen

31. Orc's flames have a Urizenic counterpart (the king is "fiery," 10:2), but overall the opposition is clear.

himself becomes a dragon.[32] Urizen, then, and not just Orc, acquires a reptile form as Blake's myth evolves. This reptile form is not associated directly with Urizen's person in *Europe*; indeed, Urizen himself is not named on plate 10 — we see only the "fiery king" (line 2), the serpent temple, and the marginal serpent. But the king is an emblem of earthly tyranny and the temple a figure of repressive thought, two of Urizen's aspects, and the king's "fiery" quality is presented visually in the bronze sunburst surrounding the serpent's head; with these points and Urizen's later reptile aspects in mind, we can identify the serpent design as a representation of Urizen's repressive system. Indeed, the spiral-coiled serpent was used in Renaissance art to stand for the dialectic (Tervarent 344), an appropriate association with Bacon; Blake later adapted the plate 10 design in his *Night Thoughts* illustrations to show the blind worship of natural existence, yet another aspect of Urizenic thought.[33] A final analogue is Miltonic: the plate 10 serpent approximates the posture and coloration of Satan's manifestation to Eve as serpent erected in "rising folds, that tow'r'd / Fold above fold a surging Maze, his Head / Crested aloft, and Carbuncle his Eyes; / With burnisht Neck of verdant Gold . . . " (*Paradise Lost* IX:498-501). These associations suggest a link between the Satanic serpent, earthly power, and natural religion. Hence, the "infinite" that is changed to a serpent in the text appears in full context to be human thought under Urizen's sway. Indeed, it is Urizen himself: Urizen's thought, and the repressive sublimation of sexuality

32. *Ahania* 3:8-24, at 8; *Four Zoas* 106:23-46 (*E*381-82); see discussion in chaps. 3, 4.

33. It was executed, but not engraved, for *Night Thoughts* 163 (Night V, p. 8), illustrating the line "Wit, a true pagan, deifies the brute." A hooded Wit kneels with hands in prayer before the serpent, here with five major coils and two small loops, and its head angled downward. See Grant, Rose, and Tolley, vol. 1; Hagstrum discusses and reproduces the design (*Poet* 123; pl. LXVIB).

into weaponry, in *Ahania*, have turned *him* from an Eternal into a repressive serpent. The serpent temple and the snake design thus appear as emblems of Urizen's power, not of the cyclicality of Orc or revolution. Moreover, the title snake appears as a rebellious counterpart to this one, an explosion of its tightly-wound coils, Orc and particularly Orcian sexuality counterposed to Urizenic antisexuality. Finally, the title page and plate 10 designs imply a duality in Blake's handling of the snake image, a use of one form for opposed purposes, to which I will return below.

The relation *between* the two designs remains to be specified. Does the specification of a serpent form for Urizen as well as Orc readmit their equivalence through the back door? The answer would depend on the overall development of both symbols, and so must be deferred for the present. Once again, however, what has been read as a simple Orc-Urizen correspondence is far more complex. The Orc-Urizen correspondence which some interpreters have found in plate 10 is, at best, one of possibility. It must be set against the other possibilities represented by the title page, the verbal and pictorial imagery associated with Orc in the body of the text, the implications of an awakening of Orc that takes place only in the last pages, and finally the serpent associations of Urizen himself, whose plate this is. To find in plate 10 the confirmation of an "Orc cycle" is to seize on one set of meanings, not well established by text and design, while excluding others, and thus is an application of a priori paradigms, not true interpretation.

While the *America* and *Europe* plates discussed here represent only a small portion of the evidence brought to bear in discussions of the "Orc cycle," they are particularly salient because they focus on two key aspects of the "cycle"

analysis — the establishment of linkage between Orc and Urizen through subliminal verbal and visual echoes (*America* 8 and 10) and reading of material that deals with Urizen as also referring by implication to Orc (*Europe* 10). A third aspect of the evidence that has already recurred regularly in my discussion, the snake imagery associated with Orc, will be examined separately, in an effort to point out distinctions and developments in Blake's use of a key image.

Blake's Snakes

As this look at *Europe* has suggested, interpretation has generally assumed that snakes have one stable meaning in Blake's iconography. Two problems undercut this assumption. The first is the difficulty of assigning intrinsic meanings to pictorial signs, as already noted in reference to *America* 8 and 10. The second is that critical discussion has often derived a unified meaning for Blake's snake symbol by lumping together different snakes (frequently from different periods of Blake's career) without regard to possible differences in meaning; references to Orc as a type of Christ, for example, are backed by referring first to his being "wreath'd round the accursed tree" in *America*, then to serpents wound round the cross in late poems and designs not directly related to Orc (Damrosch 106-107, Adams 53). These procedures rest on a view of the snake as what Damrosch calls an "iconic" symbol, one whose meaning and associations are relatively stable regardless of the context in which it appears (79-80). Damrosch, indeed, cites the serpent as "an iconic symbol which has more than one meaning, but whose meanings all conform to a single pattern" (111). This assumption of uniformity conflicts with the snake's uses in traditional iconography, where it stands variously for prudence, wisdom, royalty, death and the

dead, the renewal of life, and many other ideas, some mutually contradictory. Even the ouroboros of time can stand for eternity, the universe, the revolving year, and, with the addition of other emblems, the consistency of human or divine love. (See Tervarent 340-51; Hagstrum, *Poet* 51-52.) On closer examination, Blake's snakes are complex symbols whose meanings do *not* all conform to one pattern, and not all of the meanings that can be found in these symbols can be applied to Orc. Moreover, both the meanings that Blake attaches to snake symbols and Orc's relation to these symbols change throughout Blake's career.

Overall there are at least four types of snake symbol in Blake, and distinguishing them helps in understanding the meaning of Orc. The classification that follows is graphic rather than thematic, and deliberately rough and tentative, since the meanings associated with each snake form are not precise or stable.[34]

Because of its importance in Frye's scheme, I look first at *the ouroboros.* Despite Frye, the ouroboros is not a frequent symbol in Blake, and is never used in association with Orc.[35] The only clearcut ouroboros figure in Blake's illumi-

34. Damon (*Dictionary* 365-66) takes a thematic approach, listing four symbolic meanings: hypocrisy; worship of nature (as in the "coiled and threatening" snake of *Europe*'s title page); nature itself; and sexuality. Except in the last instance, he makes no attempt to distinguish positive and negative aspects, but assumes that the snake is a negative symbol. See also Sloss and Wallis 2:219-20 for a threefold classification.

35. H.B. deGroot identifies four examples of this figure. Three are among Blake's designs for Young's *Night Thoughts*: the frontispiece to Night III (Grant, Rose, and Tolley 78; engraved version, 24E, used in *The Four Zoas*, 73); its verso; and VI:690-92 (Grant, Rose, and Tolley 79 and 257, respectively). The fourth is *America* 5. DeGroot notes acutely that the *Night Thoughts* verso design, showing a different figure closed within a completed ouroboros, "is evidently a 'contrary' to the frontispiece itself" (561); it has also been seen as a "pessimistic sequel" (Grant, Rose, and Tolley 1:36, with Tolley's dissenting vote for deGroot, 90n.). This and the VI:690-92 figure were never engraved, and thus not available for *The Four Zoas*, but of course Blake could have resketched

nated works or in *The Four Zoas* is on page 73 of the latter work, and shows a serpent whose head has *almost* caught up with its tail while a female figure reaches up and outward from within its coils, disrupting the snake's closure (fig. 6). This design, originally executed for Night III of *Night Thoughts*, is significant in two ways. First, the ouroboros figure is uncompleted — the snake has not caught its tail. Blake executed fully-formed ouroboros figures for the verso of this *Night Thoughts* page and for a later passage (VI:690-92), and was familiar with numerous full ouroboros figures from contemporary and earlier sources, at least one of which, in John Bonnycastle's *An Introduction to Astronomy* (1786), is a possible influence on the choice of the *Night Thoughts* ouroboros for *The Four Zoas*.[36] But in utilizing his *Night Thoughts* designs for *The Four Zoas*,

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either for use there had he wished. Rodney M. Blaine (107-114 and plates) lists these and four other supposed ouroboros figures: two snake-wheeled chariots (for Dante and *Jerusalem* 41/46), two of the four *Europe* title-page variants (ii.a in *Illuminated Blake*, which Blaine also interprets as a snake-chariot, and ii.b), and *Jerusalem* 62, showing a giant whose head is encircled by what has variously been interpreted as a snake, a rope, or a worm. The paintings, drawings, and graphic works catalogued by Butlin and Bindman, and the *Night Thoughts* watercolors and engravings, include no other full ouroboros figures. Of those listed here, only the *Night Thoughts* designs are unambiguously ouroboros figures; the coils of the snakes forming chariot "wheels" allude to the ouroboros idea, but these figures open out at either end (as discussed below). Only with some strain does deGroot view the *America* 5 figure as "bringing its head round in the direction of its tail" (558). Neither deGroot nor Blaine includes the serpent-temple figure in *Jerusalem* 100. It is not a true ouroboros, since the circular central portion opens out at both ends, but it is as much one as others that they do include (e.g., *Jerusalem* 41/46). Finally, Daniel Hughes (71-73, 78-79) claims three textual examples: *Europe* 10:2-23, the serpent temple (examined below); *Jerusalem* 92:23-27, another description of the serpent temple; and *The Four Zoas* VIIA, 152-65 (80:45-81:6), Orc's serpent transformation (in which, however, the images used are consistently extensile).

36. Nelson Hilton argues that the orbits of celestial bodies shown within the snake's circle in Bonnycastle form "stellar cobwebs"; hence, he views the figure as a source for Urizen's webs in *The Four Zoas* VI, 73-75. Hilton does not discuss the figure as an ouroboros or note the design on page 73.

Blake bypassed full ouroboros figures and chose an opened-up ouroboros, one whose potential of closing the circle has not been — and may never be — realized. Similarly, snake figures that include wheel-like coils, such as the *Europe* title serpent discussed above and the snake-wheeled chariots that appear in *Jerusalem* 41/46 and some other late designs, open out at both ends, so that while the wheel-like central portions allude to the ouroboros the free ends deny the implication of recurrence. In *Europe* 10 as well, to illustrate the "image of infinite / Shut up in finite revolutions," Blake "significantly rejects" the "obvious emblem" of the ouroboros (Tolley 136); Tolley contends that the seven coils signify Blake's supposed seven historical periods, but even if this argument were accepted, the design as a whole is not recursive. In the text, moreover, the serpent temple is explicitly *not* circular; despite Frye, it "stretches out its shady length along the Island white" (10:3). The most likely form for the temple — as for the "Rocky Circle & Snake / Of the Druid" in *Jerusalem* 92:25-26 — is that of the supposed Druid temple at Avebury, visually shown on *Jerusalem* 100: a circular central portion extending at both ends. Such a form suggests both repetitiveness and the possibility of emerging from it. Indeed, its generally-accepted source is also dual in meaning, though not in precisely this way; as W. J. T. Mitchell points out, William Stukeley's explanation of the serpent-temple form in *Abury, A Temple of the British Druids* (1743) associates the central circle with God the Father and the serpent portion with the Son, the Logos or creative principle (*Composite Art* 181 and n.).[37]

37. See *Jerusalem* 100 in the Blake Trust facsimile, and Morton D. Paley's commentary on pls. 92 and 100. Daniel Hughes argues that "The snake of *Europe* [10] does not literally have its tail in its mouth, but this image concentrates several crucial meanings" (73); in other words, the image fits what *I* want to say so well that I will use it anyway.

Evidently, as Damon notes about *Europe* 10, the ouroboros symbol "was not satisfactory to Blake" (*William Blake* 345); in the one place where he uses the symbol in his own poetry, and the slightly larger number where he alludes to it, he alters it to an open design.[38] Indeed, the ouroboros was the kind of hackneyed symbol that Blake usually did not accept without some variation — the "usual emblem" of eternity, according to a gloss for the *Night Thoughts* illustration, and one that "from a Type of Eternity, is become an Infant's Bauble," as Henry Fuseli noted in explaining the clichéd quality of mythic motifs and Blake's preference for fresh imagery (qtd. in Bentley, "Blake and Cromek" 368).[39] But aside from its banality, it is possible that the idea of a closed circle of eternity as such was objectionable to Blake; this is the aspect that he continually disrupts, as in the *Four Zoas* design.

The second important point about *The Four Zoas* 73 is that the design is not associated with Orc but with Urizen; the text on pages 73-75 focuses on Urizen's attempts to bind the universe, and several of its elements — Urizen's attempt to enclose "all futurity . . . in his vast chain," and additionally the "turning wheels of heaven" that terrify human souls (73:23) — provide the likely source of the ouroboros figure. Orc is not on stage at all in Night VI. As with *Europe* 10,

38. The same point may be made about an image that Kathleen Raine sees as a source for the flying dragon or basilisk in *America* 4. The engraving (from Vaughan's *Lumen de Lumine*, 1651; illustrated in Raine 1:115) shows a basilisk with its tail in its beak, whereas in Blake's adaptation — if this is what it is — the basilisk has uncurled, only one (or two) remaining coils showing its previous circular shape.

39. The remark occurs in a testimonial included in a prospectus by Robert Cromek for his edition of Blair's *The Grave*, with illustrations designed (and originally to have been engraved) by Blake. For the *Night Thoughts* gloss, see facsimile in Grant, Rose, and Tolley, vol. 2 (endpaper; unpaged).

the disrupted ouroboros here reveals itself as a serpent aspect of Urizen, not Orc. Nowhere, in fact, does Blake execute an ouroboros design for Orc; this aspect of Frye's paradigm is absent from Blake.

Constricting and vortical snakes are a second significant snake-form. In several places in the Lambeth books Blake shows spiraling snakes that receive or wrap tightly around human bodies. On plate 5 of *America*, for example, a cringing form, hurled down the page by youthful male figures above the text, falls into a spiraling snake shaped like a question mark at the bottom; on plate 13, a snake entwines the legs of a corpse on the sea-floor; in *Urizen* 6, serpents wrap around three upside-down falling figures, and on plate 25 one or more serpentine monsters twist round two or three figures in a chaotic sea, the numbers varying in different copies. Since the *America* 5 design as a whole has been interpreted as showing a revolutionary tribunal,[40] the snake at the bottom may have affinities with Orc, but the plate 13 snake does not seem to, and the similar figures in *Urizen* occur in contexts describing the formation of Urizen from Los's side (7) and of Urizen's Net of Religion (25). When the designs are considered together, the entwining-snake figure in these texts seems to refer to entrapping historical processes and repressive thought, elements of reality that come into the world with the fall or with Urizenic creation; the use of the figure then becomes in *Urizen* rather directly pictorial, and in *America* 5 an ironically Urizenic end for what is apparently a Urizen figure. These spiraling snakes, as several commentators note, can be associated with Blake's textual construct of the vortex, itself signifying restricted perception.[41] The figure becomes more im-

40. Erdman "New Expanses" 107-108; Hagstrum, *Poet* 100; Howard *Infernal Poetics* 121. Howard also views the design as an anagogic portrayal of the last judgment, *ibid.*

41. Mitchell reads the *Urizen* 6 image positively, stressing the resurrection-like posture of the middle inverted figure and seeing the spiral serpent as

portant later in Blake, occurring in contexts that seem to refer variously to restricted perception and action in the material world, and to the congruence of creation and fall, especially in their sexual aspects.[42]

Snakes around the tree or the cross are, as we know, an important part of the argument for Orc's crucifixion, a step in the argument for his cyclicality. Familiar as Orc's self-identification in *America* 8, the wreathing snake is illustrated

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"an image of rebirth," a potentiality however which remains "ironic and unrealized" in the text; and he relates the figure to the serpent-wrapped Adam in "Elohim creating Adam" (see following note), suggesting that the *Urizen* figure fuses creation, fall, crucifixion, resurrection, and last judgment into one image (149-50). This consideration would allow reading the *America* 5 serpent in the same way, and in fact Robert E. Simmons does so in *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic* 108n., arguing that if the falling figure is followed through the "snake vortex," he emerges as the "renovated man" in the following plate. I agree that these potentialities exist in the snake-as-vortex design, but the primary effect as they occur in the texts is one of constriction and closure of possibility.

42. It is found in the *Night Thoughts* designs used for *The Four Zoas* pages 49 (77) and 51, and in a sketch on page 144, a torn-off fragment. The first design, a snake entwining a swooning or dead male, has, I will argue, thematic importance when it reappears on page 77, the opening page of Night VIIA. The page 51 design shows a double-ended worm twined around a female form above the text-frame; page 144 a snake coiled around a standing woman. In *Jerusalem* 63 a worm enfolds a prostrate woman. The entwining serpent also appears in "Lucifer and the Pope in Hell" (Bindman 323a and b, dated 1794-96 by Bindman), and in the 1795 prints "Elohim creating Adam" and "Satan Exulting over Eve" (Bindman 324 and 325, Butlin 289 and 292); in the *Paradise Lost* watercolors "Satan Spying on Adam and Eve" (Butlin 529.4, part of the set dated 1807 by Butlin; dropped in the sets dated 1808, 1822) and "Satan Watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve," discussed below; in the drawing "Eve Tempted by the Serpent" (Butlin 589 recto, dated c. 1805-10) and the similar *Paradise Lost* watercolors (Butlin 529.9, 536.9); in the Job illustration "Job's Evil Dream" (Butlin 550.11, dated c. 1805-06, and 551.11, 1821); and in two versions of the "Vision of the Last Judgment" (Butlin 639, 642, dated 1806 and 1808). In "The Spiritual Form of Nelson Guiding Leviathan" (Butlin 649, c. 1805-09) the snake form enfolds all the figures except its guide, Nelson. See also Warner's brief comments on the entwining-snake design, *Language* 96, 121-22.

in relation to Orc only once. In *Europe*, opposite the lines "The cloud bears hard on Albions shore: / Fill'd with immortal demons of futurity:" (9:9-10) — a clear reference to Orc — a marginal decoration shows a tiny snake wreathed round a grain-stalk, not a tree (fig. 7). Aside from this, the decorative work of the first Lambeth books show numerous serpentine tendrils wreathing around vegetation and text letters; some of these may indeed be serpents. The serpent entwining the tree or the cross becomes important in some later pictures. In the 1807 watercolor "The Fall of Man," the serpent is seen still coiled around the tree of Eden as Jesus, below, leads out Adam and Eve; Michael has seized its neck and raises a sword to cut off its head (Butlin 641). In the *Paradise Lost* illustrations of Raphael conversing with Adam and Eve, the serpent enfolds the tree in distant background (Butlin 529.6, 536.6). Neither in *America* nor in these later works are the serpents "bound" on the trees, "struggling to get free" (Frye 136-37); they are always free to move, normally with their heads lifted away from the tree. The opposite is true of the genuinely crucified serpent — an image never used for Orc, though perhaps associable with him. In the drawing "The Last Judgment," the serpent is seen nailed by the neck to an arm of the cross hurled down to hell, and in "Michael Foretells the Crucifixion," for *Paradise Lost*, its head is pierced by the nail that also holds Jesus' feet to the cross (fig. 8). (As noted earlier, similar pictures are painted verbally in "The Everlasting Gospel" and an associated epigram.)[43] Adams links the latter design with the Gnostic tradition in which the serpent is a type of Jesus, and hence with

43. The last judgment drawing is Butlin 645; described *E*556. The *Paradise Lost* illustration appears, in different versions, as Butlin 529.11, 536.11, 537.3. See also "The Everlasting Gospel" i.52-57 and the epigram "Nail his neck to the Cross," *E*524 and 517. Thompson points out Muggletonian analogues for this image (*Witness* 100).

Orc and his supposed crucifixion (53-56), a point also made slightly differently by Damrosch (107). But the serpent in these late designs is not used in a Gnostic inversion of its orthodox role, as the references to Orc round the tree in *America* and *Europe* may be. Rather, the *Paradise Lost* design is a relatively orthodox image, pertaining to that part of Michael's prophecy that deals with Christ's heel bruising the serpent's head (XII:385, 427-35), and to the exaltation of spiritual over corporeal warfare associated with it.[44] It is possible to read these designs as alluding to Orc, given the prominence of Orc's identification as serpent, though there is nothing in them that requires taking them in this sense. But if they do allude to Orc, it is in a quite different way than the open-ended serpent imagery that figures him in the early books. Whereas late designs such as these have been used in Blake criticism to establish Orc's wreathing round the tree as a cyclic event, a recurring crucifixion at the hands of Urizen, here he is impaled as a final, not cyclic, triumph over evil in the context of the last judgment or its type, the crucifixion. If Orc is involved here it is a transformed Orc — as discussed below — and in any case there is nothing cyclic about these designs.

Sinuous, extensile, and rearing snakes form a very prominent set of snake images in the Lambeth books, particularly *Marriage* and *America*, where rearing, confrontational, and phallic snakes slither all over the margins and text breaks. After the *Europe* title snake, the most prominent design of this type is the snake ridden by children on plate 11 of *America*. Erdman has interpreted this snake and the boy-ridden swan at the top of the page as political emblems, bearing the children to safety and trumpeting the revolution, respectively; the phallic con-

44. As noted by Wittreich (*Angel* 110n.) and Wagenknecht (173). Butlin dates the last judgment drawing (645) c. 1809; two earlier pen and watercolor versions show Satan wrapped by the serpent without a cross (Butlin 639, 642, dated 1806, 1808 by Butlin).

notations of both figures have also long been noted (Hagstrum *Poet* 89). Like plate 7, showing children asleep with a sheep in an Edenic scene, the plate 11 design is a tableau of recovered, but aware and sexualized, innocence.[45] The snake is aligned with the *Europe* title-page serpent by its bright coloration — blue, red, and yellow are prominent, especially on the face, in copy A (Morgan Library; fig. 9).[46] This phallic and utopian design is one of a number, mostly marginal or interlinear, that could be called "happy snakes," because of their sinuosity, their often discernable grins and lifted heads, and the evident bumptious joy of the *America* 11 figures.[47] Other significant examples occur at the very end of *America*, where a snake intertwined with plant tendrils and flowers

45. The similarity of this design to the one on *Thel* 6, a mirror image, has often been noted. The latter is usually seen as signifying Thel's flight from sexuality. Rodney M. Blaine terms the *America* figure a "serpent of Higher Innocence" (56, 104) and argues cogently that its reversal of direction signifies a passage through experience to the "higher innocence" of "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found" (104). Hagstrum notes a possible source in a Priapian emblem of a cupid riding on a phallus, in a design from Herculaneum reproduced in 1757 (*Poet* 89n., pl. XLIXA). Mitchell argues that ambiguity of the *Thel* design is largely resolved in *America*, and notes other possible sources (*Composite Art* 84 and n.).

46. In some other copies, coloring is also warm. In copy M (Yale), the snake is gray and pink-rose, with rose-red on the loop and yellow on the face (coloring is also delicate over the whole page); in K (Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University), more sketchily colored overall, blue and pink stand out, with dabs of red and green on the face. With copy M, these copies represent three out of four printing sessions, according to Viscomi's dating, which assigns ten copies (including K) to one session in 1793; A and B to 1795; M, provisionally, to 1807; and O to 1821 (376-80).

47. Both the sexual and the prophetic implications of the snakes in *America* were underlined, for me, by a reviewer's comment about a concert by Ziggy Marley: "Mr. Marley's music . . . is both religious and . . . political. . . . [I]t also implies a type of euphoric release. So while Mr. Marley was singing 'stand up for your rights,' (from his father's 'Get Up, Stand Up') the audience was *writhing like happy snakes*" (*New York Times*, Aug. 24, 1991, 1:15; my emphasis).

at the bottom of plate 16 offsets the mourning-woman figure at the top of the page (fig. 10), and on *Europe* 14, mentioned earlier, where two uncoiled snakes slither across the bottom of the text as a third rises to greet the words "Arise O Orc" (fig. 5). The little Orc on the grain-stalk in *Europe* 9, too, though formally aligned by its wreathing posture with late designs of serpents around the tree or cross, has more in common pictorially with these snakes because of its rising, extensile shape (fig. 7). These and other sinuous snake forms have few or no coils and extend sinuously in an evident emblem of energetic release. Also worth notice is the erectile snake between the legs of a female instructor in the design for *America* 14 (fig. 11); her student leans on his books but his upwardly-curved torso mimics the snake's posture, and evidently he is not thinking of the books. While most commentary has viewed this design as showing a sinister initiation, the visual pun makes it a rather light-hearted picture; if a serious meaning must be sought, it would seem to be that the sight of the snake/penis is *saving* the boy from his books.[48] Finally, too numerous to mention are horizontal slithering snakes in many interlinear positions, marginal rearing snakes, and almost countless snaky plant tendrils.[49]

Though no doubt other snake motifs could be added to these, the examples given are enough to construct a rough duality between constricting, cir-

48. The snake has been read as "one of the monsters of error" (*Illuminated Blake* 152), an aspect of the Covering Cherub (*Fearful Symmetry* 433), and a threat of punishment (Margoliouth 86); the whole scene as an initiation "into the world of fallen nature" (Tannenbaum, *Biblical Tradition* 150), a "diabolical indoctrination" (Behrendt, "Family" 42), and a "blighting" of the boy, in which the snake's tongue "seems to spit menaces" (Hagstrum *Poet* 101, "Babylon" 108).

49. See *Marriage* 5:12 and *Urizen* 4:5, 5:38 for slithery snakes filling lines or in line breaks; *Europe* 3, 4, 5, and almost every page of *Marriage* for snaky tendrils — there are innumerable examples just on 7-10, the Proverbs.

cular, or dead snakes, and dynamic (wreathing, rearing, or slithery) snakes. The spiraling, entwining serpents are the clearest examples of constricting snakes; the ouroboros as a traditional type is also constricting in its closure, and is used this way in two of the *Night Thoughts* designs, but as we have seen Blake modifies its closed character in using it in his own poetry. The serpents nailed to the cross in some late works are either dead or dying, flaccid and without tension. Those wrapped around the tree of Eden in late work, though similar in form to the wreathing serpents in earlier work, are somewhat different in effect — they are usually more tightly wound, closer to the "constricting" spiral serpents, than the earlier examples.[50] All these forms are relatively static, either without motion themselves or serving to constrict motion in others. These aspects are in fact linked: what I have called "constricting" snakes are also constrict*ed*, held immobile by their very function of restraining others. In contrast, the wreathing serpents in earlier work, together with the rearing and slithery forms that appear in these works, embody dynamic motion.

Three observations can now be made about this duality between constricting and dynamic snakes, and their connection with Orc's meaning. First, both types figure strongly in Blake's early work, but constricting snakes gradually become more prominent in his later work. Dynamic snakes never entirely disappear. The type I have called "happy snakes" continues to appear occasionally; a pair, probably ironic, can be found in the fourteenth illustration for Job,[51]

50. A partial exception might be "Raphael Warns Adam and Eve," no. 6 in the illustrations to *Paradise Lost*. The snake is loosely draped around the background tree in the Thomas set (1807); it is more tightly wound in the Butts set (1808) (Butlin 529.6, 536.6).

51. See Butlin 550.14, 551.14, 559.6 for three versions of the Job design, dated by Butlin c. 1805-06, 1821, c. 1823-26. The first two bear reins or thongs of control wielded by an angel; in the third the reins are not visible in Butlin's reproduction, but may be present.

and a relatively benign snake design appears on several plates of *Jerusalem* (see Chap. 6). Yet these figures are much less numerous than they once were. Designs referring to sexuality in particular show a transition between the two forms. A vivid example is found in several treatments of the *Paradise Lost* design "Satan Watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve." An initial version shows Satan watching in anguish from the air as an *America*-type "happy snake" wriggles joyously past the kissing couple; in revision, the design is reworked so that the snake enfolds Satan himself (figs. 12-13).[52] Clearly, Blake's accent has shifted from showing sexuality as a dynamic force opposed by Satan, to showing it as a constricting force — sexual jealousy rather than sexual joy — entrapping Satan himself. Satan's face in the earlier design is plainly wretched; in the later versions it is merely melancholy — lost in a sexual dream, in fact. The later design may provide a more profound understanding of sexual repression, but the point to note is that the snake symbol has exactly inverted its significance, showing constraint rather than release.[53]

Second, within the early work, Orc is associated with the dynamic snake types, while constricting snake forms are associated with other characters or states (e.g., the constricting serpents of *Urizen*, the tightly coiled marginal snake on *Europe* 10). Commentary has often failed to make this distinction. Michael Ferber, for example, despite an excellent overall portrayal of Blake's social

52. Butlin 531, dated 1806 (snake on ground); 529.5, 536.4, 537.1 (the three *Paradise Lost* sets, with the snake enfolding Satan).

53. The extensile snake form also appears, with clearly negative implications, trodden under foot in such later designs as the "Judgment of Adam and Eve" from *Paradise Lost* and "The Overthrow of Apollo and the Pagan Gods" from *Paradise Regained* (Butlin 536.10, in the Butts set; 538.4, in the Thomas set).

commitments, reads "Orc, wreath'd round the accursed tree" as bearing "the implication that he, like a serpent, has a cyclical existence. . . . [I]f we take the cycle and serpent imagery seriously we cannot say Blake was ever an uncritical Jacobin" (176); for Morton D. Paley, though the Lambeth books do not show an "Orc cycle," they maintain "a double perspective . . . suggesting the ambiguity of Orc through his two forms: human and serpent" (*Energy* 60). Such comments substitute general cultural associations with the serpent for the specifics of Blake's graphic imagery. The wreathing, rearing, slithering snake-forms associated with Orc are distinct from others suggesting recurrence or repetition, and cannot be made to suggest cyclicality or a negative counterpoint to Orc's positive speeches without linking them to these other forms.

In a more thoughtful approach, E. P. Thompson has traced the snake's importance in the doctrines of the Muggletonians (the seventeenth-century antinomian sect still active in Blake's time) and the echoes of these doctrines in Blake. Briefly, Muggletonians held that the devil, as serpent in Eden, copulated with Eve and then disappeared entirely from the cosmos, being perpetuated in Cain and his seed and only there; Abel and his descendants were the product of normal intercourse and carried Adam's divine nature, deriving from the Father (*Witness* 73-75). This doctrine finds affinities in Blake's view of Satan as found in human institutions (Chap. 4) and other aspects of his thought. Thompson also finds echoes of the doctrine of serpent copulation in Blake texts including the *Preludium* to *America* and the description of Orc's ontogeny in *Urizen* (see Chap. 3), as well as in a series of later snake designs (96-101). On Thompson's evidence, however, the Muggletonian view of the snake was uniformly negative, and Thompson, like other interpreters, does not account for the variety in

Blake's treatment. Thompson does, as he intends, show a possible connection between Blake and Muggletonian doctrine. But if the connection is real, Blake's use of the doctrine is more complex than one of simple repetition; by attaching the doctrine of serpent copulation to Orc and his calls for apocalyptic freedom, Blake sharply modifies the doctrine's content.[54] Further, as suggested earlier, Blake has made the snake symbol dual, using it to stand for matching but opposed principles. If he refers to the doctrine of the two seeds, in effect he provides a snake form for each, distinct in treatment and implications, rather than for the Satanic alone. Textually, too, both Urizen and Orc have serpent forms (the serpent temple, the snake round the tree) in a dualistic rather than monistic treatment.

The political associations of the snake image reinforce my reading of the "dynamic" snake forms. Snakes figure as conventional images of evil and treachery in many political cartoons of the period. A 1767 caricature, for example, shows the Earl of Bute, as Colossus, on pedestals of a goat and snake, labeled "Lust" and "Fraud" respectively (Morgan 405). The serpent in the tree, specifically, became an anti-France, anti-reform emblem in Gillray's 1798 cartoon "The Tree of Liberty; with the Devil Tempting John Bull," which showed him with Fox's face, backed by a multitude of democratic and Jacobin apples.[55] (One suspects that Blake would have put a different valuation on this image than did its designer.) More specifically, the snake had American revolutionary associations, appearing, for example, on the "Dont Tread on Me" flags of 1775.

54. Surprisingly, Thompson does not comment on the content of the Orc myth. Like other critics, too (some of whom he quotes), he treats the snake as a fairly uniform symbol in Blake, and does not note distinctions between different snake forms or between earlier and later work.

55. I am indebted to John E. Grant for this reference. The cartoon is reproduced in Hill, *Satirical Etchings* no. 56.

There were at least two such designs, one showing a three-coiled snake with his head lifted, similar to the *Europe* title page, and the other an uncoiled, rising snake similar to some marginal and interlinear snakes in *America* and *Europe*. The historian Alfred Young suggests a class meaning for the American snake, as well as a national one: in 1774 Gouverneur Morris had complained, "The mob begins to think and reason. Poor reptiles, they bask in the sunshine and ere long they will bite" (qtd. in Young 13). Erdman, though he does not make the connection to Orc, records the use of a "Dont Tread on Me" snake in a 1780 pro-American engraving by William Sharp, later an acquaintance of Blake, so that there is a Blakean connection for this American emblem (*Prophet* 36).[56] Though, of course, we cannot be certain that Blake remembered these insignia when he designed *America* and *Europe*, they do suggest positive political connotations for the sinuous and extensile snake-form.

The point is confirmed, in a roundabout way, by Blake's reworking of the *Europe* title-page design in four cartoon variants, probably between 1815 and 1820. Three of the four make clearly satirical additions: a bent-over male figure, presumably Blake, generates the snake out of his own head; Urizen (perhaps Moses as lawgiver) cradles in its coils; a Los figure, one leg extended as a brace, struggles to tug the snake forward (Butlin 272-274a).[57] These comments on the original design have been interpreted as showing "the comedy of any at-

56. Erdman does not say which "Dont Tread on Me" design Sharp used. The suggestion that the flags were a source of Orc's snake symbolism was originally made by Frye (210), but has not been followed up.

57. The dating is Butlin's. The fourth design may be satirical as well. It maintains the original snake essentially unchanged, only adding a second snake-head facing off against the first. But they may form a double-headed snake (the body loops outside the picture frame).

tempt to use nature, emblematized by the serpent, . . . as a vehicle [for redemption]" (Blaine 109). Yet the variants confirm, in their own composition, the point that the Orc image cannot be read as suggesting negativity or cyclicality without fusing it with other added images.

Finally, Blake's use of snake imagery *and Orc's relationship to this imagery* change over time. Both Hazard Adams and Leopold Damrosch have noted the importance in Blake's symbolism of Gnostic inversions of orthodox typology; as Damrosch notes, this tendency is strongest in the *Marriage*, but continues in the Lambeth books (Adams 52-56; Damrosch 82-83). This observation applies particularly to the snakes associated with Orc — Orc himself as he wreathes the tree in a struggle against tyranny, as well as less central images like the phallic snake that distracts the youth of *America* 14. (Blake's apotheosis of sexuality, however, is his own; Gnostic doctrine implied rejection of the body.) This inversion of orthodox snake imagery tends to fade out over Blake's career, to be replaced in later work by more orthodox symbolism that accepts the snake as an emblem of evil, while filling this symbol with Blake's radically unorthodox content. Simultaneous with this change, the relationship of Orc to the snake image also changes.

In the early work, the snake symbol is dual — roughly consisting of what I have called "constricting" versus "dynamic" snakes — and the Orc symbol is single: Orc as human is associated with the "dynamic" snake forms, which do not comment negatively on his prophetic role but embody it, and he is not associated with the "constricting" snakes. The snake symbol, then, does not illustrate ambiguity in Orc, but rather, his oppositional character is shown graphically in the rearing, extended, and slithering snakes that represent him. Indeed,

the snake is a peculiarly apt symbol for the processes Orc represents in Blake's early work, for — quite aside from its Gnostic and American associations — it is intrinsically a creature that opens from a coiled to an extended form. The snake as typically depicted in relation to Orc — extended or with one or more coils opening out into an extended form — can be seen as a representation of the *transformation* from coiled stasis to extensive motion, from cyclic repetition to forward progress.

Subsequently, Blake reworks the snake symbol to show the transformation of Orc in one aspect into a repressive force. In doing so, however, he modifies both his use of the snake symbol — largely though not entirely eliminating the dynamic and extensive snakes with which Orc was identified — and his presentation of Orc. In the later work, the snake symbol becomes more unified and more dominated by "constricting," negative forms, while the Orc symbol itself becomes dual, one half being associated with the snake and the other not. *Orc* is now dual, only the repressive Orc being represented as a snake while the opposing remnant of Orc retains human form. To understand this, it is necessary to look at what happens to Orc in *The Four Zoas.*

Orc in *The Four Zoas*, Nights VIIA and VIIB

Blake's treatment of Orc undergoes major changes in his later work. In Night VII of *The Four Zoas*, Orc is transmuted into a serpent. On one level, the transformation is an allegory of the Napoleonic degeneration of the French Revolution. It has also been seen by most commentators as a metaphor for the cyclic nature of revolution and political struggle: justified rebellion eventually becomes the destructive raging of a serpent. The full thematic meaning of

Blake's treatment of Orc in *The Four Zoas* will be discussed in a subsequent chapter; here, I wish to isolate those aspects that bear on Frye's theory.

On close examination, Orc's fates in *The Four Zoas* not only fail to confirm the existence of an "Orc cycle," but offer a thoroughgoing rejection of such a conception. I refer to Orc's "fates" deliberately. Most commentaries have assumed that in Night VII Orc "loses entirely his divine element, his human form," that "Orc's transformation [is] complete," and that whereas Blake's earlier works show Orc in "alternate human and serpent forms, . . . [i]n *Vala* the forms are not alternate but successive" (Sloss and Wallis 2:212; Bloom, *Apocalypse* 252; Paley, *Energy* 115). Orc does undergo a metamorphosis in Night VII, but it is not a simple one. In Night VIIA, which I with most other commentators take to be the critical version for Blake's later myth, Orc splits, becoming a serpent in one text sequence and remaining human in a second. (In the alternative version of the Night, VIIB, to be considered below, Orc does not split overtly; the differences between these treatments shed further light on the conception of an "Orc cycle."[58])

58. Blake composed two texts titled "Night the Seventh," commonly termed VIIA and VIIB. Prior to Erdman's 1982 edn., they were printed separately. This edn., now standard, effects a hypothetical synthesis, sandwiching VIIB within VIIA at the point where Blake originally ended the latter, with Blake's later extension of VIIA following the interpolated section to complete the redacted single text. With several other writers, I regard this editorial solution as unsatisfactory and continue to refer to VIIA and VIIB. Rosso supports an alternative synthesis, suggested by Andrew Lincoln (17-18, 135-36); for proposals by Lincoln, Mark S. Lefebvre, and Erdman for different ways of integrating the texts, see *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* 12:2 (Fall 1978).

Arguments about the dating of the two texts have also had a bearing on the criticism. Most though not all readings assume that VIIA was written later; see, e.g., Erdman's textual commentary in the 1970 and 1982 edns. of *E* (arguing for VIIA as the preferred text and for nesting the two texts, respectively); Wilkie and Johnson 140, with a note on critical views; Bloom, *Apocalypse* 244, 246. Keynes (320n., 902) and Paley (*Energy* 262) argue that VIIB was written later,

Frye, curiously enough, does not discuss the transformation in detail, stating only that "[w]hen Urizen finds Orc, there is a sharp passage-at-arms of superb dramatic irony between them (Night VII), and then Orc is crucified and reduced to 'serpent form' " (223). However, the passage that Frye alludes to does not show a crucifixion — serpent Orc, though subject to Urizen's will, remains mobile and *climbs* the tree: "He sufferd him to Climb that he might draw all human forms / Into submission to his will" (Night VIIA, 81:5-6).[59] Frye merely equates this occurrence with crucifixion, in accordance with his general mythopoeic reading of the serpent in the tree as a type of the crucifixion. Nor does the passage show an organic aging into Urizen. Rather, it depicts a temptation and fall, modeled primarily as an inversion and rearrangement of Milton's *Paradise Regained.* I will examine this temptation and its Miltonic referents in Chapter 4; for the present, it is enough to note that Urizen offers Orc his knowledge of the "arts of war," and that Orc, even as he curses Urizen,

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while Bentley and several others have argued that VIIB was originally meant to follow VIIA sequentially, a plan abandoned when the present VIII was composed (see Bentley, *Vala* 162-63). The debate has usually been presented in terms of technical bibliography (stitch marks, etc.) and thematic "fit" of the different texts, on the assumption that Blake meant to write a sequential narrative. However, given the contradictions and discontinuities in the Nights whose sequence is unquestioned, it makes considerable sense to argue that Blake meant VIIA and VIIB to stand as alternative treatments of the same material; even if one sandwiches the two, as in the 1982 Erdman text, the contradictions between VIIA and B remain. My analysis is consistent with any of these possibilities and could only be challenged by an argument that VIIB was meant to *cancel* VIIA; such an argument has never been made, largely because the extension of the original draft of VIIA to include Los and Enitharmon's reconciliation has been recognized as consistent with Blake's later ideology.

59. The syntax of this sentence is deeply ambiguous; the reference of the second "he" and "his" could be to Urizen or Orc, and indeed, whether Urizen and Orc are enemies, collaborators, or master and slave remains a question in the "serpent" sequences that follow. See Chapter 4.

metamorphoses into a snake under Urizen's influence, and against his own will. However, his transformation is not definitive or complete. This point is crucial for what Frye labels an "Orc cycle." In the plot strand that follows Orc's relations with Urizen, in Night VII and subsequently Night VIII, Orc indeed appears as a "Self consuming dark devourer rising into the heavens" (80:48). Yet in the narrative sequences focusing on Los and Enitharmon, in both Nights, Orc reappears, offstage, in human form. He is mentioned as Enitharmon's "sweet boy," as "the howling Orc" in the last line of the original version of VIIA, and as the imprisoned Orc "comforted in the deeps" at the end of the extended version (82:38, 85:22, 98 [90]:46). These lines allude to Orc's position in the *Preludium* to *America*, where the design shows him bound crouching underground beneath the tree's roots at the same time as he is spread-eagled on the earth under its limbs.[60] Though the references to his human continuation are at first muffled, they become prominent at the end of the extended version of the Night, where Los's call for a prophetic art that revivifies the dead of history centers on the imprisoned boy:

> Stern desire
> I feel to fabricate embodied semblances in which the dead
> May live before us in our palaces & in our gardens of labour
> Which now opend within the Center we behold spread abroad
> To form a world of Sacrifice of brothers & sons & daughters
> To comfort Orc in his dire sufferings[;] look[!] my fires enlume afresh

60. Wilkie and Johnson 149 and Ault 262 recognize Orc's division, but my interpretation differs from theirs. The figure beneath the tree in *America* 1 is not always recognized as Orc (see Hagstrum *Poet* 99, Keynes and Wolf 40), but the identification is supported by iconographic details and by the Orc figure who bursts from the earth in the next plate.

Before my face ascending with delight as in ancient times (98 [90]:8-14)

The solemnity of this moment of Los's creative awakening and dedication to his liberatory task, shown in the rekindling of his fires, underlines the importance of Orc's presence as suffering boy. Given the repeated, though indirect, references to Orc and the importance of their thematic context, it is not possible to say simply that in VIIA Orc is "reduced to 'serpent form' " (Frye 223). Orc *splits* in Night VIIA; his serpent transformation is not definitive.

Several other aspects of Blake's treatment in VIIA are important. Orc is tempted by Urizen; Urizen's blandishments are essentially worldly and political; finally, Orc never bursts his chains — they simply disappear from the narrative as he submits to Urizen and changes form. These aspects, as well as the upshot of Orc's metamorphosis, are all handled differently in Night VIIB. Here, Orc is tempted not by Urizen but by "the nameless shadowy Vortex," essentially a type of Vala (91:2). The temptation, moreover, differs in substance from that in VIIA: though traced ultimately to Urizen, it is mediated through the sexual al lure of the Vortex. Finally, it eventuates in Orc's bursting his fetters and raping the Vortex:

Knowing the arts of Urizen were Pity & Meek affection
And that by these arts the Serpent form exuded from his limbs
Silent as despairing love & strong as Jealousy
Jealous that she was Vala now become Urizens harlot
And the Harlot of Los & the deluded harlot of the Kings of Earth
His soul was gnawn in sunder
The hairy shoulders rend the links free are the wrists of fire

Red rage redounds he rouzd his lions from his forests black
They howl around the flaming youth rending the nameless shadow
And running their immortal course thro solid darkness borne
Loud sounds the war song round red Orc [. . .] (91:11-21)[61]

Although this sequence already shows Orc snapping his chains and "rending" the shadow, the rape is renarrated two pages later, following an interpolated sequence of songs of the "Elemental Gods" evoking war, sexual jealousy, capitalist exploitation, and rationalistic destruction of the imagination:

Orc rent her & his human form consumd in his own fires
Mingled with her dolorous members strewn thro the Abyss
She joyd in all the Conflict Gratified & drinking tears of woe
No more remaind of Orc but the Serpent round the tree of Mystery
The form of Orc was gone he reard his serpent bulk among
The stars of Urizen (93:21-26)

Night VIIB, then, makes the rape the prelude to Orc's serpent transformation; moreover, the transmutation appears complete and irreversible: "No more remaind . . . / The form of Orc was gone."

When one compares the two versions of Night VII thematically, it becomes apparent that VIIB is somewhat more compatible than VIIA with the idea of rebellion as a cyclic event, though such a conception is not directly contained in it. Orc's metamorphosis in VIIB is tied to his sexuality, that is, to his maturation in the human life cycle. His age of fourteen at the time of his chain-

61. These events are modeled on an earlier passage in *America*, 1-2. For the ways in which Blake revised *America*'s text, see Chapter 4.

ing earlier in the poem (Night V, 60:6) means that the breaking of his chains and the rape occur just at the time of puberty. The sexual context is underlined by the textual echo in which his shoulders "rend" the chains just before he (or his lions) "rend" the shadow — an echo that "links" the snapping of the chains to the rape (91:17, 19; repeated as "rent," 93:21). And the reference to the Vortex as "Vala . . . Urizens harlot / And the Harlot of Los & the deluded harlot of the Kings of Earth" (lines 14-15) introduces a primarily political, but partly sexual and Oedipal, web of associations for this figure. Vala was the consort of Luvah, Orc's "eternal" form; by calling her Los's harlot he projects onto her an Oedipal rage against Los for possessing Enitharmon, his mother and Los's mate, whom he has sexually coveted in Night V.[62] So far as these references link Orc's rebellion and the ensuing snakification to his adolescence and sexuality, it is possible, though not necessary, to conceive the transformation metaphorically as an "ag[ing] as Urizen." Finally, at least on the surface of the text, Orc metamorphoses fully into another form, as a cyclic conception would suggest.

The events in VIIA are less amenable to a cyclic interpretation. Here, Orc's metamorphosis is tied to intellectual failure rather than sexual impulse. Orc's change stems from his failure to resist what he calls Urizen's "Cold hypocrisy" (80:27). (Sexual jealousy, however, contributes to this failure; Urizen's temptation concludes with a taunting reference to the Spectre's possession of

62. The further reference to Urizen, aside from the political meaning that Vala as war and religion is Urizen's harlot, also alludes to a myth of the "fall" (one of many in *The Four Zoas*) recounted by the Shadow of Enitharmon in Night VIIA, in which Urizen is born from the coupling of Vala and the Eternal Man, an event that splits off Luvah from Vala. Orc names Urizen, the product of the union, as the guilty party in a projection of the Oedipal obsession by which Orc covets Enitharmon. The reader is asked to remember that we are now in VIIB, so that the reference may or may not assume the material in VIIA.

Enitharmon.) The pattern in VIIA, predominantly one of temptation and fall rather than sexual aggression, is incompatible with the idea of cyclic process: temptation and fall by their nature must involve free will and hence cannot be expressions of natural cycles, especially those of the human life cycle. Further, the events in VIIA are incompatible with the broader political assumption of Frye's cyclic model, that successful violence turns into repression. In VIIA Orc's chains are never broken; the self-liberation that occurs, however ambiguously, in VIIB is absent. Orc — in Blake's political allegory, America and France — is subverted by Urizen's temptation of power while still chained. In the political vision of Night VIIA, the revolutions of the eighteenth century were perverted before they succeeded, and these revolutions succeeded (the chains slipped off) only so far as they joined forces with Urizen. In Blake's larger allegory of human faculties, too, VIIA makes a more radical claim than VIIB, and one that is noncyclic. Night VIIB warns that the instinctive and sexualized rebellion which Orc stands for can lead to a perpetuation of war and suffering. Night VIIA, however, implies that without a broad understanding of the past and possible future, and without human solidarity (qualities subsequently emblematized in Los), sexualized rebellion is *not* doomed to forge new chains to replace the old — because it is incapable of throwing off those chains in the first place.

The aspect of Blake's treatment that is most incompatible with a cyclic conception, however, is Orc's division into serpent and imprisoned boy. Leaving its overall meaning for later discussion, I simply note at this point that this treatment is incompatible with Frye's view of Orc's development as an organic evolution similar to the cycles of nature and natural aging. Orc, that is, does not change his nature; *part* of Orc changes, and part does not.

Hints of a split in Orc are, in fact, contained in Night VIIB, though far less prominently than in in VIIA. In VIIB, we recall, the rape is narrated twice, two pages apart. Close examination reveals that Orc remains human in the first version — he is "the flaming youth" and "red Orc," an epithet repeatedly used earlier for his human form. Though Orc anticipates his serpent form in the first account, its appearance is forestalled by the snapping of his chains, and occurs only in the second narration (93:24-26).[63] Because this version comes later in the text, it seems to be a continuation of the first, and yet sequential texts in Blake often do not represent sequential events; it is also possible to consider the repetition of the rape images as mere narrative recapitulation, but the differences are significant. It is possible, finally, to see the two narrations as coequal and alternative, so that the Night VIIB narrative would have a less unilinear, more branching form than is immediately apparent. In this case, VIIB would show two possible outcomes to Orc's temptation, rathen than a single one. Finally — complicating matters even further — following the second version, in which we have been told that "the form of Orc was gone," Vala refers to him as still having the "Outrageous form of Orc" (outrageous because Orc is a perversion of Luvah) and as bound by a "dark chain" (94:17, 23). These references subliminally reintroduce the image of Orc as chained boy, supposedly

63. See 91:19, 21; among earlier examples, note *America* 1:1 and *The Four Zoas* V, 59:21, and VI, 75:31. In his discussion of this sequence (266-68), Donald Ault treats the two episodes as a continuous, though interrupted, sequence. Ault misses the blocking of Orc's serpent form by the snapping of the chains, and overlooks the human imagery that follows the "rending" in the first sequence. It is not true, as Ault states (267), that Orc is an "erect serpent bulk" in the first episode. In a related point, Ault implies (266-67) that the simile comparing Orc to an earthquake with "shoulders huge" (91:9) is not completed; it is, by Orc's shoulders (line 17).

eliminated from the narrative on the previous page. Even within the second rape sequence, then, there are intimations of a human residue of Orc.

Night VIIB, therefore, contains hints of a split in Orc; VIIA develops this idea more fully and builds it into the structure of the narrative by treating Orc's transformation and his human continuation in distinct plot segments. The second half of this Night, dealing with Los and Enitharmon's reconciliation, has several crucial functions. It provides the attainment of prophetic understanding missing in the first half; opens a doorway out of the "torments of Love & Jealousy" that have dominated the first six Nights; and envisions a prophetic art whose ultimate purpose is to turn poetic remembrance into social act as the dead awaken in the violent uprising of Night IX. In addition to these functions, however, the second half of Night VIIA completes the narrative of Orc's division by presenting him, again, as chained boy. The meaning could not be clearer: the rebellious energies originally figured as Orc, the chained and howling boy, *cannot be contained in the form of the Urizenic serpent*, hence Orc must split, part remaining human under the tree. As Blake develops the Orc myth in Night VIIA, Orc is incapable of organic transformation into serpent form.

These aspects of Orc's treatment help to explain the bifurcated structure of Night VIIA — the fact that its first half deals with Orc and Urizen, its second primarily with Los and Enitharmon. Night VIIA is misconceived if it is viewed, as it usually is, as divided into opposed parts — violence and retribution in the Orc-Urizen material (or this plus the original Los-Enitharmon section, through 85:22), vs. reconciliation and forgiveness in the final section (Wilkie and Johnson 140, Bloom, *Apocalypse* 252). This division does occur, but superimposed on this pattern is a larger one. The Night's divided structure corresponds to the

split in Orc, and its two halves present his divided fate. The Night as a whole is a structural embodiment of the myth it narrates; it gives Orc different forms in its two parts, presents his division as the outcome of a Urizenic entrapment of the impulses of rebellion, and shows in its second half the forgiveness and remembrance of the historic dead that enable human Orc to be "comforted in the deeps his soul revivd in them" (98 [90]:46) as the dead themselves will be redeemed to rise in Night IX.

This view of Night VIIA as a thematic whole built around Orc's split is supported by the design for its opening page (77), one of the *Night Thoughts* illustrations (fig. 14). It shows a male figure swooning backward on a rock or mound, entwined by a snake; next to him, a female figure holds back a child who is lunging after a bird. As with all of Blake's *Night Thoughts* designs used in *The Four Zoas*, the connections of this design with the text are complex and not fully specifiable. In *Night Thoughts*, the design illustrates the folly of trusting earthly joys — a trust that presumably has delivered the male figure to the serpent, and which the child heedlessly continues. (One can specify, of course, a "Blakean" meaning: the man is entwined because he did not pursue the bird of transcendence.) In *The Four Zoas*, the design has already been used in Night IV (page 49), where it may refer to the separation of Enitharmon from Los, or perhaps to Los's Spectre slumbering "in weak repose" (50:1). In the version on page 77, in the context of the approaching transformation of Orc, Magno and Erdman suggest identifying "the serpent-entwined man as Orc as well as Los," and seeing "the woman as Enitharmon, guiding yet restraining the child in his play with the bird/phallus" (68).[64] The swooning figure, then, would represent

64. The page 49 version, a later state, is described but not analyzed in Grant "Visions" 165; both are analyzed by Magno and Erdman 52-53 (page 49) and 68 (page 77). The *Night Thoughts* engraved version appears (with text) as

Orc's human identity wound round by his snake form. Though only implicit, such a proleptic identification of the male figure with Orc's metamorphosis seems too obvious to ignore. Indeed, the positions of the male figure's head, arms, and downward-turned hands loosely repeat Orc's posture in *America* 10, so that this moment ironically recalls Orc's moment of glory. Within *The Four Zoas*, the tableau also anticipates Ahania's despairing vision of the Eternal Man bound "round his limbs [by] the Serpent Orc" in Night VIII (112 [108]:25).

But the proleptic reading can be extended from the man and snake to the entire design. The right-hand portion of the design, showing the woman, child, and bird, is closely patterned on one of the plates for *There Is No Natural Religion*, where a child strains to reach a bird and the kneeling woman holding him back appears to illustrate the text: "Man by his reasoning power. can only compare & judge of what he has already perciev'd."[65] The page 77 composition and its antecedent both suggest the child as an emblem of aspiration while the female's clasp may be viewed more as an act of negative restraint than as guidance. Further, a snake threatening a child is a traditional motif for danger (Tervarent 350-51); here, though, the implied message about the child's heedlessness is reversed, as it is he, not the father, who may escape the snake. In view of

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Bindman 343 and Grant, Rose, and Tolley 7E; as a watercolor it is *NT* 27.

65. Plate II [a], *E2*; copy C, Rosenwald Collection, Washington, D.C. The composition also recalls two other designs. In the *Marriage*, plate 4, a dancing figure reaches toward the child, who is held by an angel of restraint as he struggles away from them both, toward the sun; the relevant text is "Energy is Eternal Delight." And in a reworking of this design as "The Good and Evil Angels struggling for possession of a child," the dark tan "evil" angel reaches toward the child held by the pale "good" angel, who again fights to escape them both (no. 4 of the "Large Colour Prints," reproduced as Bindman 328).

these associations, if the serpent-entwined swooning male can be viewed as Orc, the child trying to escape from the female and reach the bird can also be seen as Orc, retaining his human impulse to escape limitation. At the same time, the child's expression, noticeably more ferocious than in the later state of the engraving used for page 49 and for *Night Thoughts*, introduces an ambiguity about Orc's human character that seems appropriate at this point in Blake's narrative. But it is not really necessary to allegorize so specifically. The key point is that just as the text describes how the same character becomes a serpent and remains a boy in different portions of the Night, the design shows a constricting serpent and an child struggling to escape restraint. The design, in short, can be read as an epitome of the text material of Night VIIA as a whole. The division of the Night's parts and the narrated split in Orc are shown pictorially in Blake's reworking of the snake motif and detaching of it from the human, rebellious Orc-child.

Night VIIA, more clearly than VIIB, presents Orc's transformation in a way that is deeply incompatible with a cyclic view of his nature, because of the embedded structure of temptation and fall and the presentation of the transformation as a split, in which some human portion of Orc can never be absorbed by his serpent form. Orc does not and *cannot* develop organically into Urizen — that is, cannot undergo an "Orc cycle" — but instead experiences a division into serpent and howling boy which the Night as a whole embodies and represents. The Night implicitly deconstructs Frye by showing that Orc can never be fully absorbed into Urizen, and hence that culture does not develop as a changing yet organic whole — Orc in youth, Urizen in maturity — but on the contrary, at every moment is a structure of oppression and violence that mur-

ders its children and still, even when it seems most secure, stands trembling before them.[66]

"The Mental Traveller," *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*

Though Orc becomes less important in Blake's later work, at least one later poem, "The Mental Traveller," has frequently been seen as epitomizing the "Orc cycle" (Frye *Symmetry* 227, 229 and "Keys" 191-93; Bloom, *Apocalypse* 289-97; Adams *Shorter Poems* 77-100). This poem, *Milton* and *Jerusalem* are all important for understanding Orc, but not in the way the "cycle" assumes.

"The Mental Traveller" has obvious affinities with the Orc myth. It opens and closes with a babe nailed down on a rock, and reenacts Orc's snapping of his manacles and his rape of the "Dark virgin" (*America* 1:11; here, a "Virgin bright," 22). And, of importance to Frye's conception of Orc's "crucifixion," the babe's hands and feet are pierced and his heart cut from his side in a way that alludes not only to the stigmata but also, as Hazard Adams notes, to earlier human sacrifice (*Shorter Poems* 89). Most important, the poem traces a double cyclic development, from infancy to age and back to infancy for the male babe, and from age to infancy to age for the woman or women who accompany him. It includes, too, obvious references to the rise of new civilizations (89-92), and may be the source of Frye's conception that Orc appears twice, in the birth and the death of a culture. There are, nevertheless, reasons for not considering "The Mental Traveller" a representation of the Orc myth. First, it does not refer to the Orc story alone; rather, it incorporates elements of Blake's *entire* myth, including allusions to Tirzah (the "woman old"), to the wine presses of

66. Orc's division in Night VIIA continues in Night VIII, where new thematic elements are introduced as well; see Chap. 4.

Luvah (line 12; alternately treated as sites of apocalyptic retribution in *The Four Zoas* and of preapocalyptic earthly war in *Milton*), to the driving out of Tiriel by his children in *Tiriel* (51-55), and to the pastoral landscapes beyond experience in "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found" (81-90). Second, "The Mental Traveller" varies the Orc myth in ways that Frye, at least, does not account for; the most important is the reverse cycle from age to youth, which Frye surprisingly ignores.[67] Finally, we should not overlook the obvious point that the characters are not given the names Orc and Urizen. As W. H. Stevenson has pointed out, Blake's avoidance of names from the prophetic books in his lyrics, even when the characters have obvious similarities, is hardly an accident; aside from a desire for the lyrics to be read independently, it points up the fact that Blake's treatment in them differs. With regard to this poem specifically, Stevenson argues that though the world of Orc and Urizen is visible in it, "the narrative and figures of 'The Mental Traveller' belong to that poem alone, and its difficulties would only be increased if we tried to make it form part of a sequence with other poems" (450-53, quotation at 453).

If "The Mental Traveller" does, nevertheless, recall Orc and Urizen, it may be worthwhile to ask why the young/old character is *not* called Orc. There are, in fact, several differences from the Orc myth more fundamental than those mentioned so far. First, there is no psychic or social rebellion in "The Mental

67. "Orc, now Urizen, dies a seed's death as the world becomes 'a dark desart all around,' and eventually re-enters the world of Generation as a reborn Orc" (*Symmetry* 229). On the contrary, the Orc/Urizen figure does not die, never leaves "the world of Generation," and is not reborn. Frye's more careful later formulation, "the Boy as an old man . . . keeps seeking his 'emanation' or created form outside himself, until eventually the desert is partially renewed by his efforts, he comes again into the place of seed, and the cycle starts once more," has the effect of removing the obvious errors without producing an accurate reading ("Keys" 192-93).

Traveller." Although the manacles are burst, this occurs in a way that avoids *America*'s defiant tonalities and prophecy of liberation; the Orc figure never speaks, and is imagined from the outside in a flat, plodding way corresponding to the repetitiveness that constitutes both the poem's large-scale structure and its small-scale syntax. Connected to this, the rape in *America* is reimagined in a purely economic and sexual way, as possession of the woman and the earth: "She becomes his dwelling place / And Garden fruitful Seventy fold"; the now-aged figure's dwelling place, perhaps the woman herself, is "filled all with gems & gold / Which he by industry had got" (27-28, 31-32). Third, the relations within the poem are purely exploitive. Figures who cause others to suffer grow younger (the Woman Old of the opening, and the Urizen-like figure of the middle who becomes "Younger & younger" as he pursues the woman "night & day," 73, 79). The suffering itself creates riches: the female's rape turns her into a field-body in the early stanzas, while her "fear plants many a thicket wild" near the end, 78). But the wealth empties its possessors of vitality (29, 86). In addition, relationships change by usurpation. Most commentaries have not noted that the visiting Travellers cuckold the Urizen figure, and that the child born of this union later joins with them to drive the "aged Host" from his home (39-44, 49-53). What is imagined in "The Mental Traveller," in sum, is a world of pure materiality and acquisition, both economic and sexual, a world without rebellion or transcendence — an Orc-world without Orc. The poem can, of course, also be considered a reconsideration that roots the "Orc cycle" firmly in sexual and economic dynamics, but I prefer the first formulation, for reasons that will emerge shortly.

A final reason for not considering "The Mental Traveller" an epitome of the Orc myth is that that myth is reworked differently in *Milton*. The Orc ma-

terial in *Milton* most probably postdates "The Mental Traveller," and some of it, including the crucial plate 18, belongs to 1811-18, a period when Blake was also working on *Jerusalem*.[68] The lyric, then, is at most an interim reconsideration of the myth, not its matured form. *Milton* treats Orc differently from both *The Four Zoas* and "The Mental Traveller," but has more in common with the former. As in *The Four Zoas* — and in contrast to "The Mental Traveller" — Orc in *Milton* is not cyclic. There is no suggestion that he has been born and died earlier in history, or that he grows into Urizen. (Frye does not mention Orc's appearance in the action of *Milton*.) At the same time, contrary to the assumption that the Orc symbol is definitively given serpent form in *The Four Zoas*, Orc in *Milton* takes three forms, of which the serpent is the least prominent and thematically least important.

Orc's predominant form in *Milton* is as chained youth. He is termed "the fires of youth"; is repeatedly described as bound with the "Chain of Jealousy" or

68. Erdman gives 1800-04 as the probable period of composition of the Pickering Ms., including "The Mental Traveller," and July 1802-1807 as the possible period in which the fair-copy manuscript was made (*E*859). Bentley offers 1807 or later for transcription (*Blake Records Supplement* xvi). Estimates for the composition of *Milton* vary widely, but while the bulk of the poem may have been composed around 1800-1803, as Erdman hazards (*E*806), it took final shape much later, as shown by the addition of six plates after the printing of copies A and B in 1811. Viscomi, whose reconstruction I follow here, gives 1811 as the initial printing date for copy C, with plates added and removed until 1821, and 1818 for D, containing all the added plates (378-80). The added plates include major material on Orc. Some of the discussion of Orc in *The Four Zoas* VII-VIII, as well, may be simultaneous with or later than "The Mental Traveller"; Erdman's finding that at least some revisions in Night VIII refer to events as late as 1807 is now generally accepted. (See *The Four Zoas* 100:33, *E*841, and *Prophet* 419n., 516.)

as chained; is said to "arise" or "howl . . . on the Atlantic" and to "[howl] burning in fires of Eternal Youth"; or is described as one among the other zoas — all descriptions that treat him as human in form.[69] In the text, only his own words to Vala, "Behold how I am & tremble lest thou also / Consume in my Consummation" (18:27-28) contain a a possible reference to serpent form, since the verb "consume" has been used in *The Four Zoas* in reference both to his snakification and to his eventual purifying immolation (Night VIIA, 80:48; Night IX, 126:1). But in this same *Milton* passage the narrator describes Orc as human — he lies on a "Couch / Of fire" and has "hands of fire" (lines 39-40, 45). Among the designs, that for plate 40 shows Milton struggling against a serpent with the double heads of a snake-tongued rooster and some other beast, most probably a dog. The serpent could refer to all four zoas, with whom Milton wrestles in the text (line 7), or, perhaps, only to Urizen and Orc in their twinned forms of dragon and snake, as seen in *The Four Zoas* VIII.[70]

A third form appears in perhaps the most comprehensive, and certainly the most gnomic, of the poem's descriptions, when the narrator states that

> Orc incessant howls burning in fires of Eternal Youth,
> Within the vegetated mortal Nerves; for every Man born is joined
> Within into One mighty Polypus, and this Polypus is Orc.
> . . . . . .
> And Satan is the Spectre of Orc & Orc is the generate Luvah (29:29-34)

69. Fires of youth: 19:37; chains: 19:38, 20:61, 22:33, 23:37-38; on the Atlantic: 23:6, 31:27; burning in fires: 29:29; with other Zoas: 17:31-18:1, 40:6.

70. See Chap. 4 for *The Four Zoas*, and Chap. 6 for the significance of the *Milton* design. The design appears as pl. 42 in copy C, in Essick and Viscomi's facsimile, whose commentary describes the heads as those of a snake (but it has a bird's beak) and a dog or wolf (33); Erdman calls them "rooster-serpent" and "human-dog" (*Illuminated Blake* 262, showing copy A). In copy D, the doglike head has sharp teeth.

Orc here, seen as an aspect of "Eternal Youth" and hence as human, is described as a psychic faculty of all "men," who are imagined as a "polypus," or mass of undifferentiated life.[71] Here Orc is evidently conceived as psychic hunger or passion, and in this aspect takes a collective, unindividuated form in all humans. In line with this idea, Orc is called the "generate" Luvah, i.e., the faculty of passion in "fallen" existence. Most important for my discussion, however, is that Orc as Luvah (referred to also at 18:1) is distinguished from Satan, who is identified with Orc's spectre. This separation is consistent with a distinction between the serpent Orc's descent "into Satan" and the breathing forth on the wind of "Orc's human remains" in *The Four Zoas*, Night VIII. (See Chapter 4.)[72] Though the treatment of Orc as Luvah here is more sinister in tone, Orc remains a divided figure, predominantly presented as chained youth.

71. Rodney M. Blaine usefully discusses Blake's development of this symbol (126-29); see also Frye 130, 287. The polypus itself has two forms — this one, and tentacled invertebrate; for the latter, see *Jerusalem* 67:34-40 and discussion in Chap. 5.

72. The connection between Orc and Satan is presented differently on plate 10, and the relation among the different accounts is not fully clear. There, Los and Enitharmon realize "that Satan is Urizen / Drawn down by Orc & the Shadowy Female into Generation" (10:1-2). This reference may, of course, reflect only Los and Enitharmon's perception. Or, it may present an alternative genesis for Satan from that in *The Four Zoas* and *Milton* 29: Satan represents not Luvah's degeneration but Urizen's, prompted by the coupling of Orc and the Female. This version can be made consistent with 29 by taking Satan-Urizen on 10 as equivalent to the Spectre of Orc on 29, and hence identifying Urizen as Orc's Spectre. This would make some sense: degenerated reason (Urizen as Satan) would be equivalent to the abstracted reasoning power of Orc-Luvah (Orc's Spectre). Such a treatment would be roughly consistent with the Urizen-Orc, dragon-serpent collusion and some references to Satan in *The Four Zoas* VIII, though not with the account there of Satan's genesis from Luvah. But *Milton* 10, like plate 18 (which describes Orc and the Female), is one of the late additions incorporated after 1811 (using Viscomi's dating); plate 29 belongs to the earlier state of the poem. Possibly, then, plate 10's presentation of Satan as Urizen degenerated in response to Orc and the Female (on 18) supersedes or alternates with plate 29's view of Satan as Orc's Spectre. Politically,

The treatment of Orc is reworked yet again in *Jerusalem*. The particulars of this presentation will concern me in Chapter 6. For the present, what should be noted is that there is no Orc *cycle* in *Jerusalem*, no conception of a process that begins as rebellion but grows over into Urizenic repression. Rather, Orcian rebellion is absent altogether, and the human figure of Orc, who is its emblem, never appears. Orc is shown, instead, in his snake form, as "the Serpent, / Orc the first born coild in the South" (14:2-3), in a vision of the beginning of history that is extended over two pages of mounting and horrific detail to the present, when Albion "groans in the deep slumbers of Death upon his Rock" (16:27). Orc's "Eternal" form, Luvah, appears as well, in multiple contexts: in accounts of the division and fall of Albion, in references to the conflicts among the Zoas as emblems of human wars, in the symbolism of Luvah as a type of Jesus, and most specifically, in historical symbolism as France in the war with England ("For Luvah is France: the Victim of the Spectres of Albion," 66:15). Orc in human form, meanwhile, is absent, most notably in one of the poem's crucial turns, the passage on plate 45/31 in which Los searches Albion's bosom. In this passage, which David Erdman rightly identifies as the dramatic heart of the poem (he notes that the frontispiece refers to it),[73] Los searches in London's streets among the "minute particulars" who are England's women, men, and children, and sees

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the issue would be whether Satan stems from revolutionary degeneration (plate 29) or from the counterrevolutionary response to revolution (plate 10).

73. See *Prophet* 469-71. Erdman, however, considerably underplays the pessimism of the passage.

every Minute Particular of Albion degraded & murderd
But saw not by whom; they were hidden within in the minute particu-
lars
Of which they had possessd themselves (lines 7-9)

"They" in these lines refers to the degraders and murderers; what Los realizes is that oppression has so "possessd" the souls of the oppressed that its origins and identity as oppression are hidden, and the murderers — still present in the streets — are no longer distinguishable. This is not a new thought for Blake — it already exists in the "mind-forg'd manacles" — but it has never been expressed in so extreme and pessimistic a form as here. Blake's point is that oppression is so internalized that it proceeds almost automatically, it has taken possession of the oppressed themselves. In these circumstances the kind of rebellious defiance Blake has named Orc cannot occur, at least in its original form as a call to liberation. Hence Los does not and cannot find Orc in London. What is salient about this treatment in an evaluation of Frye's construct is that Orc is not presented as a rebellious principle that becomes, or alternates with, Urizen, or that develops cyclically. Nor, indeed, is a cyclic development of rebellion into oppression presented through any other symbolism in *Jerusalem* — for example, Luvah, who might furnish the vehicle for such a presentation, is shown as victim throughout, and is always distinct from tormentors such as Hand.

Rather than showing a cyclic transformation of one into the other, Blake in his late poems ultilizes the human and serpent forms of Orc as emblems for alternative processes. When he is concerned with revolt and its possible consequences, in *Milton*, he shows Orc as chained boy and not serpent; in *Jerusalem*, where rebellion is not actively occurring, Orc is shown only in serpent form.

In *Milton*, *Jerusalem*, and "The Mental Traveller," then, Blake deals with

the idea of Orc in three ways. Though distinct, these ways need not be seen as mutually exclusive. Rather, the three poems should be seen as having different foci. *Milton* reworks the material of the earliest prophecies showing Orc as the symbol of revolt on the Atlantic, as well as the "human" treatment of Orc in *The Four Zoas*, and tries to establish a poetic symbolism by which this revolt will be joined to a larger religious-political liberation (Orc will be freed by Milton). In *Jerusalem* Blake's view of a world of triumphant oppression, a virtual collapse of civilization, is registered in Orc's absence from the poem in his human form. Orc's absence, however, is not a statement that the impulse to political rebellion has become Satanic, but rather that it is inadequate to a situation of internalized oppression. Neither poem, then, shows an Orc "cycle," that is, a tendency based in the cycles of natural life for political rebellion to occur periodically, but merely to become the oppressive regime it once opposed.

In "The Mental Traveller," finally, Blake *does* show a cycle, with obvious points of contact to the Orc myth, though Orc's name is not used. The poem is best conceived as a meditation on the meaning of the Orc myth rather than a revision of it (and certainly not a statement of what its meaning has always been), and as such it functions in two different ways. It is a representation of a possible life cycle for an Orc figure who does not revolt, in a world that also contains no transcendent prophetic consciousness that could make contact with such a revolt (as in *Milton*). And, what is not quite the same thing, "The Mental Traveller" is a representation of the natural cycles of human life in a world (if such a world could be imagined) in which no Orc is present — in which there is no revolt that at least envisions apocalyptic transcendence. There is, in the end, much truth in Frye's cyclic conception as an image of organic life. Where he has gone wrong is in naming the cycle after Orc.

Intellectual Origins of the "Orc Cycle"

If Frye's "Orc cycle" does not describe Blake's use of the Orc symbol, it becomes necessary to account for the idea's broad acceptance. To do so requires asking, first, whether ideas similar to the "Orc cycle" are found in seventeenth and eighteenth-century thought, and whether they are felt anywhere in Blake's work, if not in his treatment of Orc; second, how cyclic concepts of history and revolution came to be associated with Orc in the twentieth century. How, if not through an "Orc cycle," did Blake deal with historical repetition in his work? What cyclical or circle imagery did he use, and what did it mean? And finally, has an association of Orc and cyclicality been pervasive in twentieth-century Blake criticism, or can it be traced specifically to Frye?

The "Orc cycle," we know, has two aspects: it argues that Orc's cyclicality describes both a process that revolutionary movements go through, and, more broadly, an evolution from "youth" to "age" in the life of a culture. It will be convenient to look at the latter point first. Analogues to this aspect of the "Orc cycle" can be found throughout seventeenth and eighteenth-century social thought. Cyclical myths of humanity's successive ages, part of the period's classical patrimony, influenced its rationalist speculations on the history of civilization, both as metaphor and as serious paradigm. Bacon, for example, is deploying familiar tropes and Platonic allusions when he laments the "turning wheels of vicissitude," which make "*all knowledge . . . but remembrance*"; he is thinking more systematically when he contends that "[i]n the youth of a state, arms do flourish; in the middle-age of a state, learning; and then both together for a time; in the declining age of a state, mechanical arts and merchandise" (*Essays* 280, 272, 280). The cyclic succession of social orders and forms of government was another standard conception. Bodin had proposed one such paradigm;

Vico, whose work Blake cannot have known when he wrote his prophetic works, offered another, in which aristocratic or senatorial authority gives way to popular or anarchic rule and the latter to monarchic power, before undergoing a regression and beginning anew.[74] In Volney, whose *The Ruins* (translated in 1793) Blake almost surely did know, the sequence is from anarchy or democracy to aristocracy and then monarchy, though such an "eternal circle of vicissitudes" would be inevitable only if "social experience is already exhausted for the human race" (36 and n.) Volney's case is especially interesting since, as Jon Mee has shown, his account of ancient religion was much like Blake's and may have influenced it (Mee 176-97 *passim*). In Volney's frame narrative, the danger that the new universal brotherhood will collapse in religious anarchy is what leads to the discussion of ancient religion that is the work's primary focus (chaps. 19-20). Evidently, a secular progressive supporter of the French Revolution could see in the present a threat of regression and repetition of past cyclic patterns.

Evidence for a cyclic conception of revolution in the period's literature is more mixed. Though Volney may seem to provide an example, we should remember that for Frye, the "Orc cycle" refers to the development of the revolutionary spirit into a principle of repression — not to the failure or collapse of revolution, evidently Volney's concern. It has become a commonplace in discussions of the "Orc cycle" that in the eighteenth century the term "revolution" itself was understood cyclically, owing to past usage and its origins in astronomical writing. According to Aileen Ward, the word "suggest[ed] restoration, the return to a previous state of affairs, far more often than rebellion, the change to something new — a cyclical rather than a progressive theory of history" (206).

74. See discussions in Pompa, chaps. 3-5, 9-12, and Vaughan 54-56. Vico was first translated, into French and German, in the 1820s (P. Burke 2). Blake knew no Italian until he studied it in the 1820s.

Ronald Paulson, who shares this view, adds that Burke was "the first English writer" for whom "the word carries the new sense of a large violent upheaval from below that brings about a restructuring of society" (51). Actually, like many intellectual commonplaces, this one oversimplifies a tangled history. The conception of a cyclic process leading from the rupture of the existing power through intervening stages to the restoration of some legitimate power seems to have been common to monarchist and antimonarchist writers: both Hobbes and Locke used it, though obviously with differing views of legitimacy. Dryden's "The Medal," directed against Shaftesbury and Monmouth, is a literary source for such a conception, though the term "revolution" is not used.[75] Complicating the picture, however, are various other contemporary uses. Cyclic senses could shade into developmental ones, as when the Duc de Rohan, in 1634, argued that "Whatever it is that causes the cyclical revolutions of the things of this world, also causes the basic principles of good government to change" (qtd. Griewank 59). The Glorious Revolution itself, though justified as a return to legitimacy (and so defended by Burke a century later), paradoxically undermined this recursive conception by coming to be seen as unique and irrevocable (Griewank 60).

Perhaps most important in a Blakean context, the term was also used in apocalyptic senses. Samuel Hartlib's English adaptation of Joseph Mede's *Clavis apocalyptica* (1651) asked its reader to "bee patient for a short time, thou shalt see the end of these distractions in great Revolutions both in Church and State, within and without Europe"; an astrological calendar for 1660, the

75. The relevance of Dryden's poem is suggested by Paulson (50); I also owe to Paulson's reference (50n.) my use of Griewank and Lasky, below, though my interpretation differs from his.

"Princely Dismal Calendar," foretold "The great Changes, Revolutions, and Turn of Times . . . *Catastrophes*, *Changes*, and *Revolutions*, that will befall most Princes, States, and *Commonwealths* throughout Europe; And the Superlative *Actions*, designed by the *Heavens*, touching the *Crowns*, *Scepters*, And *Royal Diadems*" (qtd. Lasky 230-31).[76] Without losing the root sense of catastrophic reversal or overturn, such uses added the idea of the downfall of worldly powers; "Turn of Times" or no, these were not *basically* cyclical conceptions — they did not imply that the fallen powers would rise again. The most important point here is obvious, yet often overlooked: "revolution," like any other idea, never had *one* meaning; it could mean different things to different people and groups. To cite the usages of Clarendon, Hobbes, or even Locke is simply to establish what those whose experience and thought centered on changes of office and party made of "revolution," not to delimit a firm perimeter of meaning.

With regard to the French Revolution itself, the situation is even more complex. Despite the credit Paulson has given Burke for originating the modern conception of revolution, most references in the *Reflections*, where the context suggests any definite meaning, imply only the general sense of violent alteration; this is the case, for example, in Burke's defense of revolutionary necessity (80-81). Elsewhere the term implies overturn or sudden downfall, with a suggestion of heavenly cycles, as in Burke's outburst over Marie Antoinette, "Oh! what a revolution! and what an heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall!" (126). In a few instances, however, Burke does approach the idea of social upheaval, and on one occasion, he formulates

76. For particulars on Hartlib's work, part of a larger collection by Hartlib, see Wittreich and Patrides 400, item 745; for background on Hartlib, see Wittreich, *Visionary Poetics* 43, 229, 235, and C. Hill 51-53, 288-89.

the conception that to attempt to restructure society recreates the same injustices in a new form:

> You would not cure the evil by resolving, that there should be no more monarchs, nor ministers of state, nor of the gospel; no interpreters of law; no general officers; no public councils. You might change the names. The things in some shape must remain. A certain *quantum* of power must always exist in the community, in some hands, and under some appellation.... The very same vice assumes a new body.... It walks abroad; it continues its ravages; whilst you are gibbeting the carcass, or demolishing the tomb.... It is thus with all those, who, attending only to the shell and husk of history, think they are waging war with intolerance, pride, and cruelty, whilst, under colour of abhorring the ill principles of antiquated parties, they are authorizing and feeding the same odious vices in different factions, and perhaps in worse. (190)

Burke's affinities here are, on the one hand, sociological — he anticipates later theorists of oligarchic organization like Robert Michels and Wilfredo Pareto; on the other hand, they are theological — his target is the idea that evil lies in institutions rather than the vices of the human heart. The latter is a conception that comes close to a standard reading of Blake, namely, that he emphasizes an internal change in the heart rather than one in society. And Burke's idea bears a superficial resemblance to Blake's later conception of the "selfhood," which I will examine in a subsequent chapter. Pertinent to my present discussion, however, is that Burke here goes beyond earlier cyclic conceptions that revolution ends by returning to an old form, and broaches the idea that successful revolu-

tion recreates old injustices in *new* institutional forms. Though he uses neither the term "revolution" nor the metaphor of a cycle, his conception has clear affinities with Frye's.

Other anti-Jacobin polemicists raised similar ideas, though less analytically than Burke — asking, for example, whether "*nobles* by *nature*, when possessed of unbalanced power, are not fully as tyrannical and cruel in their government as they whose vanity is fed by the recollection of an illustrious line of ancestors" (*Comparative Display* 549). Coleridge, too, when he broke with France in 1798, expressed his new position in terms that imply a cyclic conception: the "Sensual and the Dark" "burst their manacles and wear the name / Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain!" ("France: An Ode," 85-88). In these examples, however, the specific metaphors of a cycle or of revolution as circular motion are not used. Similarly, while revolution or popular power was metaphorized as a snake — as by Gouverneur Morris, above, or in an apologist's comment that Jacobin "venom" was bred by the old regime (Chapter 3) — the image of the tail-eating snake of recurrence does not seem to have come to mind. In *The Rights of Man*, on the other hand, Paine uses the idea of circular motion, but only to invert it. The American and French revolutions, Paine argues, "are a renovation of the natural order of things"; whereas former revolutions "extended only to a change of persons and measures," these amount to "a '*counter Revolution*,' " because rights lost "at some early period" are being recovered. Government "founded on a *moral theory, on a system of universal peace, on the indefeasible hereditary Rights of Man*, is now revolving from west to east by a stronger impulse than the Government of the Sword revolved from east to west" (Part 1, 212; Part 2, 227). Despite the changes ostentatiously rung on the term's root meaning, revolution

is not thought of here as cyclic or repetitive but as a unique recovery of rights uniquely lost; the passage's affinities are not to classical cyclic ideas but to the Christian fall-redemption pattern.

What emerges from this brief review is a mixed picture. The idea that successful revolution generates vengeance and then tyranny was present, and that idea, as a response to the French Revolution, is what has suggested the "Orc cycle," whether in Blake or in Frye. However, the specific cycle imagery that Frye associates with the idea does not seem to have been prominent. Paine's discussion shows that "revolution" could be used in an etymologically self-aware way without truly involving repetitive conceptions. Antirevolutionary writers, on the other hand, tended to avoid the idea of circularity in favor of an older vocabulary of disorder and disruption of natural hierarchies. Finally, the idea that revolution is an upheaval from below that alters the social structure, though present in sneers about "nobles by nature," was not well developed.

Blake's responses to such conceptions are not altogether easy to gauge. It is worth noting that the ideas I have just been examining are mainly expressed by monarchist and/or conservative authors that Blake detests.[77] Volney is the exception; yet Blake utilizes other elements of Volney's thought than his cyclic

77. In the so-called "Public Address," Blake comments that "Dryden has degraded Milton" in revising *Paradise Lost* (*E*581 and note at 882). He annotated Bacon's *Essays or Counsels Civil and Moral* (in a 1798 edn., *Essays Moral, Economical, and Political*), though not the chapter I cite here; the most heavily marked chapter is "Of Seditions and Troubles," a thoroughly repressive, though non-cyclic, exposition on which Blake noted, among other comments, "Contemptible Knave Let the People look to this" (*E*625). This is one of a series of comments often overlooked by those who assume that Blake's only objection to Bacon was to his natural philosophy. Blake's view of Burke is not recorded, but can probably be inferred from his defense of Paine and his allusion to Burke in the assassin figure of *Europe* 1 (annotations to Watson, *E*611-20; Erdman in *Illuminated Blake* 159).

ideas of social evolution. Some of Paine's conceptions also have analogues in Blake, such as that of dispossession "at some early period," elaborated in the emergence of Urizen and chaining of Orc in the dawn of material existence (*Urizen* and later works).[78] But these conceptions are not attached to ideas of cyclic recurrence in Paine, and Blake does not attach cyclic imagery to them (for example, astral or seasonal) to suggest such an idea.

Blake does, however, utilize the image of a circle in his mythology, and in his later work he broaches the idea of historical recurrence. We should look at these references to see whether they focus on the processes that Orc represents. Blake develops his circle imagery through several of his early and middle works:

> The bounded is loathed by its possessor. The same dull round even of a univer[s]e would soon become a mill with complicated wheels (*There Is No Natural Religion* [b], 4)

> But go, merciless man! enter into the labyrinth of another's brain
> Ere thou measure the circle that he shall run. Go, thou cold recluse,
> into the fires
> Of another's high flaming rich bosom, and return unconsum'd, and
> write laws (*The French Revolution* 190-91)

> And they inclos'd my infinite brain into a narrow circle
> . . . . .
> [must she be] bound to hold a rod
> Over her shrinking shoulders all the day; & all the night

78. These ideas are not unique to Paine, but Paine seems a plausible influence on their presence in Blake. On the intellectual affinities between Blake and Paine, see Mee (*passim*, but esp. Chap. 4) and Goldsmith (165-91 *passim*).

To turn the wheel of false desire (*Visions of the Daughters of Albion* 2:32, 5:25-27)

The first usage gives the basic form of the image: the circle or "round" is existence lived without imagination, under "bounded" perception and in a "bounded" and therefore repetitive universe. More particularly the image is one of oppression, labor at a "mill," for Blake repeatedly a figure for enslaved labor, as in the *Albion Rose* design and *Milton*'s prefatory poem (copies A and B). In the *French Revolution* passage, the circle is that of human existence, but through its association with "laws" and its opposition to the brain's complexity and the heart's passion, it refers specifically to bounded, or what Blake interpretation has called "Urizenic" existence. In Oothoon's uses in the *Visions*, the circle at first is, again, that of Urizenic bounding. In her second reference the circle becomes a *wheel*, a variation of the mill of *No Natural Religion*; the image sums up a process in which social subjection and (as the context makes clear) religious teaching keeps the female enslaved under the complex of Urizen's social and sexual "wheels," which she herself, with no alternative, is forced to turn.

The same imagery, with new elements, recurs in the passage from *Europe* 10 already considered above:

> then all the eternal forests were divided
> Into earths rolling in circles of space
> . . . . . .
> Then was the serpent temple form'd, image of infinite
> Shut up in finite revolutions, and man became an Angel;
> Heaven a mighty circle turning; God a tyrant crown'd. (10:18-22)

Here the closure of the infinite into a circle is projected onto an astronomical frame and becomes the earth's rolling through space; the universe (created, for

Blake, by the general human mind) becomes a reflection of a bounded, "Shut up" *human* existence. This existence in turn has a defined social form as a tyranny, and the earthly form of this tyranny is present also in the God of such a universe and its conception of heaven as an oppressive "mighty circle."

The images of rolling movement, in turn, are developed in the creation sequences of *Urizen.* Urizen is seen "Dark revolving in silent activity"; he is associated with "the rolling of wheels" and accompanied by "vast clouds of blood [that] roll'd / Round the dim rocks of Urizen"; his waters "roll'd perplex'd labring"; and later, bounded by Los, Urizen's "eternal mind bounded began to roll / . . . ceaseless round & round" (3:18, 30-31, 41; 4:3; 10:19-20). Insistently throughout the poem, images of circular motion and form recur, materially projected at times as whirlwinds, Urizen's black globe, his brain as "orb," and, most prominently, his "globe of blood" (5:13, 33, 38, 10:34, 13:58ff.). Subsequently, in *The Four Zoas*, Night I, the circle becomes that of human destiny in our present world. It is simultaneously "Turnd" by Tharmas as he sinks down into the sea, and woven by Enion from Tharmas's entrails as he *becomes* the sea; as a form of the sea, it is both a circle round the earth and a globe enclosing it.

> [Tharmas] stretching out his holy hand in the vast Deep sublime
> Turnd round the circle of Destiny with tears & bitter sighs
> . . . . . .
> Nine days she [Enion] labourd at her work. & nine dark sleepless nights
> But on the tenth trembling morn the Circle of Destiny Complete
> Round rolld the Sea Englobing in a watry Globe self balancd (5:10-11, 23-25)

It is clear from the development traced so far that Janet A. Warner is correct in stating that "This circular image becomes a hallmark both of Urizen's thought processes and of Urizenic design" (30). (Of the circle of destiny, more in a moment.) Warner is referring specifically to the motion "round & round" that forms Urizen's "orb" of thought (*Urizen* 10:20, 34), but her observation remains correct if the term "Urizenic" is understood in its more general sense of bounded rationality. The term is slightly inaccurate, since other characters create this existence in various parts of Blake's myth — including, in its core versions, Los, in powerful collusion with Urizen. The "Urizenic" role in the passages cited here is played partly by Los and, in *The Four Zoas*, by Tharmas (the "parent power" in Night I) and his emanation, Enion. But indeed, Urizen is the character *most* associated with these processes. Blake's circle image, in sum, is his way of representing both Urizen, and also the bounded and hence repetitive processes associated with him, no matter by whichever character they are performed. Indeed, the "joy without pain, / . . . a solid without fluctuation" that represents Urizen's aspiration for his universe in one version of *Urizen* (4:10-11, copies A-C) can only be a circular form, a sphere — his own black globe or the globe of blood formed with Los's aid that represents the existing universe.

The circle of destiny, in turn, gains a new aspect not explicit in earlier uses of the circle image: through association with the "Moment of Time" that Eno drew out "to Seven thousand years with much care & affliction" (9:9-10), the circle comes to be associated with the whole span of created time.[79] Eno opens

79. Some additional complexities to the circle should be noted. The circle is presented partly as a materialization of Tharmas's Spectre; it is also a function and a material projection of his submission to his division from Enion — it comes into existence when he "stoop[s] his innocent head" in recognition of the separation and begins to form it (5:9). Fundamentally the circle as Spectre and as submission to division are the same — the latter is one aspect of the Spectre,

"windows" in this long moment as a way to keep "watch" over humanity (lines 11, 16), and these will concern us in a later chapter. At present, what should be stressed is a seemingly paradoxical development of Blake's symbolism. The circle of destiny would seem ideally suited to represent the long cycle of historical time, and is so treated in the classic analysis of this image, Milton O. Percival's *William Blake's Circle of Destiny* (1-12 and *passim*).[80] Yet Blake does *not* develop this use of the symbol; instead he works out a more specific conception, the "Twenty-seven Heavens & their Churches" (*Milton* 37:35; *Jerusalem* 75:10-20).[81] Grouped in three sets, these cover the span of biblical and historical time from Adam to Luther. In *Milton*, then, Blake replaces the conception of a circular and perhaps recurrent movement of history with that of a progression. In *Jerusalem*, however, he reintroduces the circle image in a passage added at the end of the list:

> But Jesus breaking thro' the Central Zones of Death & Hell

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as Blake develops this conception. Enion, in turn, simultaneously weaves the circle *out of* Tharmas's Spectre and draws it forth *as* the Spectre, which in turn animates "in masculine strength," coupling with her to produce Los and Enitharmon (5:14-25, 6:1-4). Altogether, then, the Spectre is both the dominating thought and desire of separated existence, and submission to this state of existence, and these processes conjointly *are* the circle of destiny.

80. Percival describes the circle as a descent from Eden through Beulah to Ulro, followed by an ascent from Ulro through Generation to Beulah and then Eden (11-12). While such a cycle is not necessarily linked to historical time, Percival in fact treats the circle this way; see, e.g., 43, 237. I would argue that Percival's demarkation of the stages of descent and ascent is also overly rigid.

81. The churches and heavens are also mentioned at *Milton* 35:65; the symbolism of their division into "Giants mighty Hermaphroditic," "Female-Males," and "Male-Females" (lines 37, 39, 42) is discussed by Percival, 114-22; for Frye's conception, see *Symmetry* 343-44; for their relation to the "Seven Eyes of God," see Chapter 5 below.

Opens Eternity in Time & Space; triumphant in Mercy

Thus are the Heavens formd by Los within the Mundane Shell
And where Luther ends Adam begins again in Eternal Circle
To awake the Prisoners of Death; to bring Albion again
With Luvah into light eternal, in his eternal day. (75:21-26)

Here, Blake makes explicit the possibility of a recurrence of the entire course of human history, without apparent possibility of escape — the waking of the prisoners is only part of an "Eternal Circle." Such a dark possibility does belong to the world of *Jerusalem.* Yet, on closer examination, the passage shows a typically Blakean syntactic displacement: after the churches are listed (lines 10-20), but before they are summed up and the circle identified (23-24), the lines about Jesus interrrupt the description. Surely, too, if we mentally restore the "proper" order, it is not Adam but Jesus, "Open[ing] Eternity" in mercy, who intervenes "To awake the Prisoners of Death." By displacing the lines about Jesus, Blake creates the possibility of a false resurrection; at the same time, the displacement serves as graphic illustration of the possibility that, at any time, Jesus can break open the circle and *prevent* Adam from succeeding Luther in a repetition of the horrors of history. Alternatively, with an intervention of Jesus into the circle, the recurrence of Adam may *not* launch a second historical cycle — Adam may actually awaken the prisoners. These possibilities are in fact much the same. Summing up this complex development in Blake's symbolism, the image of a circle as a way of representing historical time seems to suggest itself as an outgrowth of its basic significance as an emblem of limited mental and social existence. Blake does not, however, exploit the implication of

cyclic repetition implicit in this use of the image; yet neither does he dispense with it altogether. Rather, in two distinct versions of the alternative symbolism of the churches, he writes out the idea of recurrence and then writes it back in only to make clear that the circle need not turn again.

This seemingly paradoxical idea of a recurrence which is not a recurrence is expressed differently at the end of *The Four Zoas*, Night VIII: "as of old so now anew began / Babylon again in Infancy" (115 [111]:23-24). The reversion to Babylon, however, is the prelude not to a new large-scale movement of history, but rather to the apocalyptic events of Night IX; it is a deepening of the corruption of present society that leads to its breakdown. It is in this context that we find Orc's only connection with the cluster of images I have been discussing. In one description of Orc's immolation and regeneration in Night IX, Orc in serpent form is described as "rag[ing] thro his twenty Seven / Folds" (119:3-4). Though Blake does not use the image of the twenty-seven churches in this poem, it is legitimate to associate the reference to Orc with the churches' appearance in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. The folds link Orc to the heavens and churches, implying either that Orc's serpent form has persisted throughout history, or — in the context of the retroactive creation of Babylon at the end of Night VIII — that he retrospectively incorporates the evils of all prior human history in the moments of his immolation. If the folds are conceived as coils, they may seem to suggest cyclic appearances of Orc. However, other references to the heavens and churches do not suggest that a cycle of similar events occurs in each. Moreover, the folds are used elsewhere without reference to Orc; Milton, on his return to history from Eternity, enters his own "dread shadow, [which] twenty-seven-fold / Reachd to the depths of direst Hell" (*Milton* 14:39-40). The

twenty-sevenfold repetition, then, is a general trope signifying the extent of historical time. Though associated with Orc in the passage from *The Four Zoas*, it does not develop from Orc's initial, extensile serpent imagery, but from the "finite revolutions" of the serpent temple in the *Europe* text; in its final form the trope is identified with the "heavens" and "churches," both emblems of Urizen.

Blake's uses of the circle image in its historical aspect, then, broach the the idea of recurrence only to disrupt it with the contrary conception, a redemptive opening-out of cyclic existence. This way of conceiving the large movement of history refers not to classical conceptions of the sequence of "ages" — as cyclic models ultimately do — but to the Judaic-Christian conception of *apokatastasis*, the return to blessedness at the end of history.[82] This restoration, as M. H. Abrams has stressed, is part of a linear and progressive line of development that is circular in one sense and yet nonrecursive: it involves a return to blessedness that is not a recreation of the original Eden but the creation of a new heaven and earth (*Supernaturalism* 32-37). The location of the restoration in a city, as Jacques Ellul emphasizes, is precisely what shows its nonrecursive nature: "In the first [creation], God has created a garden for man. Man lives in 'nature.' In the second, he is installed in a city. Thus we do not observe a return to the origin" (221). Blake's selection of a city — London — as the site for his renewal has exactly this significance. More broadly, rather than to historical cyclicality, Blake's circle imagery as a whole refers to the limitation of psychic and social experience, the linkage of repetitive and oppressive existence, the attempt to order life by law. These ideas and the imagery used to dramatize them are tied to Urizen, rather than to Orc and the processes he represents.

82. For a useful discussion see Ferber, Chap. 8 *passim*.

We do not find the intellectual origins of the "Orc cycle," then, in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century associations of revolution with cyclical recurrence; contemporary references are more multiform than this notion would suggest. Nor does the "cycle" originate in a use of circle imagery by Blake to describe historical recurrence or the outcome of revolutionary movements; that is not how Blake uses this important image. It becomes evident, then, that the origins of the "cycle" lie in the twentieth century rather than the eighteenth. Here we find several aspects of the intellectual material of the "Orc cycle" lying ready to hand. The conception of a cyclic movement of civilizations, partially eclipsed during the enlightenment and supplanted by nineteenth-century ideas of linear progress, reemerged with the cyclic historical theory of Spengler and the renewal of interest in Vico (for example, by Joyce).[83] The organizational theories of Weber, and more specifically Pareto and Michels, formulated in part as rebuttals to the intellectual and political appeal of Marxism, gave currency to the idea of an inevitable development of elite structures in and over mass movements. Such conceptions as Pareto's elite theory and Michels' "iron law of oligarchy," together with these thinkers' insistence on "the inner degeneration of all political groups and institutions" (Hughes 253), contributed to the influence of oligarchic conceptions in the 1920s and '30s, and have evident points of contact with Frye's conceptions. The protracted crisis of European parliamentary capitalist societies in the early part of this century, with their seemingly inevitable slide toward fascism, and the concurrent totalitarian outcome of the Russian Revolution, provided the large-scale public political experiences necessary for

83. Joyce, of course, is one of Frye's main intellectual interests; he does not, however, refer to Vico in *Fearful Symmetry* or the *Anatomy*. For Frye's appreciation of Spengler, see "Spengler Revisited" in *Spiritus Mundi* (1976), 179-98.

these ideas of historic and revolutionary cyclicality to gain plausibility. The "cycle" has more specific roots as well, which I shall examine in a moment.

Yet it is important to realize that Orc has not always been interpreted as cyclic, at least not in the way Frye describes. Sloss and Wallis's early edition of the *Prophetic Writings* views Orc as "the will to moral emancipation which, expressed, inevitably becomes effective" in the Lambeth books; Sloss and Wallis add that in later works he loses his "Messianic quality," but do not suggest that he recurs cyclically or becomes Urizen (2:210-11). In S. Foster Damon's *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (1924), Orc is "the spirit of Youth and Revolt." Damon discusses his transformation in *The Four Zoas* in some detail, but does not raise the idea there or elsewhere that Orc develops into Urizen or a type of Urizen; his narration suggests, though sketchily, the idea of a temptation and fall (69, 160, 379). Damon also avoids some of Frye's typical amalgams, such as identifying Fuzon with Orc (124-25). Even Damon's late *Blake Dictionary* (1965) treats the "relationship of Urizen and Orc, or convention and revolt, [as] that of the Contraries, without which progression is impossible" (311), and does not raise the idea of cyclic development, though by that time, of course, Frye's conception was quite popular. Damon does, it is true, raise the idea that Orc undergoes cyclic progression in his treatment of "The Mental Traveller" (*William Blake* 9), and this may have provided the germ of Frye's conception, but the cycle Damon describes there is that of the five "mystic states," and they involve neither Orc's political role nor a development into Urizen. Moreover, Damon's view of "The Mental Traveller" was not universally accepted; Mark Schorer's *William Blake: The Politics of Vision* (originally published 1946) argued against it (72-73). Schorer further elaborated a sympathetic

political interpretation of Orc's role, stressing for example his reappearance as symbol of American revolt in *Milton* (302, 308, 312). J. Bronowski's *William Blake and the Age of Revolution* (first published in 1943; revised 1965) similarly has no trace of a cyclic view of Orc, though oddly it views Orc's struggle against Los as more important than his struggle against Urizen (124, 130). John Middleton Murry's *William Blake* (1933) came closer to Frye in seeing Urizen and the serpent-Orc in *The Four Zoas* as "one" (207), but his was not a cyclic analysis, but rather a view of "Reason" and "Energy" as opposed aspects of a larger selfhood: "The Selfhood, always and necessarily, is divided against itself, in internecine war" (208).

The point is not that these views were correct — Schorer's reading of Orc in *Milton*, for example, is much too simple — but that cyclic views of Orc were not well established, certainly not hegemonic, before Frye. Indeed, the standard view before Frye was that Orc, an opposed principle, is overcome by Urizen's hypocrisy. One of the chief treatments of Blake's imagery prior to Frye's, Percival's *William Blake's Circle of Destiny* (1938), treats Orc straightforwardly as the "personification of revolt," a "deathless phenomenon, the spirit of revolution that arises when energy is repressed" (30, 31). Percival never suggests that Orc develops into Urizen or recurs cyclically; his account of Night VII of The Four Zoas observes that a "shrewd method of dealing with revolt is to offer a meretricious compromise. This is the method that Urizen adopts in dealing with the rebellious Orc.... [Orc] suffers himself, an agent of revolt, to be tamed" (31-32). Percival notes, too, the redemptive role Orc plays in the poem's conclusion (32, 210, 288). Bernard Blackstone, in *English Blake* (1949), echoes Percival: Orc, the "spirit" or "principle" of "revolt" or "revolution" (55,

57, 58), is "overcome against his will by Urizen's hypocrisy .... Revolt has been overcome by reason" (91). So too Herschel Margoliouth's *William Blake* in 1961, with Frye already in the field: "Urizen by his hypocrisy tames Orc into a serpent climbing his tree" (123).

Frye's idea that revolt develops *into* restraint was, then, a *new* critical paradigm, and in terms of its reception, a stunningly successful one. Much of this success must be laid to the scope and erudition of Frye's reading of myth and archetype, and his skill at weaving Blake's sprawling myth into an organized whole. But in addition to these achievements, his interpretation also provided a way of looking at Blake in which Blake's radical politics, though not denied, receded in importance, in two somewhat distinct ways. Frye argued that Blake ultimately turned from any political conception of human regeneration toward one based purely on the force of imagination, and — perhaps more important because it was built into the very structure of his analysis — he treated the political elements in Blake as expressions of larger themes drawn from a universal and unchanging mythology. Both these conceptions were themselves highly political: the argument that politics is of little importance in human life is always a political statement.

Frye's conceptions were, in fact, political in narrower senses as well. He occasionally, though not often, admitted direct topical references into his analysis. Writing during or just after World War II about what he sees as Blake's association of the spread arms of the crucifixion with the captive sun, and the clawed or hooked cross with Druidism, he reads from Blake a condemnation of Japan and Germany: "The imaginative status of any nation which has adopted either the rayed sun or the hooked cross for its emblem thus becomes clear"

(212). More often, Frye's political statements were not topical, and were presented as Blake's conclusions rather than his own. Several that are crucial have to do with the "Orc cycle" and what Frye sees as the alternative, imaginative commitments of Los. Frye ends his outline of the "cycle" with an explicitly political moral: as Orc "stiffens into Urizen," it becomes clear that

> . . . the word "revolution" itself contains a tragic irony: it is itself part of the revolving of life and death in a circle of pain. (217-18)

Frye here makes explicit a view of revolution as mere repetition that is certainly quite common, but which he does not demonstrate in Blake. We have met this conception elsewhere in Frye — for example in the remarks quoted earlier, that "revolution, in the sense of a renewal of energy and the power of life, is not haphazard but cyclic," or that "revolution . . . is a natural renewal of life in society," such that "human history, no less than the natural world, has a cyclic rhythm of decline and revival" (*Symmetry* 207, 209). Such ideas, it may now be clear, are ideological statements, expressions of a world-picture that Frye endorses but that is not present in Blake.

Frye's view of the alternative to revolution is equally ideological: a dedication to art as civilizing action and therefore as social good. In presenting Los's redemptive enterprise, Frye nods in the direction of prophetic art, but flattens it into "art" in general: Los embraces "the tradition of art and prophecy which reaches its culmination in Jesus. . . . Los settles down to producing art in real earnest, and the arts of civilization begin to weaken and undermine the tyranny of war" (298-99). Then the art, notwithstanding a certain social reference, is made basically sufficient to itself:

> Los is not simply creative power, but the spirit of time: more accurately, he is the power that constructs in time the palace of art (Golgonooza), which is timeless . . . an invisible but permanent world created out of time by the imagination. This world is the genuine Atlantis or Eden that we actually live in. As soon as we realize that we do live in it, we enter into what Blake means by the Last Judgment. . . . Blake obviously hopes for a very considerable social response to vision in or soon after his lifetime. But even if everybody responded completely and at once, the City of God would not become immediately visible. . . . The real "heaven" is not a glittering city, but the power of bringing such cities into existence. ("Keys" 198)[84]

And commenting on Blake's own life, Frye refers to William Morris's view that "the joy that the medieval craftsman took in his work was so complete that he was able to accept the tyranny of medieval society: similarly, Blake was able to live in the age of Pitt and Nelson and yet be absorbed in building his palace of art" ("Keys" 197). Blake's successful project, Frye concludes triumphally, was "the building of a continuing city *in* the England of the Satanic mills" (*Symmetry* 355; my emphasis).

The ideas of the futility of political struggle and the apolitical, "timeless" character of art, though vocalized only occasionally, are central to Frye's conception of the "Orc cycle" and Blake's art, not to mention his view of Blake's myth generally as embodying universal archetypes. These ideas — which differ-

84. Paley similarly contends that Night VIIA of *The Four Zoas* Blake "replaces the prophetic function of the artist with a purely aesthetic one" (*Energy* 160-61).

entiate Frye's reading from the more political, though by no means revolutionary, interpretation of a Schorer or from Erdman's examination of Blake's topical allegory — may help explain why Frye's treatment became the standard one and why his conceptions were so influential. They are similar to ideas that flourished elsewhere in the twenty years after World War II, centering on the devaluing of social utopianism and mass movements. The same period saw, for example, Arthur Schlesinger's celebration of *The Vital Center* in U.S. politics (1949) and Daniel Bell's announcement of *The End of Ideology* (1960). Seymour Martin Lipset's *Political Man* (1963) contained a major chapter elaborating the theory of "Working-Class Authoritarianism," another stereotype related to the idea of inevitable revolutionary corruption. Camus's *The Rebel* (tr. 1954), with its dichotomy between romantic "rebel" and the amoral "revolutionary," provided an ideological paradigm very close to Frye's, with its own influence on Blake scholarship in Morton D. Paley's *Energy and the Imagination* (1970).[85]

The common intellectual backdrop for these works, of course, was the disillusionment with radical hopes that set in after World War II, when the social revolts of the Thirties were succeeded by international cold war; when revolution in the Soviet Union and the imposition of Soviet power in Eastern Europe were seen to have led to tyrannies; and, perhaps as important, when the thirty years of titanic struggles and sacrifices culminating in World War II had given way to a desire to cultivate one's own piece of earth. Frye's project might well be described as "building a palace of art in the age of Stalin and Eisenhower."

The works I have mentioned were part of a general atmosphere, and came too late to be specific influences on Frye; and other elements of Frye's theory,

85. See 74, 85-86, 163; see 115 for application to Orc.

notably his stress on archetype, actually belong to a slightly earlier intellectual period. One work contemporary with Frye's, however, seems very pertinent to Frye's formulation of the "cycle": Crane Brinton's cyclic treatment of revolution in his *The Anatomy of Revolution*, originally published in 1938, revised in 1952 and 1965, and a major teaching text on college campuses in the 1950s and 1960s.[86] The similarity of Brinton's title to that of Frye's best-known work is striking, and the works share an archetypal character that tries to find recurrent forms underlying apparently diverse occurrences.

For Brinton, "anatomy" is a biological rather than a generic metaphor, and his "cycle" is that of disease rather than life or the seasons: the "pathology" of revolution includes prodrome, active symptoms, crisis with delirium, and convalescence with relapses (16-17). Despite thse differences, Brinton's conception has much in common with Frye's, beginning with its repeated references to a "cycle" of phases common to all revolutions (e.g., 17, 22, 135). For Brinton, too, as for Frye, revolutionary *ideas* are ultimately beside the point, since a common cyclic pattern underlies ideologically disparate movements. And though Brinton gives a fairly detailed consideration of the American, French, Russian, and other revolutions, his account is ultimately ahistorical, since it tries to reduce them all to a recurring general pattern; in a similar way, the "Orc cycle" and other aspects of Blake's myth, in Frye's approach, are merely variations on universal archetypes.[87] It should be understood, though, that Brinton's account is not politically reactionary; he is at pains to point out that revolution is probably

86. I am indebted to Ronald D. Tabor for pointing out the relevance of Brinton to Frye.

87. For useful critiques of Frye's ahistoricism, focusing on the *Anatomy*, see McKeon 6-11 and Manganaro 125-32. See also the more general attack on Frye's archetypalism by Wimsatt (85-94).

inevitable, "as incurable as cancer" (263) — a typical, indeed archetypal, 1950s metaphor. And while revolutions ultimately fail, they are nevertheless positive, for the cycle of fever and convalescence leaves the social body stronger than before, "take[s] the sting out of . . . radical ideas and slogans," and achieves "the necessary miracle of reconciling aspiring men [*sic*] to the substantial failure of their aspirations toward heaven on earth" (248). Here, Brinton's accommodating view is more cynical than Frye's negative one, which stresses the supersession of revolutionary futility by a real heaven on earth, though only in imagination. This utopian element in Frye — his larding of apocalyptic content into a conception of art as the alternative to politics that is as old as Schiller — may help explain some of the appeal of his reading of Orc. Both Frye and Brinton, however, stress that hopes for an apocalypse in social life are empty.

Despite the affinities between Frye's construct and several ideologically conservative twentieth-century cyclic theorizations of history and revolution, it should be noted that the "Orc cycle" received much favorable commentary in the most radical period of recent U.S. and European cultural history, the period of social upheavals from about 1965-74. This fact, at first sight paradoxical, can be associated fruitfully with several aspects of the radical culture of the time. Much more than, say, the radical culture of the 1930s, that of the 1960s embodied a sense of generational revolt; the earlier period's concern with class, unionization, and the struggle between fascism and socialism — issues that rendered generational differences secondary or tertiary — tended to be replaced in the 1960s by a sense that the generation of the parents had made a rotten bargain with social reformism. Indeed, without being too fanciful, it could be said that Sixties radicals viewed their own parents, especially those who had been on

the left in the Thirties, as Orcs that had become Urizen. At the same time, a particular feature of the radical culture of the time was its insistence on both sexual and psychic transformation not only as essential elements of revolution but, often, as sufficient themselves to transform society. My purpose in pointing to such aspects of the Sixties culture is neither to affirm nor to criticize them, but to point to ways in which aspects of Frye's model could be taken as obviously and timelessly true because of affinities to the outlook of a specific time. In this way, a strongly (perhaps sometimes superficially) revolutionary culture could embrace paradigms also rooted in conservative criticism of revolution. Abrams's internalization of apocalypse, Frye's self-perpetuating generational revolt, and his continuing city *in* the England of Satanic mills were not just paradigms of romantic thought that mirrored romantic *self*-conceptions, as Jerome J. McGann's *The Romantic Ideology* has asserted about critical constructions of romanticism generally. These paradigms also jibed with aspects of the culture of the young scholars who received them.

Viewing the "Orc cycle" as an expression of attitudes toward politics that were themselves time-bound, even cyclic, does not of course fully explain its persuasiveness. The longevity of Frye's idea no doubt has to do with the difficulty of Blake's work, which makes any test against textual and graphic evidence complex; and it may even reflect the frequent use of *Fearful Symmetry* as a guide to the early reading of Blake, so that one encounters the texts and designs, in the first place, in the light of Frye's categories. Beyond such factors, however, the staying power of Frye's conception, like his overall reading of Blake, may have much to do with the ideological plausibility of his central notions: culturally, the idea of the futility of utopianism and of radical youth growing into conservative age are deeply embedded.

But regardless of the degree to which Frye's idea owes its appeal to conservative political ideas, its own character as an ideological construct becomes clear once we read Blake against Frye. Frye's description of Blake's absorption in "art" might have some biographical justification in the contented circumstances of Blake's last years and even in his political quietism in this period, yet it is evident that Frye means it as an emblem of Blake's attitude toward art generally. But the idea of contented artistry under the rule of Satan — which is how Blake regards Nelson and Pitt — does not fit Blake's myth, whether or not it describes his life. The central point of my argument, that Orc is not cyclic and does not grow into Urizen, but splits into serpent and chained boy, helps explain why. For Orc is Los's *son*. The notion of Los contentedly making art while Orc is bound "in the deeps" or, in *Jerusalem*, "degraded & murderd," is not Blake's; Los's art is directed toward the deliverance of the chained boy. Blake's conception of prophetic art was social-transformational. It was one in which the role of Los and his sons was "to circumscribe this dark Satanic death / . . . Till Albion is arisen." Rather than building a "timeless but permanent" imaginative world, a "glittering city" of the imagination (Frye), Los counsels his sons to "patient wait a little while, / Six Thousand years are passed away the end approaches fast" (*Milton* 23:51-55). It is time to recognize Frye's "Orc cycle" for what it is — not an elucidation of Blake but a venture into conservative political theory[88] — and to turn instead to the myth of the chained boy.

88. I adapt this phrase from the conclusion of Michael Paul Rogin's study of pluralist ideology, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter* (1967).



Fig. 1. *America a Prophecy*, plate 8. Copy M, Yale Center for British Art.

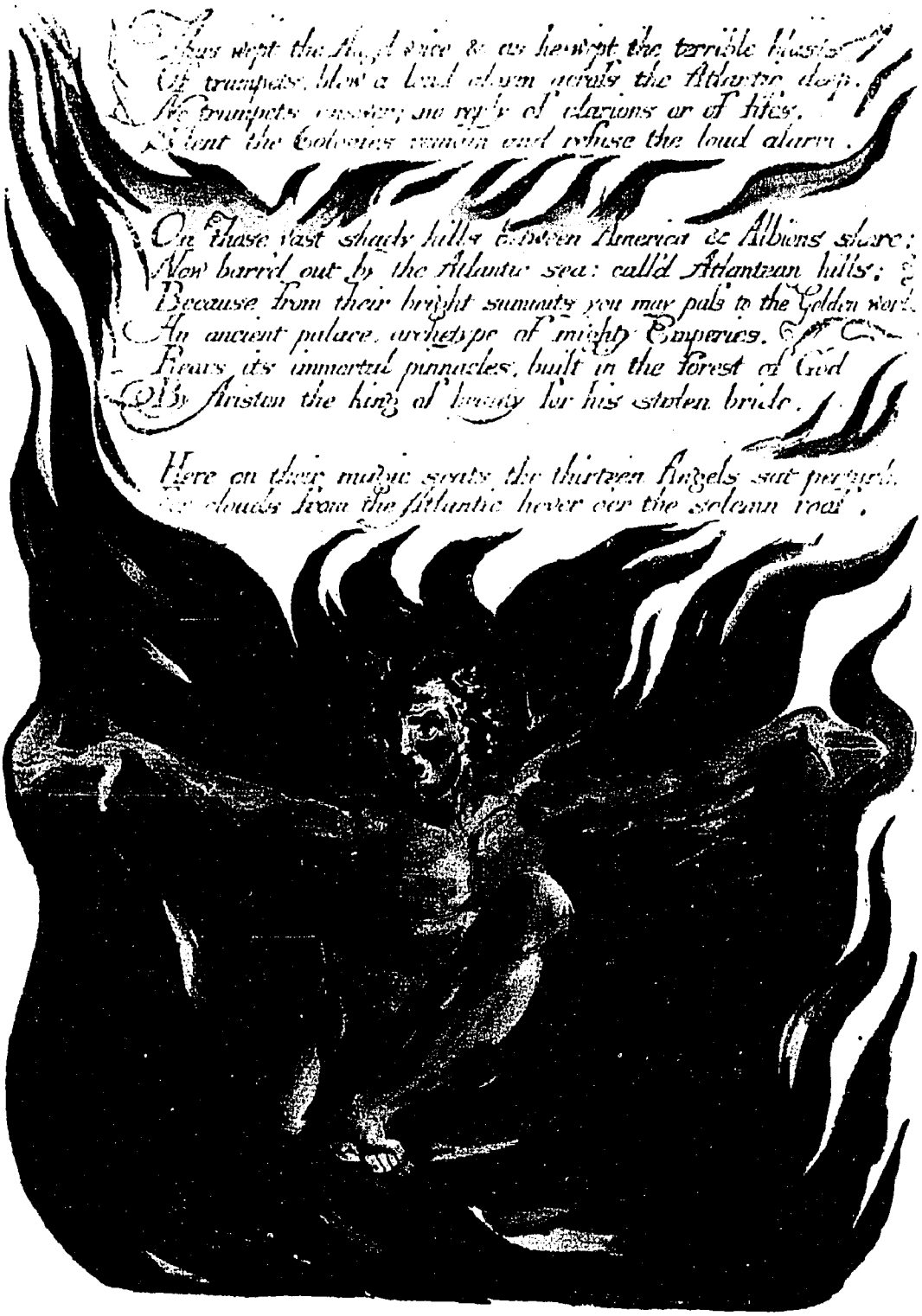


Fig. 2. *America a Prophecy*, plate 10. Copy M, Yale Center for British Art.

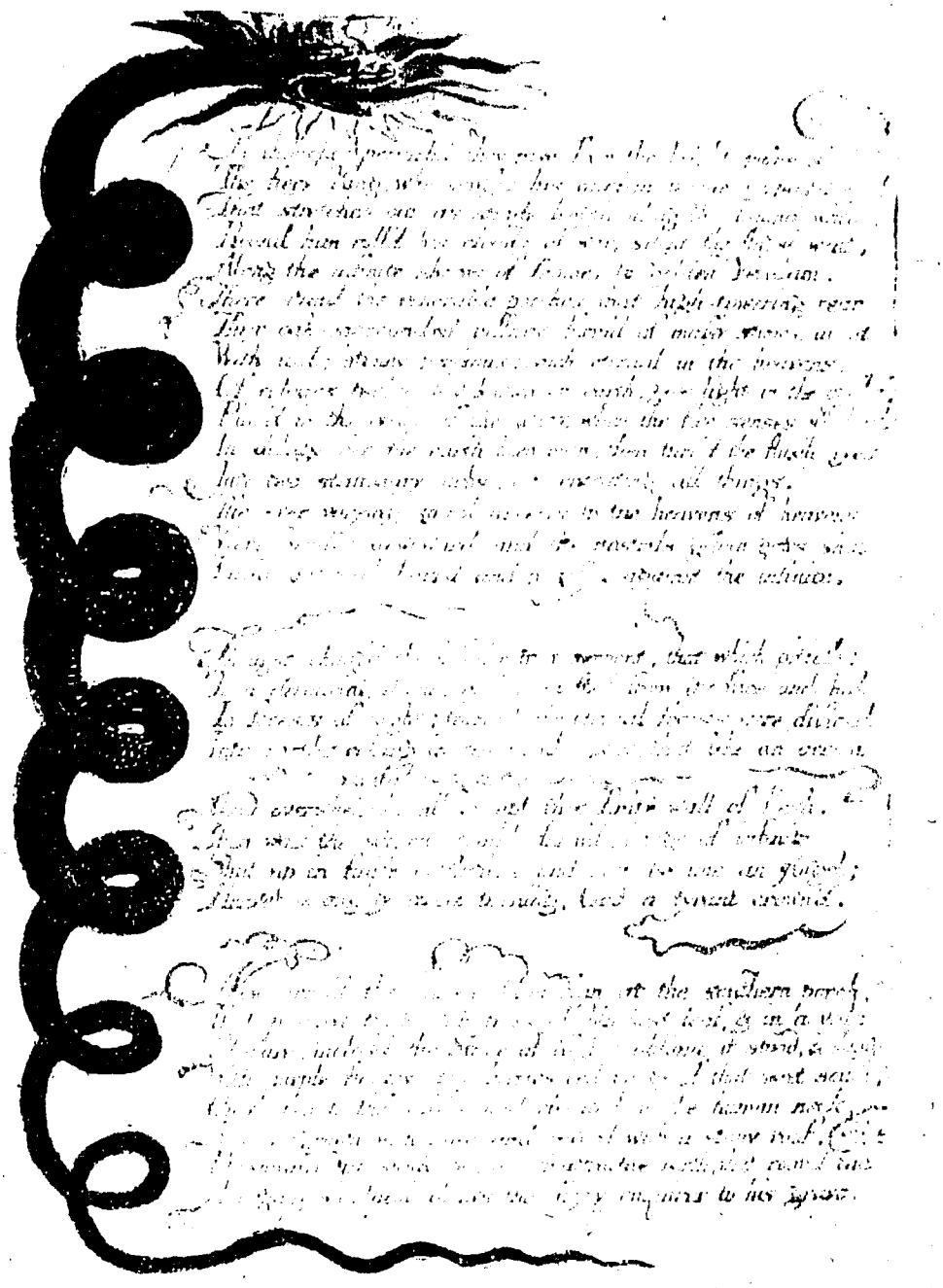


Fig. 3. *Europe a Prophecy*, plate 10 [9]. Copy A, Yale Center for British Art.

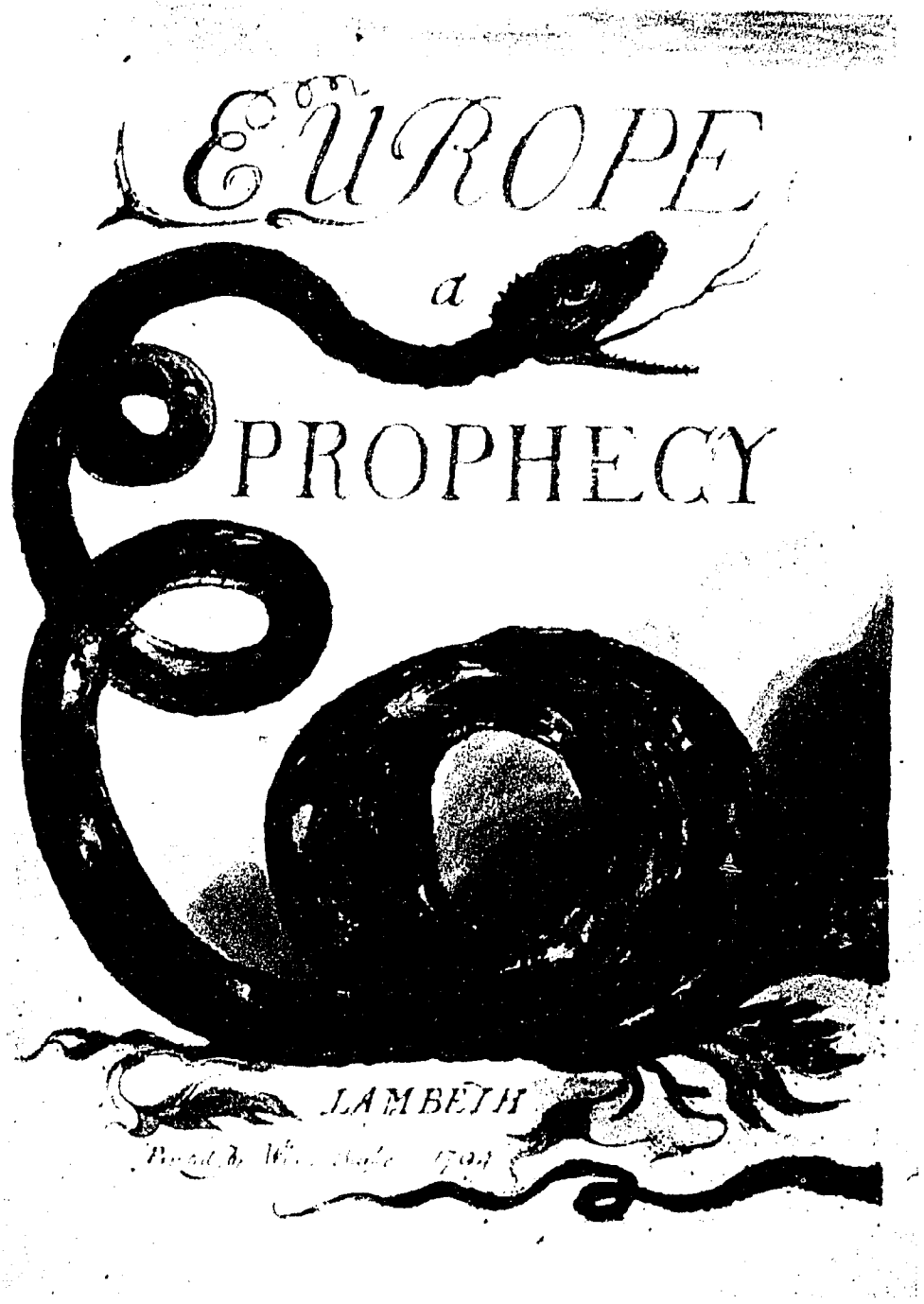


Fig. 4. *Europe a Prophecy*, title page. Copy A, Yale Center for British Art.

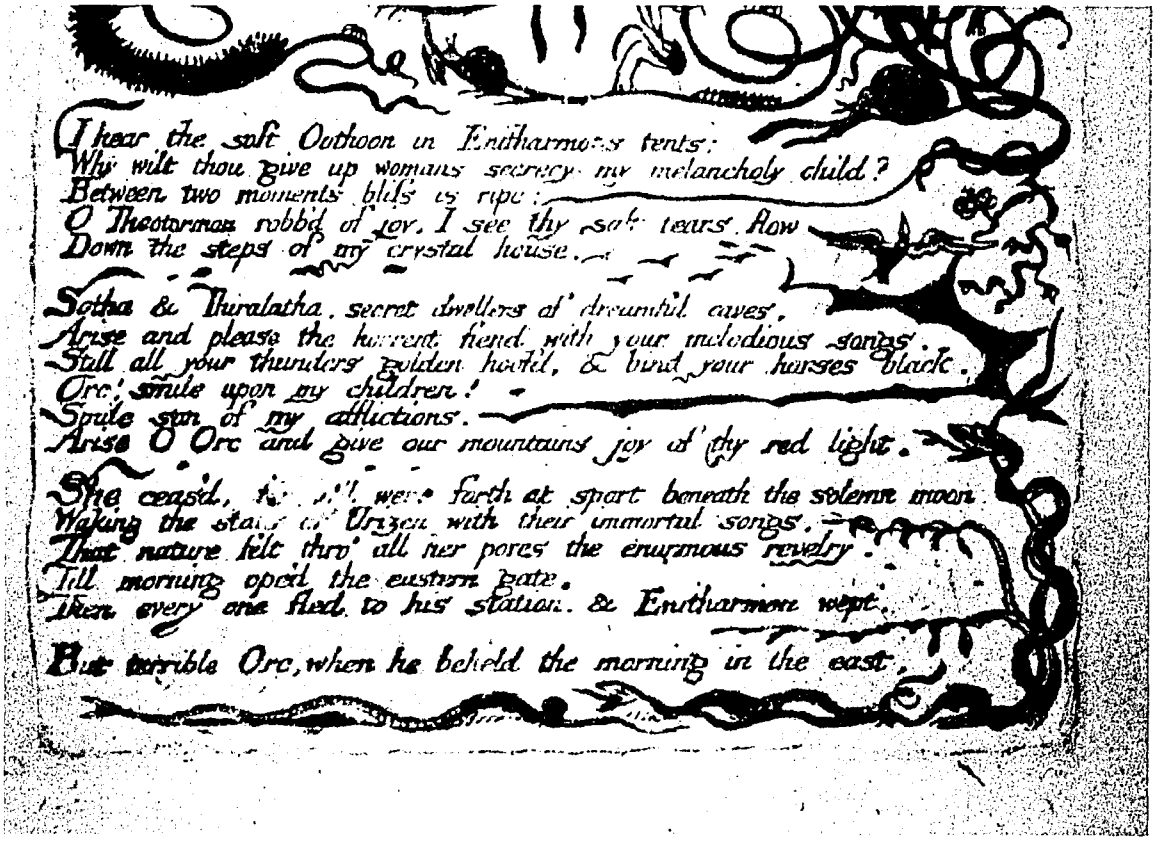


Fig. 5. *Europe a Prophecy*, plate 14, detail. Copy A, Yale Center for British Art.

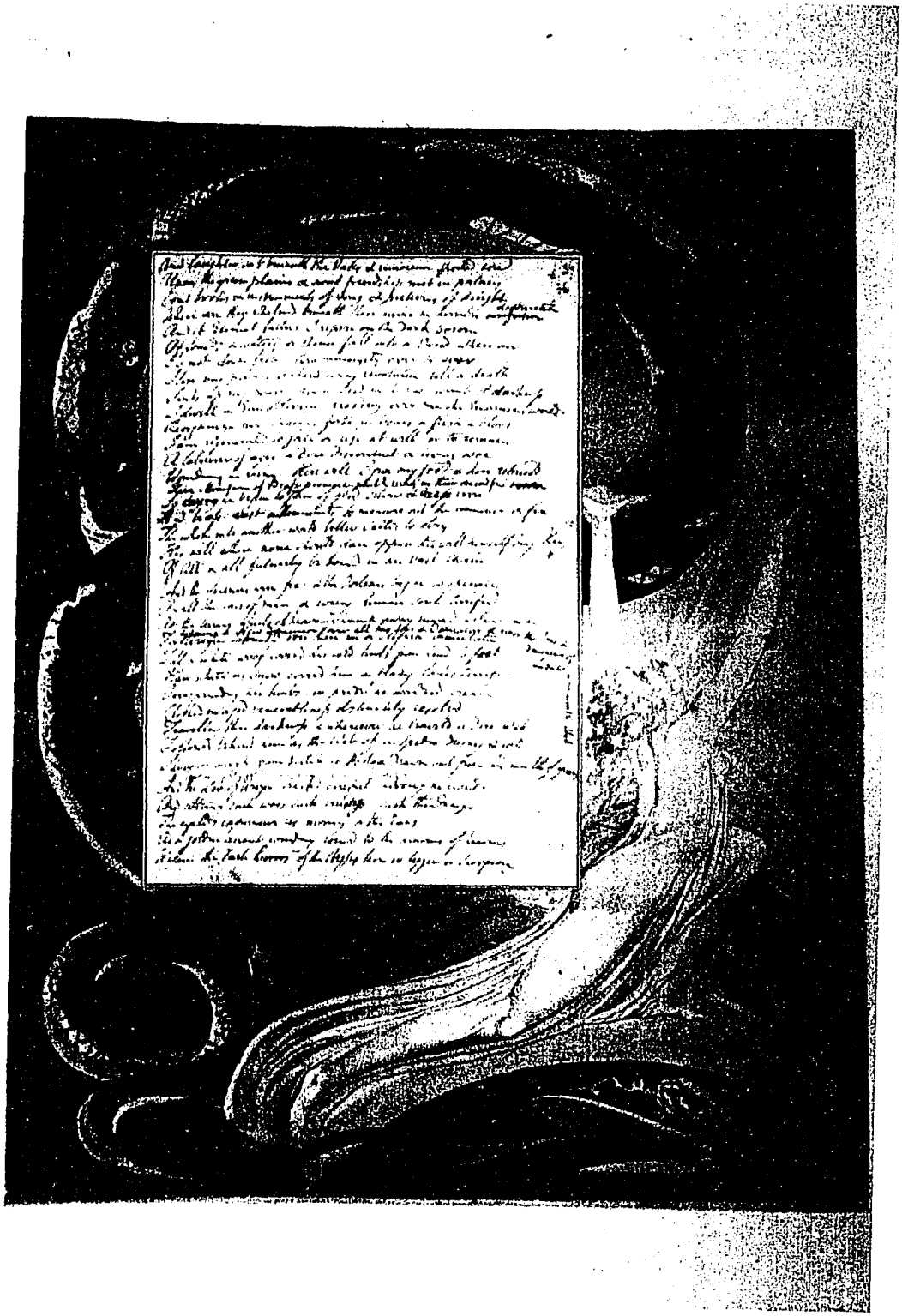


Fig. 6. *The Four Zoas*, page 73. British Library.

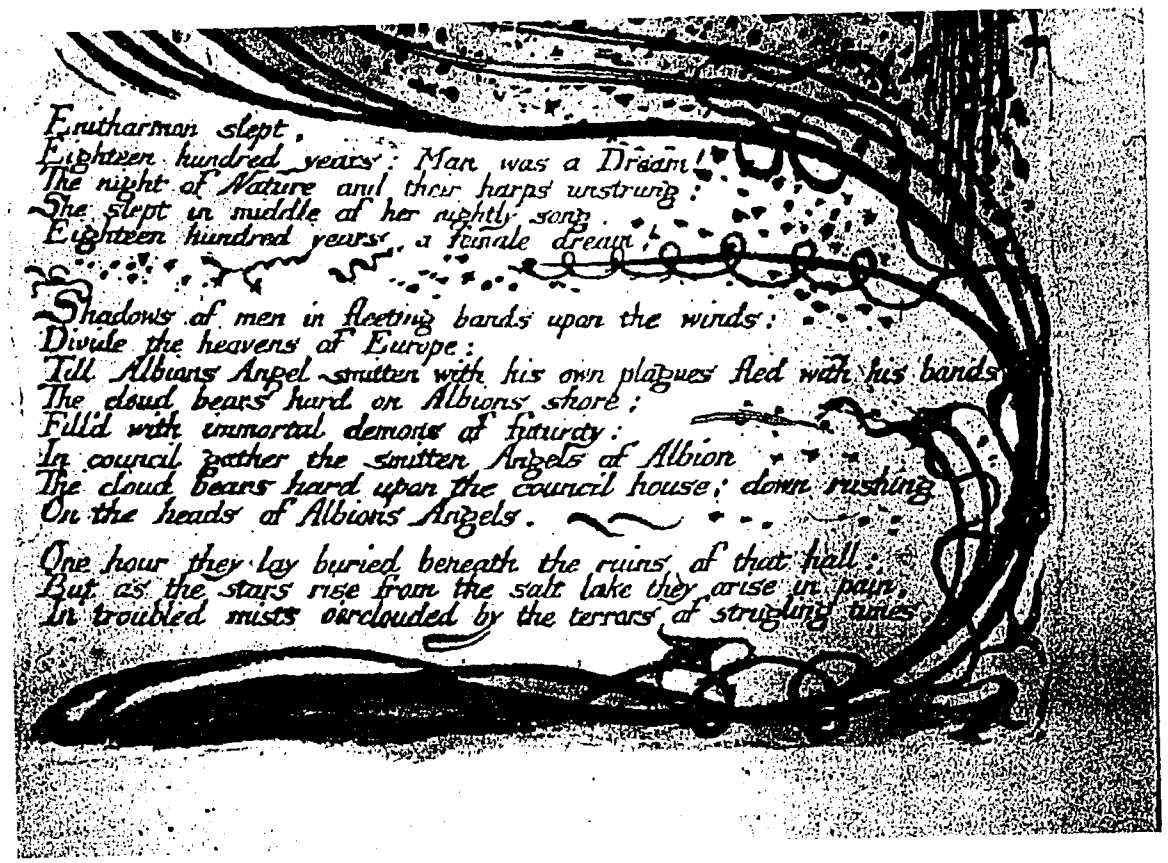


Fig. 7. *Europe a Prophecy*, plate 9 [8], detail. Copy A, Yale Center for British Art.

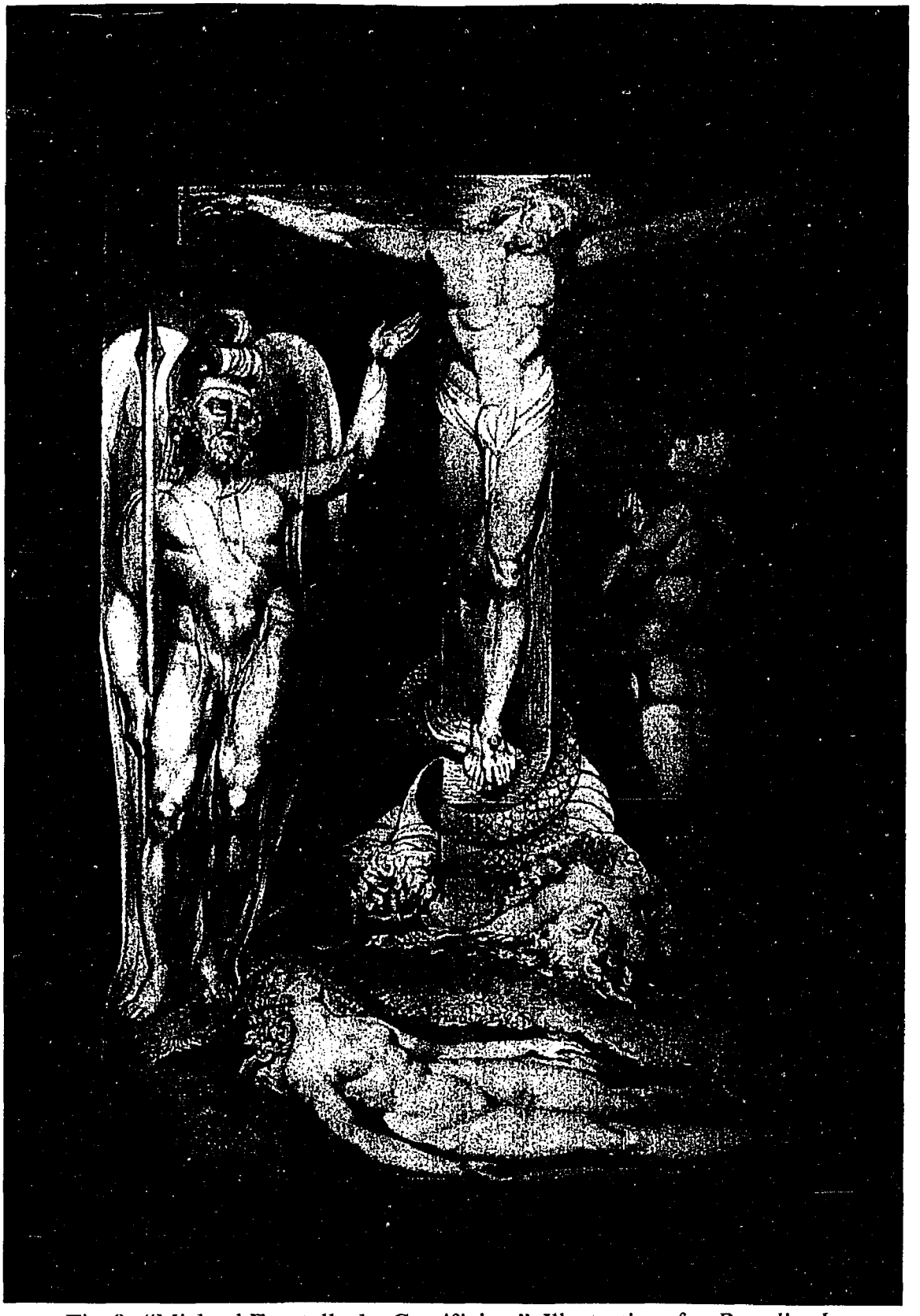


Fig. 8. "Michael Foretells the Crucifixion." Illustrations for *Paradise Lost*, "Butts Set." Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

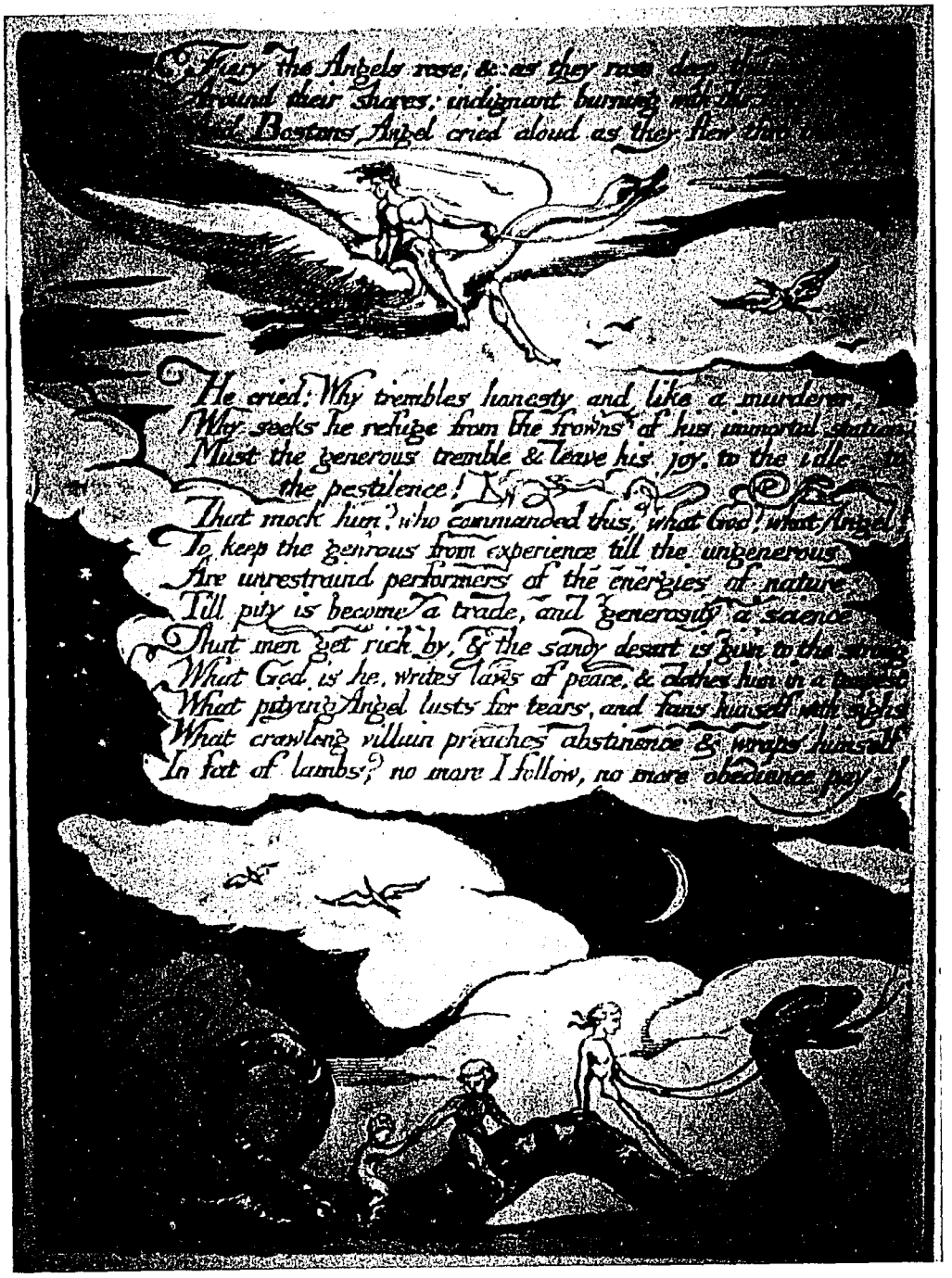


Fig. 9. *America a Prophecy*, plate 11. Copy A, Pierpont Morgan Library.

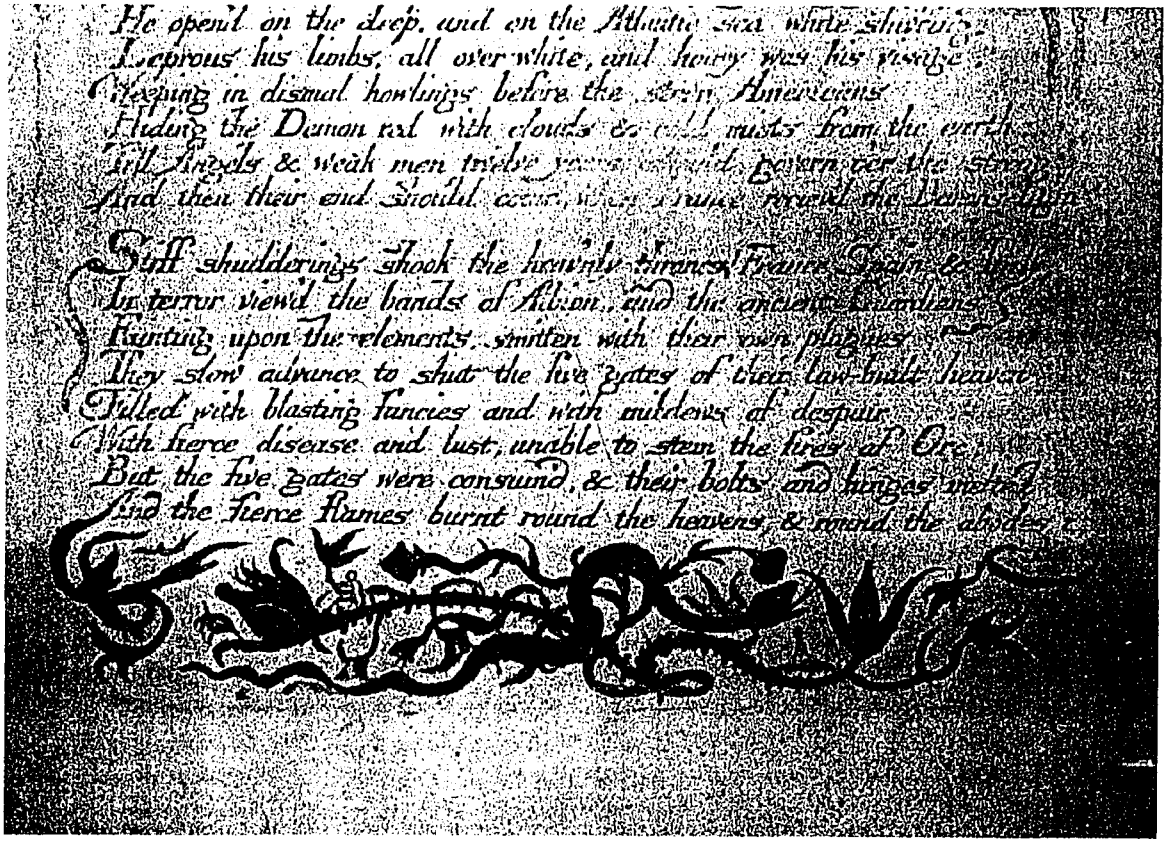


Fig. 10. *America a Prophecy*, plate 16, detail. Copy M, Yale Center for British Art.



Fig. 11. *America a Prophecy*, plate 14, detail. Copy A, Pierpont Morgan Library.

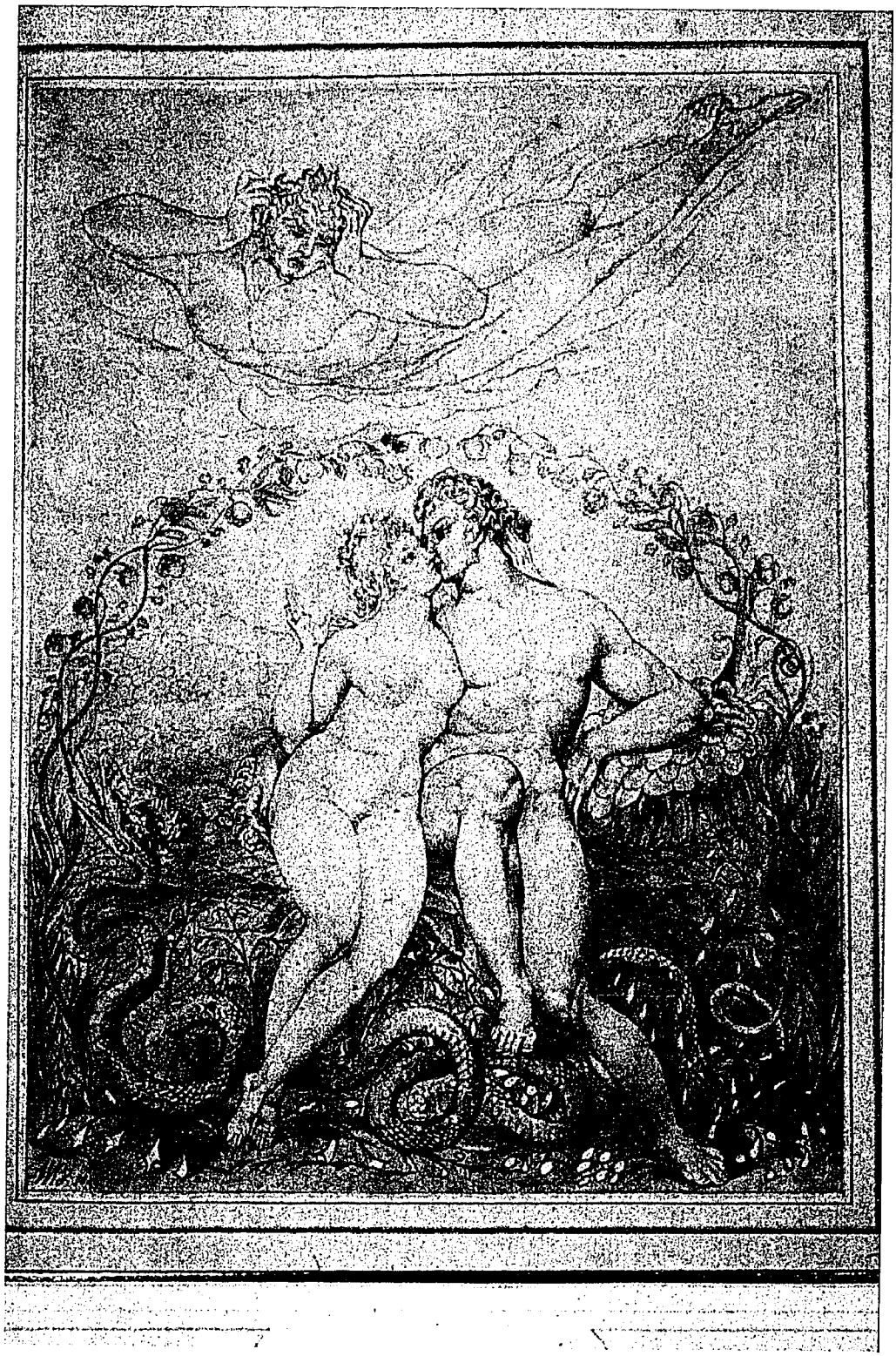


Fig. 12. "Satan Watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve." Early version. Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University.

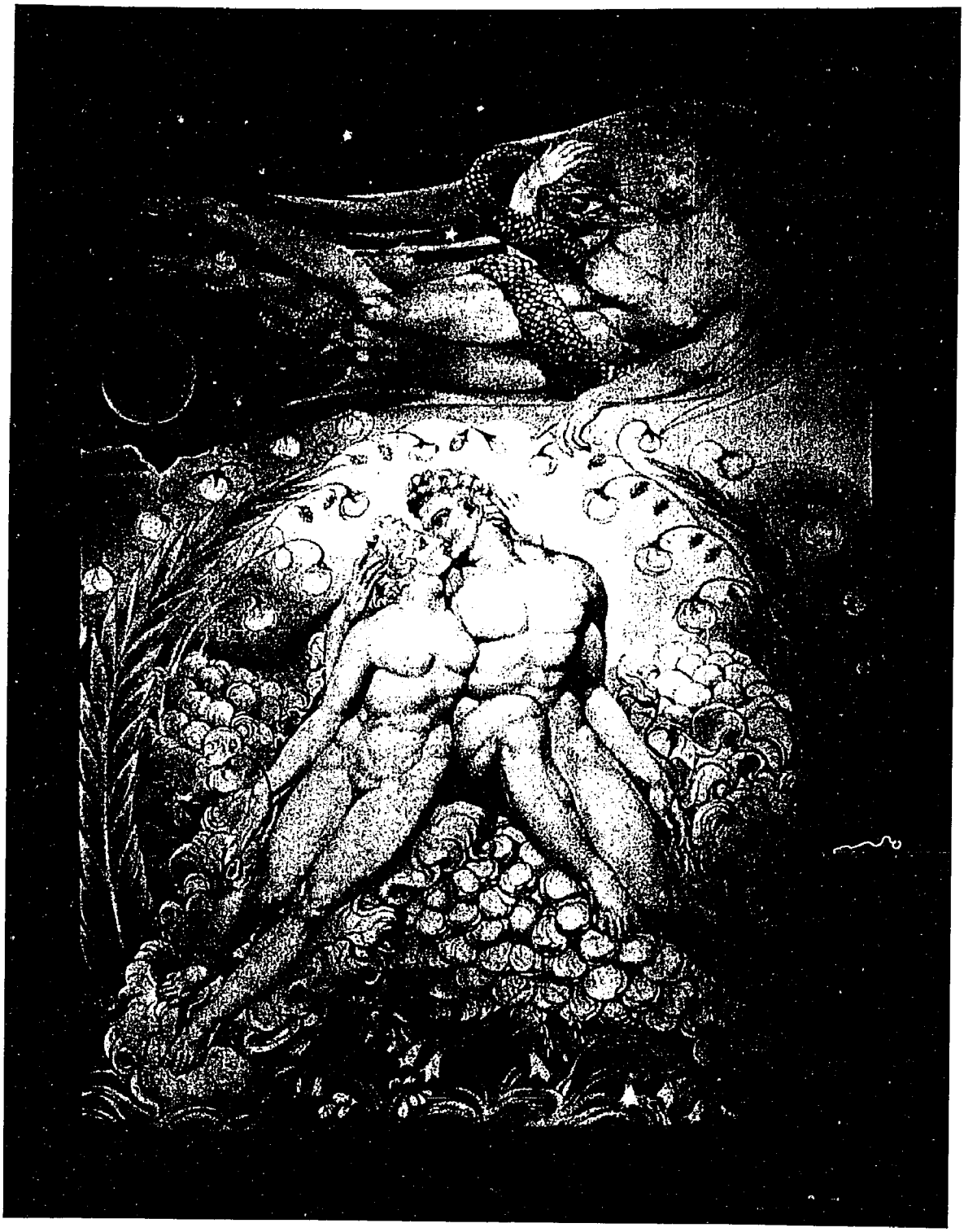


Fig. 13. "Satan Watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve." Illustrations for *Paradise Lost*, "Butts Set." Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Fig. 14. *The Four Zoas*, page 77, detail. British Library.

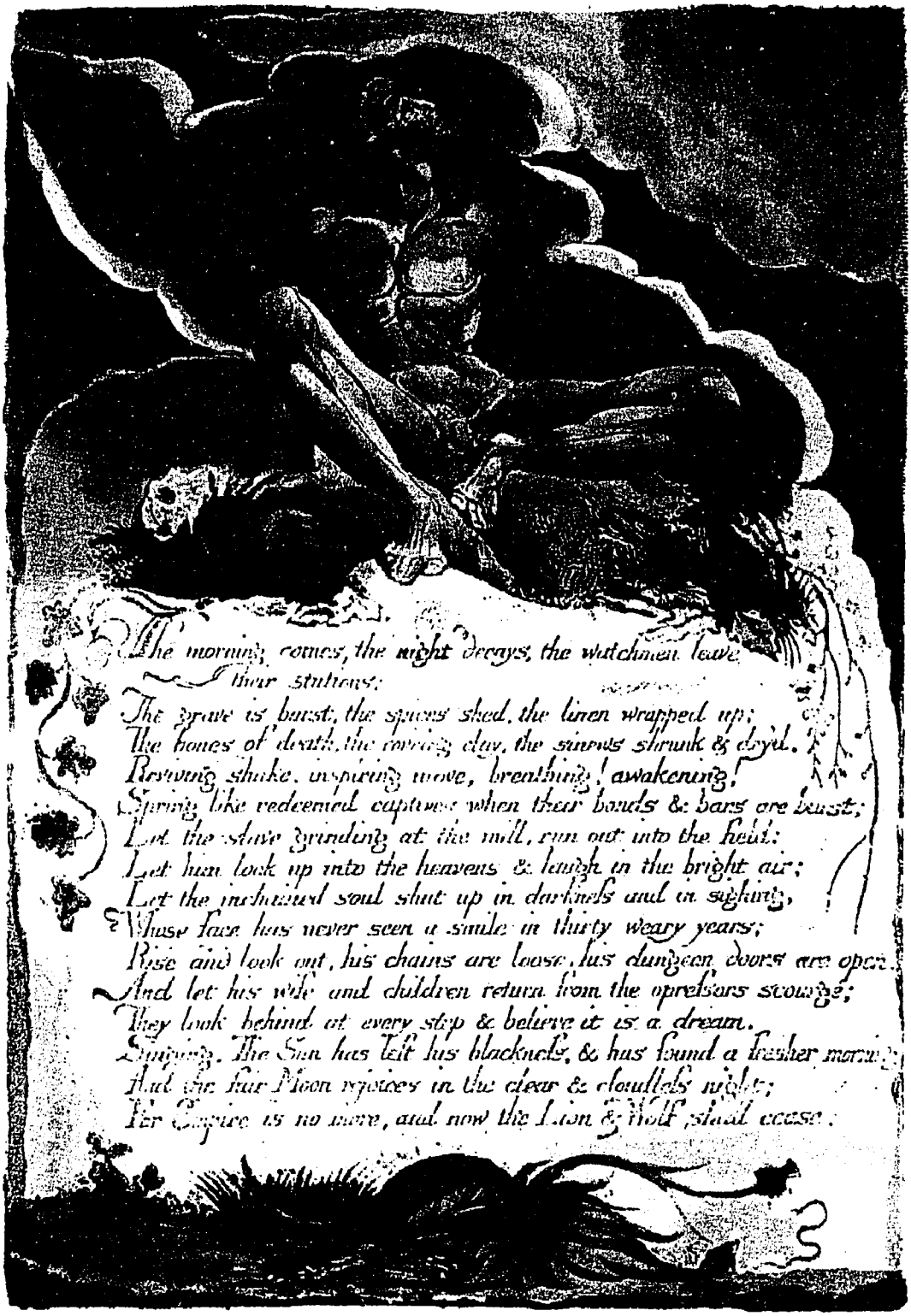


Fig. 15. *America a Prophecy*, plate 6. Copy M, Yale Center for British Art.



Fig. 16. *America a Prophecy*, plate 2, detail. Copy M, Yale Center for British Art.

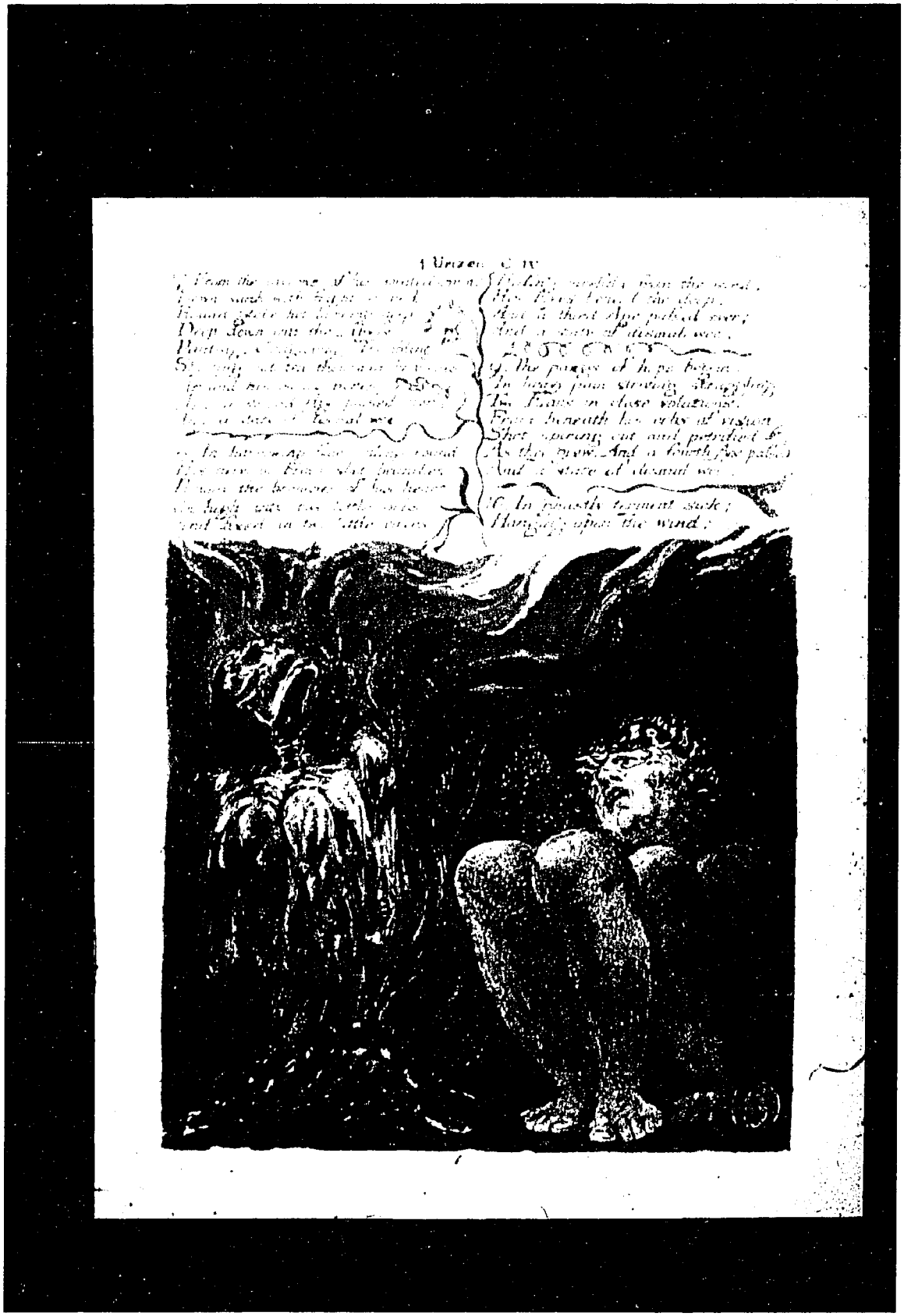


Fig. 17. *The First Book of Urizen*, plate 11. Copy C, Yale Center for British Art.



Fig. 18. *The* [*First*] *Book of Urizen*, plate 11 [13]. Copy G, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress.

CHAPTER THREE

The Terror Answerd: I Am Orc

Orc is introduced on plate 1 of *America* as chained boy, and that is his enduring identity, but he has other identities as well: freed figure bursting from earth (plate 2), herald of revolt (plate 8), revolutionary sun over the apocalyptic vineyards of France (*Europe* 15). Though these are narratively presented as successive roles, there are other roles that do not fit a narrative sequence: Orc as awakened dead (*America* 6) and, in later work, Orc as serpent (*The Four Zoas*). I shall argue that these are all aspects of the same figure, which is not thereby reduced to fundamental ambiguity but simply revealed in the complexity of real social life.

Orc in the Lambeth works stands as a referent for several processes. The use of one character to embody them implies that they are all bound up together, but in order to chart Orc's meanings four can be distinguished. The first is contemporary: oppression and elemental resistance in present society. Orc's significance in this aspect is both psychic, as repressed mental and sexual energy, and social, as the oppression of the people, understood in the most socially radical sense. Further, he stands both for the experience of oppression and for resistance against it. In the former aspect he appears as chained boy upon the mountain, at the foot of the tree of mystery, or beneath its roots; in the latter,

he is the boy's cries and, simultaneously, the figure who breaks the chains and inspires rebellion. In a second major component of his meaning, Orc stands for these same processes as initiated in the early history of civilization — an inception of repression variously presented as coterminous with the organization of matter and as a somewhat later event. Third, Orc is the center of a cluster of apocalyptic imagery, and more particularly, he is a regenerative symbol of the apocalyptic awakening of the dead. Finally, he is an emblem for the immediate revolutionary struggles of the 1770s, '80s, and '90s, likewise figured in apocalyptic terms. These roles are established in the two Lambeth works explicitly called "prophecies," *America* and *Europe* (dated 1793 and 1794), and partly in *Urizen* and *The Song of Los* (1794 and 1795). The first part of this chapter — following some contextualization — examines these elements of Orc's identity as expressed in these works, moving from poem to poem in thematic fashion.

Orc's resistance is elemental in two ways. It is fundamental and lasts throughout historical time; it is also instinctive, unreasoned — in *America* it creates "heat but not light" (4:11), a sign of Orc's lack of sustaining understanding. In keeping with his role of epochal resistance, Orc's resemblances to Urizen, where they occur, are those of opposition and not equivalence — contrary to the "cyclic" analyses examined in the last chapter. It follows that his resistance is potentially redemptive, and, more controversially, that this redemption is seen as occurring through violent revolution. The second portion of this chapter sets this understanding of Orc against established interpretive traditions that see in the Lambeth works an expression of the futility of political and social revolutions and the need, instead, for inner, mental transformation. (While my focus is no longer on cyclicality *per se*, some comment on this issue is inescapable since most of the views I will examine utilize the idea of the "Orc cycle.")

Though the basic paradigm of Orc's significance, and the positive valuation of violent revolution, remain fairly constant throughout the Lambeth works, the linked group called "books" — *The [First] Book of Urizen*, *The Book of Ahania* (1795), and *The Book of Los* (1795) — take up and revise some aspects of the initial paradigm. This revision focuses on three points: 1) the recognition that the roots of repression are lodged more deeply in the foundations of civilized society than the "prophecies" and *The Song of Los* indicated; 2) an elaboration of the collusion of Los with Urizen in establishing repressed social and psychic existence; and 3) an examination of the possible corruption of revolutionary resistance. The final part of this chapter focuses on these reevaluations. To anticipate the completion of this phase of my argument, I will argue in a later chapter that the convergence between Urizen and an aspect of Orc that does occur in later works is based on Orc's *capitulation* to what Urizen represents, and not on the equivalence of his resistance to Urizen's repression.[1]

1. As "revision" seems to imply the supersession of earlier by later work, the chronological and thematic relations of these poems need comment. On the basis of printing dates, the two groups of works I cite overlap partly, rather than separating neatly in time — especially because *Urizen* belongs, in different aspects, to both groups. To some extent differences between the groups may be explainable by differing functions — the "prophecies" and the "song" are concerned with imminent apocalyptic events within a time-frame stretching from the Mosaic and Christian dispensations to the present, while the "books" are concerned with the initiation of repression and resistance in an epoch extending from before the creation of matter to the exodus. So far as Orc is concerned, their presentations are not fully consistent, but neither are they cyclic — Orc's birth and binding occur later in the "prophecies" and "song" than in the "books," but there is no indication in the former that he has freed himself only to be reenslaved. Despite the overlapping printing dates, then, the differing treatments do suggest revision of an initial conception — perhaps a testing-out of a revised paradigm in some works while others simultaneously employ the unrevised concept. Other aspects of the two groups suggest this as well. They include the deepening of the presentation of Los in the "books" and the greater consistency of Orc and Los's stories and the treatment of French Revolution in these works with the presentations in *The Four Zoas* (begun, as *Vala*, probably

A Sketch of Historical Background: Radicalism, Millenarianism, and Violence

E. P. Thompson, David Erdman, Albert J. Goodwin, Iain McCalman, Jon Mee, Nicholas Roe, and others have provided a detailed picture of the milieu of English and London radicalism in the 1790s, which forms the intellectual background for the Lambeth prophecies, and of Blake's definite though not central place in it.[2] Political support for revolutionary France and the sense of roiling discontent at home were so intense among radicals that in February 1793 the English Jacobin John Oswald could contend that an invasion from France would "spark the zeal of the London sans culottes, who are miserable and hate their tyrant" (Erdman "Man" 94). Zeal on the repressive side prompted the "Church and King" riots of July 1791 in Birmingham, connived at by the authorities, when — according to the *Times* — the "loyal spirit of the numerous inhabitants of that great manufacturing town broke forth with the greatest violence" to thwart "treasonable" plans for a Bastille Day celebration; the crowd broke the windows in the scheduled meeting hall and pulled down Dr. Joseph Priestley's church and home, another meeting house, and a private home. Later the *Times*, in effect coaching Pitt's ministry, would warn that the "notes" blown by the

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in 1796-97). In view of the greater consistency of these aspects of the "books" with later work, and the indications of evolution in Blake's views, I shall continue to refer to them as "revisions," recognizing, however, that some works embodying the "basic paradigm" appeared in the same years as those involving "revisions."

2. See Thompson, *Making*, Part 1 (1966), and Erdman, *Prophet* (1954), for the foundational works on the 1790s reform milieus and on Blake's views; Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm* (1992), for Blake's affinities with both plebeian "enthusiastic" millenarianism and rationalist-deist radicalism; Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty* (1979) and McCalman, *Radical Underworld* (1988) for the general milieus of overlapping moderate, radical, and ultraradical reform; Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (1988), for the radical milieu and the two poets' place in it.

"*Horne* of sedition" — at a meeting of Horne Tooke's Society for Constitutional Information — "must reach the ears of justice." The singing of "*the Marseillois* [*sic*] *treasonable Hymn*" at this meeting, the *Times* urged, and the other "sentiments expressed . . . ought to send the speakers to Botany Bay" — an opinion probably meant quite literally (July 18, 1791, May 5, 1794). Influenced by this tumultuous atmosphere, Blake's work was also shaped, as Stewart Crehan has shown in detail, by his membership in the milieu of artisan engravers and painters from whom "society" artists diverged in a series of splits between 1761 and 1768 to form the Royal Academy; those who remained, whig in association and republican in sympathy, formed a tradition of what Crehan calls "republican art" (196-204 and chap. 8 *passim*). Finally, A. L. Morton, E. P. Thompson, and others have sought to trace Blake's place in the tradition of plebeian dissenting religion whose roots go back to the Civil War and beyond that to the Joachimite, anabaptist, and other millenarian trends of the Middle Ages.[3]

Several more particular aspects of this intellectual background leave their marks on the Lambeth works. One is the identification of the French Revolution with apocalyptic events and the typological reading of contemporary history as a fulfillment of eschatological texts; the trope was a commonplace of popular and intellectual millenarianism. Richard Brothers, the most prominent millenarian prophet of the early 1790s, his parliamentary defender Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, independent prophets such as Sarah Flaxmer, and apocalyptic interpreters such as Rev. Joseph Lomas Towers all affirmed some combination of

3. See Morton, *Gospel*, and, on the seventeenth century, *World of the Ranters* and Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*; on the Middle Ages, Cohn, *Millennium*; on the eighteenth century, Harrison, *Second Coming*; Garrett, *Respectable Folly*; Thompson, *Witness*.

current typologies. The war with France was "the great War in the Revelations, by which this Government [the English] was to be overturned" (Flaxmer); the people of France "had the judgement of God in their favour," as revealed by texts in Daniel and Revelation, and the monarchies of England, France, Prussia, and Russia were identifiable as the four beasts of Daniel 7 (Brothers); London was the Babylon of Revelation 18, England was Egypt, and Brothers was the prophet who "will lead the Hebrews again out of captivity this very year" (Halhed); biblical texts endorsed "the overthrow of tyranny" and the "restoration of a people to their rights" (Towers). From an anti-Jacobin angle, on the other hand, Mrs. S. Eyre identified France as the beast in Revelation 17-19.[4] Hence, what first seems a peculiarity of Blake's intellectual system, his insistent identification of biblical-eschatological texts with contemporary social history, is now understood as part of a "wider millennial culture" (Harrison 131). This culture was both popular and intellectual. While millenarian membership was concentrated among artisans, tradesmen, and small capitalists,[5] the intellectual assumptions behind it were shared by radical intellectuals such as Priestley, Dr. Richard Price, and Coleridge. Violence is done to Blake by treating either element of this amalgam separately — either by reading the Lambeth works as contemporary political allegory alone or by treating them only or mainly as recon-

4. Qtd. Harrison 31, 65, 76-77. The account in this paragraph is based on Harrison chaps. 2 and 4 *passim*. The mention of Brothers leading the Hebrews refers to the primary focus of his mission on the restoration of Jerusalem and the repatriation of the Jews, elements that would find echoes in Blake's later work. For typological traditions in English literature see Korshin chaps. 1-2 *passim*, and 348-58 for typologies in Blake, with a focus on *Milton*.

5. See Harrison 29, 36, 68-69, 110, for observations on occupational status among followers of the "French and English prophets" early in the century, the Scots Buchanites of the 1780s, and Brothers and Southcott in the 1790s and 1800s. Clarke Garrett, however, argues that not much is conclusively known about the social composition of most millenarian groups (11-12).

siderations of biblical thematology and Christian doctrine.

The example of Coleridge helps make a further point about the amalgamation of radical politics and millenarian theology — its endorsement of retributive justice. Coleridge's "Religious Musings," which places social history from the origins of the property system to the French Revolution within an eschatological framework culminating in the Millennium and "Universal Redemption" (*Argument*), is notable for its characterization of the retributive phase of the revolution as the work of

> immitigable ministers
> That shower down vengeance on these latter days.
> For kindling with intenser Deity
> From the celestial Mercy-seat they come,
> And at the renovating wells of Love
> Have fill'd their vials with salutary wrath,
> To sickly Nature more medicinal
> Than what soft balm the weeping good man pours
> Into the lone despoiléd traveller's wounds! (79-87)

These lines are most plausibly read as referring to the French dictatorship's policy of revolutionary war and domestic repression, even though the most extreme phase of that dictatorship, the Jacobin terror, had ended five months before the poem's putative, probably retrospective date of Christmas Eve 1794.[6]

6. They could also refer to English-French military struggles or to the acts of the French revolutionary mobs. Since the English-allied intervention is discussed in lines 159-192, while mob actions belong to an earlier phase of the revolution (and Coleridge counsels quietism to the English oppressed, 300-308), the interpretation given above seems most likely. It is, perhaps, supported by Coleridge's own reference in his palinode, "France: An Ode," lines 51-57. The

(The date, and perhaps the reference to Christ's forgiveness of his enemies in lines 22-28, may obliquely state Coleridge's identification with the post-Jacobin phase of the dictatorship.) If this view is accurate, the lines endorse revolutionary dictatorship as both politically necessary and an expression of divine mercy. Equally remarkable, they identify the acts of the "immitigable ministers" with the pouring out of the seven vials of God's wrath in Revelation 15-16, and appear to prefer this wrath demonstratively to the action of the Samaritan in Jesus' parable. This is the background against which Blake's handling of similar themes is to be gauged.

A second aspect of the contemporary intellectual background that makes itself felt in Blake is the rhetoric of public opinion for, and especially against, the French Revolution. In addition to the image of the revolutionary crowds and leaders as "tygers," discussed below, one reads of the leaders as "wretches, glutted with the effusion of blood," and of Marat as a "monster." Believers in the rights of man are "wild litigious spirit[s]," regicides are beasts in their "dens," aiming "at the ruin of all nations, and the destruction of all Governments." Revolutionary mobs become "the *cannibals of Paris*," whose murder of Foulon and his son-in-law "transformed a civilised city into a *hippah of New Zealand cannibals*" and whose vengeance at the Bastille showed a serpent's "venom." Hostile polemics presented the revolutionary process as a "volcano," an infant Titan growing up "to heap mountains upon mountains, and to wage war with Heaven itself." Partisans of France repeated and varied these meta-

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most thorough discussion of Coleridge's revolutionary politics, by Roe, concentrates on other aspects of "Religious Musings" and does not discuss these lines.

phors: Europe will be freed of tyrants "*by the eruption of the volcanic principles of equality*," and the revolution is "*a devouring flame . . . upon the point of consuming the throne of Great Britain.*"[7] Repeatedly, such phrases find palpable, sometimes exact, echoes in the images Blake uses for Orc and the processes he sets in motion. As presented either by the narrator or in the hostile view of Albion's Angel, Orc is a "Human fire fierce glowing," with "limbs" and "wrists of fire"; such beasts as an eagle, a lion, a whale, and, repeatedly, a serpent; a "Demon . . . / Lover of wild rebellion, and transgresser of Gods Law"; a "Devourer of thy parent" (*America* 4:8, 4:9, 2:2; 1:13-15, 2:12-14, 8:1, etc.; 7:5-6; 9:20). In the design to *America* 2, he bursts from the earth in the visual equivalent of a volcano or an emerging Titan such as the "buried Enceladus" that Carlyle would later use to emblematize the sans-culottes and revolutionary upheaval in general (*French Revolution* 1:41 and *passim*). And the struggles of Orc and the Americans and French against Albion's angels and Urizen are seen as the "flames of Orc" and, on the last page of *Europe*, "the strife of blood" (*America* 14:11, *Europe* 12:12, 16, and elsewhere; *Europe* 15:11). The imagery used for Orc and his struggles, then, echoes that used by sympathizers and opponents for the French Revolution and its participants, underlining the strong connection between Blake's early Lambeth prophecies and the social-revolutionary struggle occurring simultaneously in Europe.

7. *Times* July 23, 1793 (wretches, Marat as monster), Jan. 25, 1793 (dens, ruin of all nations), Aug. 18, 1794 (volcano), Feb. 7, 1793 (flame — in a report of speeches by English jacobins to the French Convention, Nov. 28, 1792); Burke, *Reflections* 92, 118 (titan, wild spirits) and *Preface* 519 (volcanic principles, quoting Desmoulins); Anonymous, *Historical Sketch of the French Revolution*, rpt. *Comparative Display* 1:257, 239 (cannibals); Anonymous, *A Tour through the Theatre of War* [etc.], London, 1793, qtd. Pedley 49 (venom). Foulon had advised the people to "eat grass"; for his murder, which echoes throughout subsequent anti-revolutionary writings, see oblique references in Burke, 141 and 162; Carlyle, *French Revolution* 1:215-16; Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859),

Another term prominently used for Orc is "terror" (*America* 5:2, 8:1). *America* is dated 1793, and it was offered for sale on October 10 of that year ("To the Public," *E*693). This was also the moment when the French Terror was reaching its height. The king had been executed in January, the Committee of Public Safety was authorized in April, and in August it was proposed in the Jacobin Club "that terror should be made the order of the day" (*Times*, September 14, 1793, 1). This resolution was subsequently adopted by the Convention, and on October 10 the government was declared "revolutionary until the peace" (Lefebvre 68, Stewart 480). In the last three months of 1793, 117 persons were sentenced to death, and more than 3,000 arrested in Paris alone (S[oboul], "Revolution" 498). We should be cautious about reading the word "terror" in its ultimate political sense, which was just beginning to develop; moreover, Blake's poem, if indeed ready for sale in October, must have been in or near final form before these last events. Nevertheless, the association of the revolution with a policy of rule by mortal fear was already very strong;[8] and the date "1793" on *America*'s title page emphasizes its contemporaneity, its association with the events of this particular year, not just the idea of revolution in general.

The political significance of the 1793 date is underlined by the final plate's reference to Orc being hidden by Urizen's mists for "twelve years . . . / [until]

Book 2, chap. 22.

8. In addition to "terror [as] the order of the day," cited above, the idea was suggested, e.g., by Burke's accounts of the queen flying "almost naked" from the assassins "reeking" with her servant's blood (164; the story was widely controverted at the time) and the *Times*'s reports of the invasion of the Tuilleries and the September Massacres (August 16, September 10 and 11, 1792). "Terrorist" and "reign of terrorism" are first recorded by OED in *Annual Register* for 1795 (published 1800); "Reign of Terror" in 1801. "The system of terror, introduced by Robespierre," is used in *Annual Register* 1795 (83; not recorded by OED).

France receiv'd the Demons light" (16:14-15). As Erdman notes, this is the time period between Yorktown and 1793 (*Prophet* 208 and n.). If indeed the mists refer to the damping-down of social tensions in England and America as a consequence of the peace, and this much seems unquestionable, then the twelve years from the surrender at Yorktown (October 19, 1781) conclude almost at the moment when *America* was advertised for sale — and when the French Terror reached full stride. In that case the identification of Orc as a "terror" is, in effect, a reference to French events and the Jacobin policy. Among the poem's meanings, then, disguised by the American context and the overtly metaphorical use of the term in relation to Orc, is a serious defense of revolutionary violence, including state violence, that is parallel to Coleridge's endorsement of the "immitigable ministers."

Blake, however, is not simply endorsing, and here comparison with Coleridge is instructive. Blake's millennialism and his justification of the French terror policy belong to a common trend, but his response, as early as *America*, was to place the immediate revolutionary events in the context of far deeper social and psychic changes. (This is one reason the poem ostensibly focuses on America, not France — it is concerned with a process of which France is only the culmination.) The corollary is that where Coleridge accepted French revolutionary policy at face value, and hence was left with no alternative but political reaction when finally compelled to break with France, Blake understood the revolution in terms of underlying processes that remained valid despite the revolution's failure. The name for these processes is Orc; "The terror answerd: I am Orc" means that the terror is announcing its true name. Who, then, is Orc?

The Orc Paradigm: *America, Europe, The Song of Los,* **and Partly** *Urizen*

The myth of Orc as initially worked out involves the interrelation of several kinds of oppression and elemental resistance; a conception of when Orc's presence first made itself felt in the world; the apocalyptic significance of his resistance; and, finally, the manifestation of this apocalyptic potential in contemporary history. I will examine each in turn.

Social, religious, and sexual oppression and resistance. Orc, or an Orclike spirit, appears first in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*'s concluding "Song of Liberty," which centers on a figure described as a "new born terror," "new born fire," "new born wonder," or "son of fire," terms that connect him with Orc (verses 7, 8, 10, 19). The text alludes to the fall of the Bastille as well as events in America and Spain,[9] and presents embryonically ideas that will be more fully developed in *America*: the eclipse and reappearance of the Orc spirit, the downfall of religion, the holiness of life, the end of empire. Orc also appears in the *Preludium* to *America.* But his most important appearance, in the body of the poem, is as "a voice" (5:7). The terms used for the speaker, "Wonder," "Human fire fierce glowing," and "terror" (4:7, 4:8, 5:2) identify him with the spirit in the "Song of Liberty," and the "voice" is evidently Orc's since when the speaker is challenged after he speaks — "Art thou not Orc . . . / . . . / Blasphe-

9. The reference in verse 4, "Golden Spain burst the barriers of old Rome," probably alludes to the campaign of Charles III and his chief minister, Aranda, which expelled 10,000 Jesuits from Spain and the Indies (1767), compelled the Pope to suppress the order, and secularized and liberalized education (Atkinson 237-39). Less certainly, the line may refer to the accession of a liberal ministry in February 1792, replacing one that had utilized the Inquisition to suppress favorable reports about France. The reference is not satisfactorily explained by Erdman (*Prophet* 192).

mous Demon, Antichrist, hater of Dignities" (7:3-5) — he affirms his identity in the words quoted above. The voice's speech, on plate 6, is one of the most stable in Blake's corpus; sections of it are quoted verbatim in two places in Night IX of *The Four Zoas*, and the final speech of *Jerusalem* alludes to it; the accompanying design of a naked youth looking up in wonder, apparently hearing the speech, recasts an earlier design in the *Marriage* (21) and reappears in miniature and in altered posture as part of the design heading chapter 1 of *Jerusalem* (4).[10] The speech and its design, then, are fundamental to Blake's conceptions.

> The morning comes, the night decays, the watchmen leave their stations;
> The grave is burst, the spices shed, the linen wrapped up;
> The bones of death, the cov'ring clay, the sinews shrunk & dry'd.
> Reviving shake, inspiring move, breathing! awakening!
> Spring like redeemed captives when their bonds & bars are burst;
> Let the slave grinding at the mill, run out into the field:
> Let him look up into the heavens & laugh in the bright air;
> Let the inchained soul shut up in darkness and in sighing,
> Whose face has never seen a smile in thirty weary years;
> Rise and look out, his chains are loose, his dungeon doors are open.
> And let his wife and children return from the opressors scourge;
> They look behind at every step & believe it is a dream.

10. Suggested by an observation by John E. Grant (Erdman and Grant 101n.); the design is discussed by Hoagwood (74) and Paley (*Jerusalem* commentary, 135). Another version is the figure above the pediment in the design "Deaths Door" (1805), evidently representing the resurrection of the old man entering below; see Essick, *Separate Plates* figs. 25-27 and commentary, 49-51.

Singing. The Sun has left his blackness, & has found a fresher morning
And the fair Moon rejoices in the clear & cloudless night;
For Empire is no more, and now the Lion & Wolf shall cease. (6:1-15)

The opening lines show the dawn of the American and — by extension — French revolutions as a resurrection that is both individual and social, as it draws its details both from the opening of Jesus' tomb and from Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, a vision of national rather than individual renewal.[11] The beautiful naked youth, seated on a mound with a skull by his side, gives pictorial form to the resurrection in the text. It is the revivified bones that "Spring like redeemed captives" and modulate into the captives (slaves and prisoners) of the next lines, who hear Orc's message and who in turn are projected through Orc's voice as singing the final hymn.

The significance of this speech goes far beyond the importance David Erdman assigns to it, as an imaginative version of the American declaration of independence (*Prophet* 24-25). Indeed, though it serves as an inspiration to revolt in the American "plot" of the poem, Orc's speech does not refer to the American war; its content displaces the Lockean political terms of the declaration with a socially radical inner content: the revolution will or should mean the liberation of prisoners and slaves, not simply political liberty. This radical meaning was, in fact, the one that at least some participants gave to the American revolution: within a week of its reading there, and "in Pursuance of the Declaration for Independency," New York's debtors were let out of prison. Slaves petitioned for freedom in the terms of the declaration; others fought for

11. The fullest account of biblical imagery in *America* is Tannenbaum 124-51 *passim*.

the British, and tenant farmers in upstate New York took arms on the British side in hopes of gaining land — acts that explode a simple equation of the colonial cause with liberty but show that such groups used the revolution for radical social aims.[12] These struggles may have had their own sequel in Britain, just as Blake shows Orc's spirit crossing the Atlantic. Two of the twenty-one persons hanged for participating in the Gordon Riots of 1780 were Black; both were involved in the storming of Newgate and the freeing of its prisoners, one as a tactical leader, and one or both were American, possibly ex-slaves.[13]

Whether or not Blake knew of such actions, at the time or later, his imaginative vision corresponds to the socially radical idea of freedom that they reveal. His account, written retrospectively, presumably does not express an illusion that the American revolution actually will liberate prisoners and slaves, but a statement about what revolution as such should mean.[14] Orc's speech underlines the magnitude of the prisoners' and slaves' awakening by linking it both

12. Debtors: *New-York Gazette: and Weekly Mercury*, July 15, 1776, qtd. Lemisch 18; tenants: Lynd *passim*. The role of slaves and free Negroes in the Revolution was first detailed in Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (1943), 201-208. The fullest treatment is by Quarles (1961), and there is a voluminous later literature.

13. Linebaugh 348-54. Linebaugh builds a circumstantial case that the two men, John Glover and Benjamin Bowsey, were "Afro-Americans and former slaves" (348), though his evidence establishes conclusively only that Bowsey was an American.

14. The four lines in which Blake's bard smashes his harp, "asham'd of his own song" (2:18-21), extant in two of the copies produced in Blake's lifetime, have a bearing on this point. The most straightforward reading is that the bard is ashamed of his optimistic view of the American revolution (Erdman's contrary late reading, *Prophet* 514-15, notwithstanding). As the lines seem to have been present on the copper but masked or erased in all but the two latest copies (dated 1807 [?] and 1821 by Viscomi), Blake presumably understood from the start that the revolution had not fulfilled radical hopes, but either held out hope that it might yet do so, or felt that his imaginative vision could stand independently, concluding only later that it was necessary to express the point directly.

to Jesus' resurrection and, as we shall see, to the apocalyptic awakening of the dead, and finally ties both to an event both apocalyptic and directly political, the downfall of Empire — not the British empire, but Empire as such.[15]

Though its primary significance is as a powerful statement of apocalyptic social emancipation, the passage also has an ambiguity in its political perspective that points to problems which echo throughout Blake's later work. Both the text, in which the slaves and others receive the message that they should "run out into the field," and even more powerfully the design, in which the youth sits *hearing* the message of liberation, seem to imply that the oppressed will be *freed by someone else*; that Blake, like so many radical thinkers, envisages the oppressed as "running out" on the receipt of a liberatory message from outside, rather than as freeing themselves by their own agency. This aspect of the passage is related to a narrative problem not apparent on first reading: in the vision of emancipation as Orc presents it, what causes the dead bones to revivify? They simply do so, without explanation. The speech in fact contains an ambiguous ordering typical of Blake's narrative procedures. It is possible that it is to be read in reverse, exchanging effect for cause: Orc is calling the "dead" of history "back to life" *through* the call to run out into the field; the hearing of the message, which appears as an effect of the revivification, actually brings it about. This way of reading the speech implies that the bones are inert until an outside agent calls them to life. Equally, however, it is possible that Blake's sequence is correct, that the "dead" must revivify through an unspecified — in-

15. Erdman identifies the lion and wolf as emblems of Austria and Prussia (192), defeated at Valmy, September 20, 1792. The lion is of course a British emblem as well, but the salient point is the lack of an article before "Empire." Another aspect of the lion and wolf is considered below.

deed, unspecifiable — molecular process of historical awakening in order to be able to hear the message at all. In this case the apparent elitism of the passage is mitigated; Blake is presenting a more contingent conception of how the apocalyptic message is given and received than is at first apparent. Rather than attempting to resolve the ambiguity at this point, I wish simply to register it as a problem for later discussion.

Orc's torment and resistance as an emblem of social oppression and resistance continue through the Lambeth works. In the apocalyptic "Asia" section of *The Song of Los*, for example, Orc's howls and his "thought-creating fires" (6:6) stir the Asian kings to lament over the coming loss of their prerogatives:

> Shall not the King call for Famine from the heath?
> Nor the Priest, for Pestilence from the fen? (6:9-10)

Such references do not rest with denouncing kingly and priestly oppression, but make clear that its purpose is to destroy the spirit so that no challenge is possible; in Blake's terms, to enforce the involution of perception that is the condition and result of Urizen's rule:

> Shall not the Councellor throw his curb
> Of Poverty on the laborious?
> . . . . .
> To cut off the bread from the city,
> That the remnant may learn to obey.
>
> That the pride of the heart may fail;
> That the lust of the eyes may be quench'd:
> That the delicate ear in its infancy
> May be dull'd; and the nostrils clos'd up;

To teach mortal worms the path
That leads from the gates of the Grave. (6:15-7:8)

While in such contexts he primarily signifies social rebellion, Orc also represents, perhaps even more strongly, revolt against religious law and hypocrisy, and for psychic and sexual liberation — the second key aspect of his basic role. As "Orc, wreath'd round the accursed tree" (*America* 8:1), he represents the serpent of knowledge, particularly — as related designs will make clear — sexual knowledge, while Urizen appears as God in the aspect of restrictive lawgiver perverting "The fiery joy" to "ten commands" (3-4).[16] The combined imagery of the tree and exodus create an ambiguity as to when in human history the repression of sexual joy began — in the garden or with the Mosaic law — which *Urizen* and *Ahania* will try to resolve. Orc's vow in the succeeding lines weaves numerous elements together in a complex way: the smashing of the "stony law," the scattering of religion as a mulch to renew the "fiery joy" of sexuality, and the consequent bursting of perception through the "stony roof" of the brain, itself associated with the law, as the repetition of "stony" makes clear (5-9). These lines refer variously to earlier discussions of the promulgation of "One Law for the Lion & Ox" (*Marriage* 24; *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* 4:22; *Tiriel* 8:10), to the restricted senses as "five gates of . . . law built heaven" (*America* 16:19), and to the "stony roof" of the skull, solidified and inverted through the infolding of perception into the "Stone of Night," an emblem of Mystery (5:1; *Europe* 10:26-29).[17] The skull will eventually be associated specifically with

16. For the meanings of Orc's serpent identification, see Chapter 2; for the Gnostic traditions Blake draws on, see Jonas and the brief discussion in Adams "Synecdoche" 52-56; for the positive aspects of Orc's serpent identity here, see Howard, *Infernal Poetics* 122.

17. For discussion of the Stone of Night as the human brainpan, see Tol-

Urizenic repression, as the first site in the body Los creates for Urizen, shutting in the "fountain of thought" (*Urizen* 10:34); even without this relation being clear, the bursting of the skull in *America* 8 reflects back upon the design for plate 6: the skull beside the youth, it becomes clear, is not simply an emblem of resurrection, it is his own shell of religious law, from which he has burst forth. Finally, as the freeing of sexuality has been associated with that of perception, so it is also tied to the overturn of class hypocrisy: the "coarse-clad honesty" in which may be found "The undefil'd tho' ravish'd in her cradle night and morn" (11-12) is a class emblem, the servant or other lower-class girl who, with the prostitute (line 11), is the double victim of sexual hypocrisy, as object of desire and as the child who is product of desire.

If the bursting of the stony law is thus tied to several psychic and social processes, sexual rebellion is central to them. The phallic content of Orc's revolt is made clear by *America* 1-2, in which he snaps his chains (in the text) and bursts from the earth (in the design for plate 2) in a consensual rape-embrace of the daughter of Urthona. The emphasis on phallic liberation is underscored by the designs of plates 11 and 14, the first showing children riding and guiding an evidently sexual serpent, the second showing a prone youth achieving an "erection" of his upper body in response to the appearance of an erectile snake between his female preceptor's legs.[18]

Blake, then, fashions the Orc symbol to refer simultaneously to sexual, psychic, religious, and social repression and to the release of energy in all these

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ley, "*Europe*" 138.

18. OED lists "erection" in the sexual sense with exempla from 1594 onward, and in the sense of an exaltation of the spirits with exempla from 1626. The design seems very much a pun on the two senses of "erection." See discussion of the serpent forms in these plates in Chap. 2 above. For the now-considerable debate over Blake's conceptions of sexuality, see sources cited in

spheres in a single moment of rebellion. This conception of both oppression and revolt as fusing processes usually considered unrelated is key to all Blake's later work. A comparison with the earlier, unengraved poem *Tiriel* (usually dated 1789) will show the importance of this approach. The title character of that work, essentially an early treatment of Urizenic hypocrisy, unites several kinds of repression. He has enslaved his brother Zazel and his own sons, whom he repeatedly calls "serpents" in a projection of his own serpentine duplicity; his relationship with his surviving daughter Hela seems founded on repressed sexuality (the more so as her leading him blinded toward sanctuary with his parents Har and Heva recalls Antigone and Oedipus); the only aspect of repression not originally his is the uniformity of law, which originates with Har and Heva, though Tiriel has embraced it. But the qualities that will eventually be seen in Orc are dispersed among several other characters. Ijim, Har's third son, shows a powerful Orclike fury at hypocrisy, but combines this with an obtuse incomprehension of Tiriel's real nature, and opts for passive withdrawal rather than rebellion. Orc's later function of active rebellion passes to Tiriel's sons, who overthrew his enslavement five years before the action starts, and separately to Hela, who opposes him ineffectually after the sons' slaughter. Orc's sexuality is absent. Of the characters opposed to Tiriel, Ijim and Har embody opposed but complementary weaknesses. Ijim exemplifies rage without the power of opposition as he curses Tiriel but carries him back to his sons and daughters, whom Tiriel slaughters *en masse* with a curse, while Hela's comment about Har and Heva — "O they are holy. & forgiving filld with loving mercy / . . . / Or else thou wouldst not have livd to curse thy helpless children" (6:26-28),

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n. 20 below.

points with terrible irony to the folly of mere forgiveness. As Blake's later portrayals of Orc and Los are often read as showing the futility of rage and the advantages of forgiveness, it is significant that Har's portrait shows conciliation as an error and that the weakness of rage lies in incomprehension and inaction. Tiriel's sons, in contrast, exemplify the successful overthrow of a tyrant by an enslaved populace, though their victory is negated when they readmit Tiriel and fall subject to his curse (1:12-17, 35-41; 4:44-79).

The most salient comparison between *Tiriel* and Blake's later work, however, is that while the poem presents repression as a relatively unified Urizenic phenomenon, its conception of resistance remains fragmentary; in particular, social-economic and sexual resistance remain separate. By comparison, Blake's working out of the Orc symbol gives unified representation to originally separate qualities, suggesting that the processes of sexual, psychic, and social subordination are interdependent and must be opposed in a unified way.[19]

The origins of oppression. The historical origins of oppression are a second concern of the Orc paradigm, and are treated in a complementary way in two poems, *Europe* and *The Song of Los*. Both present Orc's binding or entrapment as extended from the time of Jesus, or slightly earlier, until the present. In each case this presentation is part of a complex argument about the repressive nature of society; in *Europe*, the historical treatment also involves a variation on

19. Bentley, *William Blake: Tiriel* has the fullest explication of the plot intricacies; Gleckner 142-56 has a standard interpretation from the standpoint of Innocence and Experience; Erdman sees Tiriel as a portrait of George III's madness, perhaps an accurate but an unnecessarily restricted view (*Prophet* 135-38). In addition to other associations, Tiriel may embody an early criticism of Milton's errors: he has embraced his father's restrictive laws, he is blind, his wife has died, he leans on his daughter, he calls down pestilences on his sons, and he speaks of finding "the right & ready way" (6:5).

Blake's other treatments of sexuality. The poem has two subjects, one contemporary, to which I return below, and the other historical: the historical advent of Jesus as a false dawn and the continued domination of humanity by nature, personified as Enitharmon, until the historical present. In her sexual aspect Enitharmon is delusive and destructive, approximating the role played by Vala in Blake's later work, and in particular she is able to engage Orc in a kind of sexual stasis, "descend[ing] into his red light" for the eighteen-hundred-year period of her sleep (4:18). At the same time, Enitharmon's sexual dominance generates its seeming opposite, sexual guilt and denial (5:5-10). Enitharmon's sexuality, then, is negative and entrapping, an aspect of that "nature" which for Blake, as Michael Ferber nicely puts it, was "the sign of an ideological ruse . . . [that] sanctifies the existing social order by placing it beyond human control" (96, 95). Though this and other aspects of Blake's treatment of nature and of female sexuality have provoked considerable debate, the relevance of this episode for my purposes is as part of Blake's extension of the Orc myth into the historical past.[20]

Europe, as Michael J. Tolley and Leslie Tannenbaum have shown in detail, has as its subtext Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" and its

20. Since Blake adopts the conventional gendering of nature as female, female sexuality becomes the sign of nature's seductiveness; while Orc's sexuality in *America* signifies the liberation of nature by rebellious energy, Enitharmon's in *Europe* signifies the ensnaring of this energy by nature. These somewhat obvious remarks notwithstanding, Blake, as stressed above, is directly concerned with sexuality as such and sees it as a liberating force ("This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment" — *Marriage* 14). Arguably, this conception focuses on *male* sexuality, while female sexuality, though valued so far as it is gratifying to the male, is seen as dangerous and limiting precisely to the sexuality of the male. Representative treatments of Blake and women include those of Tayler, Fox, Ostriker, and Webster; the treatment by Paglia 270-99 is derivative and superficial. Among several studies focusing mainly on the *Visions*, see Aers, "Blake: Sex," Haigwood, and Linkin.

portrayal of the vanquishing of the pagan gods.[21] The descent of the "secret child, / . . . thro' the orient gates of the eternal day" at the start of Blake's poem (3:2-3) closely parodies Milton's opening; the secret child has been interpreted variously as Orc or as Jesus himself (Tolley 144; Tannenbaum 154), but it is less important to try to decide between these possibilities than to realize that the descent coincides with the historical advent of Jesus, that the descending spirit has Orclike characteristics, and that the expectations aroused by his appearance are frustrated. The key expectation, universal peace, is announced as fact: "War ceas'd, & all the troops like shadows fled to their abodes" (3:4); but though the time of the advent is specified as morning ("orient gates"), the following lines take place at night (9) and constitute a preparation for war, as I will argue in detail below. While the difference between lines 3 and 9 can be explained as a mere lapse of time, to do so is to miss two of Blake's key points. First, the historical coming of Jesus produced not a freeing of human potential but a binding of sexual energy, signified in Enitharmon's descent into Orc's light. The immediate consequence of her descent is that Orc's energy, figured as "red stars of fire, / Whirling . . . in furious circles round the immortal fiend" (4:15-16), is bent into a continuous motion, trapped and unable to escape. Here, Blake presents a distinct version of Orc's binding, not repeated in other works, that focuses on the entrapment rather than the suppression of his sexuality. More subtly, Orc's bound energy is displaced onto oppression and war, manifested in the unloosing of Urizen from his chains (3:11) in consequence of the "secret child's" appearance.[22] This point is not fully explicit in *Europe*'s text because of

21. The point was anticipated, but not developed, by Frye (*Symmetry* 262) and Margoliouth (87).

22. If the contexts of *Urizen* 13:26-27 and 20:26-29 are assumed, Urizen's unloosing follows his binding by Los and is in response to the cries of Orc, who here represents one aspect of the "secret child." The two accounts are not fully

the placement of the poem's historical material as a distinct sequence between the mythic opening and the apocalyptic close, but it is suggested by several of the designs (as argued by Tolley "*Europe*" 130-34). The word-portraits of the "youth of England hid in gloom," the citizens "With bands of iron round their necks," the inhabitants of suburbs "in leaden gyves," and the villagers with bones "soft and bent" (12:5, 29-31) sketch these ills retrospectively. The historical binding of Orc's sexual energy by Enitharmon in her night becomes the condition for the torments of day that fill her long sleep.[23] In this aspect, *Europe* reworks Milton's account of the driving out of the pagan deities; Blake's treatment suggests a collusive alliance between these deities, who take night as their sphere, and daytime state Christianity, in which entrapped sexual energy is mobilized in oppression and dynastic war.

The Song of Los, in its "Africa" section, presents Orc's situation and its origins differently, in effect concentrating on "day" where *Europe* concentrated on "night." Its theme is law, and secondarily the social effects of sexual denial, rather than sexuality as such. The most important point for the interpretation of the Orc symbol here has already been noted — that Orc remains chained "on Mount Atlas" from pre-Christian times to the eighteenth-century present (3:21;

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consistent and *Europe* should be regarded as a distinct version, but it is clear here that *someone* has bound Urizen and that he is released by the coming of the "secret child."

23. Blake's point may be illuminated by a reference in a similar context in *The Four Zoas*, referring to the building of Urizen's temple: "For he divided day & night in different orderd portions / The day for war the night for secret religion in his temple" (Night 7b, 88[96]:17-18). In this division, night's "secret religion" (itself a function of sexual repression) and the warfare of day become each other's enabling conditions.

Chapter 2). Orc appears in a sequence whose main concern is the creation of "abstract Law":

> Moses beheld upon Mount Sinai forms of dark delusion:
>
> To Trismegistus. Palamabron gave an abstract Law:
> To Pythagoras Socrates & Plato.
>
> Times rolled on o'er all the sons of Har, time after time
> Orc on Mount Atlas howld, chain'd down with the Chain of Jealousy
> Then Oothoon hoverd over Judah & Jerusalem
> And Jesus heard her voice (a man of sorrows) he recievd
> A Gospel from wretched Theotormon (3:17-24)

The sequence shows Orc's bound situation as a function of a series of equivalences: Mosaic, hermetic, mystical, and Greek rational philosophies are kindred abstractions whose expression is enslavement and misery. The function of Oothoon and Theotormon is less clear; Damon suggests that Theotormon's effect is positive because "Theotormon's woes have revealed to him [Jesus] the woes of all sufferers" (*Dictionary* 402), and Leonard Deen argues that Oothoon is one of Jesus' voices, though not the dominant one (63), but in context the most likely meaning is that Jesus distorts Oothoon's voice in accordance with Theotormon's gospel of sexual self-denial, expressed in the *Visions*. This would be consistent with the immediate narrative sequel: "The human race began to wither, for the healthy built / Secluded places, fearing the joys of Love," a process that ultimately creates "Churches: Hospitals: Castles: Palaces: / Like nets and gins to catch the joys of Eternity" (25-26, 32-33).[24] Though some details are

24. Theotormon's sorrows are also briefly mentioned in *Europe* 14:24.

unclear, the general pattern is that abstract law leads to both sexual and social oppression.

These events, in turn, occur within a larger context of the shrinking and fading of humanity in consequence of Urizen's promulgating his laws through Los's children Rintrah and Palamabron (3:8-15). The ultimate results of this process are the formation of a philosophy of sense experience (a restricted conception of reality corresponding to and derived from Urizen's laws) and the withering of humans into serpent forms "Creeping in reptile flesh" (4:16, 9).[25] The promulgation of the human forms of abstract law seem to play a climactic part in this process. It is unclear, however, whether Orc's binding occurs at the same time as the events with which it is narrated — historically, the epoch from the exodus to the birth of Jesus — or whether he has been bound all along. The former would be more consistent with *Europe*, the latter with *Urizen* and later works; the most significant point may simply be that Blake has pushed Orc's bound condition farther back in time here than in *Europe*.

25. The passage concerns Har and Heva, who function in *Tiriel* as the apparent parents of all humanity; here, effectively, they are types of Adam and Eve in exile. The reference in Tiriel's final speech to man "in a reptile form / A worm of sixty winters creeping on the dusky ground" (8:9-10), a standard Blake trope for "fallen" existence, is clearly the model for the reference in *The Song of Los*. As Har can be linked with Harmonia, wife of Cadmus, through Blake's repetition of an error in Jacob Bryant, Tannenbaum constructs an argument for cyclicality based on Ovid's story: Cadmus, who had slain the serpent or dragon, "is transformed into that which he had fought" (189). Tannenbaum fails to note the role of Har and Heva in *Tiriel*, however, where they slay no one and arguably are overindulgent (if there is indeed a reference to Cadmus, it would appear to be parodic). For the identification of Har with Harmonia (not entirely persuasive to me, as Har is male), see Mary S. Hall, "*Tiriel*: Blake's Visionary Form Pedantic" and Nancy Bogen, "A New Look at Blake's *Tiriel*," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 73 (1969), cited in Erdman, *Prophet* 133n.

Despite this inconsistency, *Europe* and *The Song of Los* describe the same binding from complementary angles — in *Europe*, that of psychosexual dynamics, from which it appears as a the creation of a field of entrapped energy, and in *The Song of Los*, that of law and social institutions, from which the binding appears as a chaining. While it has become customary to view "Africa" as forming a prologue to *America* and *Europe* — since its last line is also the first line of *America*[26] — this analysis suggests that "Africa" and *Europe* can also be regarded as complementary, elaborating distinct aspects of a complex process.

Orc and apocalypse. In addition to the meanings so far discussed — as social and sexual repressed energy, the struggle against this repression, and the historical elaboration of the origins of this repression — Orc signifies an apocalyptic potential in the oppressed. General apocalyptic references abound in *America* and *Europe*. Jesus' resurrection and the dry bones (*America* 6:1-5) are both types of the apocalyptic restoration of the dead. Orc's "The times are ended" (*America* 8:2) alludes to Revelation 10:6; the design of children sleeping with a ram (plate 7) to the images of reconciliation of the wild beasts in Isaiah 35 and 65; and as Tannenbaum has shown, imagery of apocalyptic destruction from Isaiah 34 and of restoration from Isaiah 35, and a messianic identification of Orc with Edom, the orthodox antichrist, are tightly woven throughout the whole text (125-33).

Somewhat more specifically than these general references, Orc's rage prompts the apocalyptic waking of the dead:

> Orc raging in European darkness

26. As argued by Erdman "Symmetries." See endorsements of this view by Bloom (*E*905) and Tannenbaum (185).

Arose like a pillar of fire above the Alps
Like a serpent of fiery flame!
The sullen Earth
Shrunk!

Forth from the dead dust rattling bones to bones
Join: shaking convuls'd the shivring clay breathes
And all flesh naked stands: Fathers and Friends;
Mothers & Infants; Kings & Warriors:

The Grave shrieks with delight, & shakes
Her hollow womb; & clasps the solid stem:
Her bosom swells with wild desire:
And milk & blood & glandous wine

In rivers rush & shout & dance,
On mountain, Dale and plain. (*The Song of Los*, 7:26-40)

Orc as pillar of fire and flaming serpent (Isaiah 14:29) here shrinks the earth in a positive sense that is counterposed to its degenerative shrinking in "Africa," and similar to the way we use this idea today — the earth shrinks because Orc's flames reach from Europe to Asia. In turn, the shrinking of the earth almost literally produces the extrusion of the bones and clay, of which Ezekiel is told, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: . . . Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open up your graves, and cause you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel" (Ezekiel 37:7, 9, 11-12). The awakening of the dead in Ezekiel as a people and as an "exceeding great army" (verse 10)

is very much to Blake's purpose; the detail he adds, the nakedness of the flesh that permits no dissimulation, will become the basis for retributive apocalyptic war in *The Four Zoas* Night IX (122-23), where this passage is repeated and varied. Here, the apocalyptic resurrection is presented as a female orgasm modulating into birth: the rivers of blood, milk, and wine are both an orgasm (as the clasping of the stem indicates) and the discharge of the placenta. The images of blood, central to Blake's meaning, make the point that this birth is bloody and painful, as revolution is — an idea Blake expresses in similar terms in *America*: "This is eternal death; and this the torment long foretold" (2:17).[27] In the passage as a whole, Orc's rage causes a modulation of images in which the earth is changed from a desert where "Adam, a mouldering skeleton / Lay bleach'd on the garden of Eden" (7:20-21) into a womb, and the dead bones, raised and filled with breath, are born as new and bloody life.

In *Urizen*, Orc's howls once again precipitate the awakening of the dead, in an allusion to John 5:25-26 ("the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God"):

> 5. The dead heard the voice of the child
> And began to awake from sleep
> All things. heard the voice of the child
> And began to awake to life. (Chap. VII; 20:26-29)

Though gnomically, this text expands on *The Song of Los* in a crucial way: Orc's cries awaken not only the dead but, in the next verse, Urizen:

> 6. And Urizen craving with hunger
> Stung with the odors of Nature

27. See Mee 142-44 for a different presentation of the *Song of Los* episode and its relationship to the *America Preludium*.

Explor'd his dens around (30-32)

Urizen, indeed, is *as* dead; Orc is chained beneath his "deathful shadow" (25). His awakening as part of a general awakening of the dead is therefore appropriate, but its larger meaning is that Orc's cries set in motion *all* the events leading to apocalyptic upheaval, Urizen's awakening and the consolidation of his rule as well as the awakening of the dead. In a parallel way, Orc's appearance in *Europe* precipitates the reentry of Los into the poem's action, as discussed below. The cries of Orc thus catalyze the mobilization and clash of opposed forces — one of which is Orc himself, in his aspect as herald of revolt. The basic reason for this pattern will become clear later; at present what must be noted is that Orc as apocalyptic emblem is central to the *entire* process of conflict and renovation in a way that goes beyond his immediate role as tribune of rebellion.

The apocalyptic present: Orc, Lamb, and Tyger. The last of Orc's symbolic functions is as an emblem for the revolutions of Blake's own time. As already noted, these are presented in apocalyptic terms, and in violent and retributive imagery. *Europe*, for example, ends with an apocalyptic dawn that is the occasion for a call to the "strife of blood" (15:11). Treatments of such imagery — when they have not assumed that it is meant to expose political apocalypse as delusion — have been somewhat gingerly. Often, interpretation has focused on the way in which Blake presents clashing perspectives, so that references to Orc as "Devil," "Antichrist," etc., are viewed not as objective statements but as dramatizations of the terrors of the oppressors. Bloom, for example, writes (in relation to the *Marriage*) that "that the 'Devil' called Orc in Blake's *America* and later poems . . . is truly a savior, however awful he may appear to the 'Angels' of

Pitt's England"; John Howard notes that the "whole magnificent passage [on *America* 6], prophesying illumination, freedom, joy, and harmony, scarcely could be conceived by the Orc who is perceived by Albion's Prince or Albion's Angel" (*E*896; Howard, *Infernal Poetics* 121; Erdman makes the point differently, *Prophet* 24). Such comments are not wrong, and Howard's appreciation for the positive presentation of Orc is refreshing. Yet the viewpoint of the "Angels" is not just a perceptual misidentification. Orc does act destructively, and epithets like "Devil" and "Devourer of thy parent" (*America* 9:20) are not merely deployed ironically, but are in some sense affirmed. The reason for such usages becomes clearer if we consider a second, more fundamental point about *America* 6: its emancipating perspective, as expressed in text and design, is itself criticized by later plates of this poem, though in a way completely opposite to the terms of conventional interpretation. To establish this point it will be convenient to look again at the issue of the symmetrical poses of Orc and Urizen, this time from the standpoint of positive interpretation rather than the criticism of cyclic theories. These points, in turn, are conveniently approached by first drawing a comparison between the action in *America* and a slightly earlier, nominally unrelated Blake poem, "The Tyger."

Most older accounts of this poem — one of the best is Hazard Adams's, on which I draw here — approach the Tyger as an image of transcendent human possibility, misapprehended by limited thought; the poem is thus seen to operate on two levels. One is Urizenic; here, the Tyger seems to represent "a *real* hell and a *real* deathliness" and to be created by a perverse God. But on an implied level of visionary insight, the Tyger is understood to be "an image of man's own hopes" and to be created by "heroic representatives of energy" — in fact, by

Los (*Shorter Poems* 61, 71, 64). Such accounts have clear affinities with the view that Orc is merely misconceived as devilish — indeed, Adams views the Tyger and Orc as types of one another (58). While such an analysis is true and valid so far as it goes, it slights the real dread associated with the Tyger — even if toned down in revision of the early drafts, as Martin K. Nurmi's tracing of the poem's evolution shows — and it slights, as well, the political context of the poem. Nurmi's reading called attention to the Tyger as an emblem for the French Revolution. Subsequent studies by Ronald Paulson, Stewart Crehan, and Colin Pedley have traced how the tiger, understood as a figure of unrestrained savagery, functioned as a metaphor for the French revolutionaries and republicanism in anti-Jacobin writings — the mob that hanged Foulon, for example, were "tygers in human shape" (*Times*, August 10, 1789).[28] Indeed, the epithet was taken up by Jacobins themselves. During the mass demonstrations for bread on September 4-5, 1793 — which the government first opposed and then tried to coopt — a Jacobin section commissioner had the *nom de guerre* of "Tiger" (*Times* September 17, 1793, 2). (Interestingly, he was accused of "intriguing" by the Jacobin higher-ups.) To establish the image's political meanings complicates the standard view that "read properly, *The Tyger* will reveal . . . a state where the lamb can lie down with the tiger" (Bloom, *Company* 35), for the path to the pacific tiger of the poem's illumination lies through the Terror.

This, indeed, must be one point of the poem, on several different levels. The Tyger's rhetorical associations suggest that its political meaning in the

28. See Paulson 97-98; Crehan 123-36; Pedley, "Blake's 'Tyger' " *passim*, and 48 for a defensive use of the trope by Robespierre; *idem*, "Blake, France, and the Tiger," for other contemporary references to France as tiger. For Blake's revisions, Nurmi *passim*. See Paley, *Energy* 38-40 for a brief summary of early interpretations; 41-60 for his own.

poem, and Orc's in the larger mythology Blake was developing, should be understood as "violence" — not simply "energy," a reading that is true but a little squeamish. (Indeed, as in *America*, the word "terror" itself appears suggestively in the poem [line 16], though again we should be cautious about how much of its developing political meaning to read in.) If indeed the Tyger is a figure for revolutionary violence, then the poem's central question, "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" (20) acquires on the level of polemic or social satire the thrust of a comment on social responsibility: the same orthodox God (or his earthly agents) created innocence and social injustice, and retributive violence is a case of chickens coming home to roost. On a conceptual level, as most commentators have pointed out, the metaphors used to ask the question — hand, eye, hammer, etc. — provide the answer: the Tyger is a human creation. On this level, the Tyger stands both for social injustice and for the violent response to it: human agency has created both. Further, each of these conceptions — the polemical assignment of responsibility for social violence and the understanding of who created humanity — is related to Blake's emerging large-scale myth. In that myth, as we know, Los gave shape to Urizen and subsequently (but really simultaneously) both created and bound his opposition, Orc, creating Orc's rebellion as well. These terms apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to "The Tyger," through the central blacksmith image. The smith, or human labor, has both shackled ("framed") human energy, and, as a necessary consequence, created ("framed") human violence — both the violence mobilized by states in war, and the opposing violence of revolt. Here, Stewart Crehan's point that the Tyger's maker is "fragmentarily perceived as the mysterious hands, eyes, shoulders and feet of One Man, or as bits of different men" (134) is an important clue to Blake's meaning.

The creator is not merely human, but social human labor, the work of humans in society; it is represented by the hammer, both in "The Tyger" and in Blake's developing Los myth. Verbal echoes in *The Book of Los*, discussed below, underline the point. In turn, if the creator is a smith or smiths and his (their) instrument the hammer, the tiger will come to be frequently associated both with Orc and with the apocalyptic rising of the dead which is one of his meanings (*The Four Zoas* 61:25, 118:4, 122:32). "The Tyger," then, presents an early working through of the Orc/Los myth, with the blacksmith figure occupying the roles both of Los and Urizen.

"The Tyger," however, does not stand by itself; it exists in tension with its sister poem, "The Lamb," whose questions it echoes. Only in these terms can the full meaning of "The Tyger" emerge. As generally recognized, the lamb implies a transcendent vision of goodness, but it also implies the counterposed perspective of "experience," in which the lamb in this world is mere "meat and wool" (Bloom, *Company* 39). While the "contraries" can be regarded as merely satirizing each other (Bloom), or as transcending each other in a higher understanding (Adams), it needs to be remembered that just as the perspective of "innocence" is not annulled in such a synthesis, neither is that of "experience."[29] The lamb is truly a victim; to take an even more relevant example, so is Tom Dacre, even though his dream is anagogically a vision of the New Jerusalem.[30] Here it is useful to consider the lamb's meaning in a distinct frame of reference,

29. Paulson suggests that the tiger-lamb juxtaposition originates in the Horatian injunction against artists portraying the lamb engendering with the tiger, which Blake ironically inverts in the "Tyger" design as a "lamb-tiger" (108-109). My concern here is with the real oppositions that are not canceled by this synthesis.

30. The angel with the key and the bright river (13, 16) repeat and vary Revelation 20:1 and 22:1.

that of animal fabling based on Æsop, which, as Annabel Patterson has argued, is the basis of an English poetics of "communication from or on behalf of the politically powerless" stretching from Lydgate through the eighteenth century and beyond (2). Though this fabling tradition is not usually associated with Blake, its terms fit as soon as they are examined. In this tradition the lamb or sheep figures as the victim of unjust authority, while the lion and wolf are his oppressors through sheer power ("The Lion, the Cow, the Goat, and the Sheep") or treachery ("The Wolf and the Lamb").[31] Within this frame of reference the lamb-tiger antinomy suggests the insufficiency of being a lamb in this world, and the need for the Tyger as a corrective: if the lamb is not a match for his traditional predators, the Tyger is.

This observation brings my discussion back to *America*. If indeed the myth Blake is creating in his Lambeth works is an elaboration of the terms of "The Tyger," then the lamb, as well as the Tyger, should be present in *America*. Since the lamb represents a vision of transcendent goodness undercut by helplessness and victimization, the place to look for him is on plate 6 of *America*, which expresses a vision of transcendence central to Blake's entire belief system. And indeed, while the lamb is not named in the text of this plate, his presence is suggested by the naming of his opposites — the lion and wolf (line 15). The use of the lion and wolf as emblems of Empire has already been noted, but with the addition of the fabling context just mentioned, they resonate with their tradi-

31. Patterson traces the history of the fables' English versions and their place in distinct, often clashing, political frameworks. Familiar editions in the eighteenth century would have included the Royalist version of Roger L'Estrange (eight editions between 1692 and 1720) and Samuel Croxall's whig version (at least eighteen printings in the eighteenth century) (143-46). La Fontaine, whom Patterson does not consider, was also very frequently translated and would have been an alternative source for both the fables mentioned.

tional identities as devourers of the weak. The text, in this case, must imply the question of how those who hear Orc's message — first of all the youth in the design — are to overcome the lion and wolf; mere words will not do. The youth, these contexts suggest, is a lamb, and we know what happens to *them*.

The most powerful expression of this idea, however, is not in the text but in the design. The design makes clear the weakness as well as the beauty of the youth who hears: open and trusting, he sits with his legs aspraddle and his genitals fully exposed (fig. 15). Nearly as innocent as lamb-haired Tom Dacre, he would be easy prey for lion or wolf. Like the lamb and like Tom, the youth is a double emblem: of social resurrection, in a transformed world, and of social victimization in the present one. This double signification implies a criticism as well as an endorsement of the perspective of plate 6; while the boy embodies the promise that "the Lion & Wolf shall cease," he himself cannot bring this promise to pass.[32] The criticism is deepened if the youth is taken, as I will now propose, to be an aspect of Orc. Overtly, the boy in the plate seems to represent not Orc, but an emblematic figure who hears his speech. Nevertheless, he has visual affinities with *America*'s representations of Orc, notably the upward-tilted faces of plates 1 (top figure) and 2, with prominent Adam's apple and brow. If the plate 1 figure could sit up, or if the plate 2 figure (fig. 16) were to rest after climbing from the earth, they would look much like plate 6. Quite specifically, the right arm and hand of the youth on plate 6 repeat the alignment

32. Stephen C. Behrendt cites a use of the familiar lion-and-lamb *topos* that is relevant to this discussion in a 1774 cartoon on American-British reconciliation. While Britannia takes the hand of the American Indian, plenty and concord are represented in the foreground by a cornucopia and by the lion and lamb ("Family" 32 and pl. 1). Blake's text suggests, instead of reconciliation, the destruction of empire, but the figuring of the youth as lamb asks how this aim can be accomplished.

of the plate 2 figure's right arm and hand as he levers himself up out of the earth.[33] These correspondences establish at least an affinity, if not a necessary identity, between the various Orc figures and the youth of plate 6. Moreover, in a kind of visual-verbal pun, the youth in the plate looks up in apparent wonder at the sky, the source of the voice of Orc, who is himself a "Wonder" (4:7); the listener and speaker both embody wonder, though of different kinds. This point would appear to link the listener with the speaker, as his iconography links him with Orc figures elsewhere, making it possible that he is a version of Orc. In a sense, indeed, he *must* be Orc; since Orc, as a quality in the individual brain, is an aspect of collective humanity and part of both rebellious individuals and dispossessed social groups, whoever responds to Orc's message is also an Orc.

Urizen, however, would eat up this Orc — a point imaginatively apparent on plates 8 and 9. If the Urizen figure of plate 8, clothed in white with raised knee — and *its* genitals under wraps — is related to plate 6 rather than to the plate 8 text or the plate 10 design (as in most criticism), it will be seen to be a figure of great power, despite its dismal face, and more than a match for the defenseless boy of plate 6. Indeed, the face of sorrow, in combination with the suggestion of a wintry landscape, suggests Urizen's flame-quenching snows, not mentioned in the text until plate 16, as much as it does dismay. The design at

33. The figures also have in common a receding forehead (in most copies; colored over in M). The bell cheeks of plates 1-2 are thinned out in plate 6 and hollow in plate 10, presenting a progressive aging of the figure; the pronounced adam's apple and brow are also repeated in plate 10. The plate 6 figure's hair, though matted, lacks the spiky or snaky ends of Orc's hair on plates 1 (bottom figure), 2, and 10; however, the manacled Orc on plate 1 (top) lacks it too. Criticism has not identified the plate 6 figure as Orc; Erdman, for instance, calls him simply a "young man" (*Illuminated Blake* 144); the bottom, chthonic figure on plate 1 is identifiable as a second Orc by his action in breaking out of the earth on plate 2.

the bottom of the facing page (9) contributes to this effect. It shows a supine child, pale or uncolored in most copies, embowered by wheat. Erdman interprets the design optimistically — the wheat is shielding the "new-born child" of the French Revolution — but other descriptions call the child simply a "corpse," and it closely resembles the dead child of *Europe* 7 (*Illuminated Blake* 147; *Blake Books* 96).[34]

If the designs for plates 6, 8, and 10 are now juxtaposed, the similarity of Orc's and Urizen's poses on 8 and 10 can be read in a new way. Unlike the trusting and vulnerable figure on plate 6, the Orc on plate 10 matches Urizen point for point. "Orc cycle" analysts, of course, have insisted on this correspondence, but it now has new meaning. The Orc on plate 10 has the strength to meet and combat Urizen, a strength lacking or only potential in the plate 6 figure. The mirror-image poses can then be read as signs of necessary opposition, not underlying identity. Moreover, they are *mirror*-images, not the same pose; Orc's body does not duplicate his adversary's, but is positioned to grapple with it. If this reading is correct, Orc's posture on plate 10 carries a straightforward political meaning as an endorsement of matching one's enemy blow for blow. At the same time, it is a visual statement that the youth of plate 6 — whether or not taken as a version of Orc — must be transformed into the Orc of plate 10 if he is to counter Urizen rather than being overwhelmed and destroyed by him.

The three designs and the associated designs on their facing pages can be read, moreover, as a visual *narrative*, a sequential story independent of the ver-

34. The child is pink in copy A (contrary to *Blake Books* 97); in copy M it is uncolored or with an extremely pale pink wash, with pale greenish shading in the kidney area and for body details accentuating its overall pallor. It is pink in copy K. Hagstrum sees the child as safely sheltered, but notes that the color "in some copies" implies that it is dead (*Poet* 100).

bal text. Orc's prophecy is received (plate 6), and its meaning as limitless emancipation given anagogically as a vision of harmony and peace in the design of sleeping children (plate 7); Urizen intervenes, and *his* vision of life is given anagogically in the dead child (plates 8-9); finally, Orc counters Urizen, and the anagogic vision here presents a victory that has absorbed and annulled the perspective of Urizen's two plates, as living children ride the snake of sexuality and a prophetic messenger trumpets liberation from the sky (plates 10-11).[35] The story continues, of course; these six plates cannot be isolated from those that precede and follow; and to select them as a "narrative" can appear arbitrary. But at least the juxtaposition of vulnerability and strength in plates 6 and 10, mediated by the negating strength of Urizen in plate 8, seems to exist in the composition and placement of the plates themselves. The full sequence of plates 6-11, then, shows an awareness of Orc's resemblance to Urizen, but presents it as arising from opposition and criticizes a more "open" stance as naïve. In visual and textual narrative contexts, the sequence shows a need to match power with power, not a criticism of the limits of social rebellion.

The Orc Paradigm and Interpretive Tradition

The view I have been developing clashes with a powerful, perhaps dominant interpretive tradition that finds a rejection of political revolt in the Lam-

35. For Rodney Blaine's comment on the plate 11 snake design (in its variant version in *Thel*), see above, chapter 2; for a political reading of the boy-and-swan design, *Illuminated Blake* 149; Hagstrum sees the swan as imagination (*Poet* 100). For readings of individual designs in *America* as sequential narratives, see Erdman, "New Expanses" *passim*; for the independence of text and design, and sequences of designs as narrative, see Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art*, *passim*. Early copies of *America* were printed recto-verso, so that even- and odd-numbered pages faced each other; later copies were printed on one side only.

beth poems. To Tannenbaum, as already noted (see above, chapter 2), the similarity of Orc's and Urizen's poses in *America* 8 and 10 "reveals the essential similarity between the tyyrant and the rebel" and represents "Blake's critique of the cyclical pattern of tyranny and rebellion that Frye identifies as the Orc cycle" (*Biblical Tradition* 47-48). Harold Bloom sees in *Europe* a clash between two perspectives: Orc and Urizen's limited, essentially "cyclic struggle, pillar of cloud against pillar of fire"; and the ultimately successful effort to "convert history into linear progression" through enlarged vision (*Apocalypse* 158).[36] Echoing such views, Ronald Paulson's frequently illuminating *Representations of Revolution* argues that "in various ways [Orc and Urizen] are indistinguishable from the start," takes the general lesson of *America* to be that the rebel ends by "serving as his own counterrevolutionary . . . or as a tyrant in his own right," and finds that the later Blake comes to view the quest for "irreversible change" as "a personal one" (7, 106, 251).[37]

The implications of such views are profound. If there is an "essential similarity between the tyrant and the rebel" (Tannenbaum), then rebellion can

36. Bloom is referring to the initially unsuccessful effort to blow the apocalyptic trumpet, finally completed by Newton (*Europe* 13:1-2, 5), further discussed below.

37. Paulson's commentary also exemplifies the tendency of the standard paradigm to be self-confirming. Discussing the supposed Orc-Urizen equivalence in the *America* 8 and 10 designs, Paulson finds added evidence in the texts: Blake "places a speech of Orc under the image of Urizen, and the Urizenic evocation of Albion's Angel and his convocation of angels under the image of revolutionary Orc, rendering them interchangeable" (103). Equally well, one could read such placements as giving verbal form to the fears and worries of each visual image (and vice-versa). In any case, Paulson's is an inaccurate reading; the angels on plate 10 are disaffected and about to rebel (10:3-4, 11; 11:1-15), so that Orc's image is not countered by a "Urizenic evocation" in the way that Paulson thinks.

never end tyranny, and its inability to do so must be Blake's point in *America*, *Europe*, and indeed the Lambeth books as a group. In this case, *America* and *Europe* cannot show a redemptive pattern; their purpose must be to criticize as illusory the redemption they apparently show. As Robert E. Simmons, who concurs with Bloom and Tannenbaum that Orc and Urizen are "inextricably linked," states this point, either Blake is "mistaken in *America*, or . . . *America* is the story of a fall, not the beginnings of redemption," and the "inconclusiveness" of its ending, that "drifts off into cycles of history," prompted "Blake's conviction that he must explore the fall first, before redemption," in *Urizen* and *The Four Zoas*. Ultimately, "the struggle is unresolved until both Urizen and Orc *forgive each other*" in the later prophecies, making possible "the integration of both Urizen and Orc into the psyche" (161n.). In this conception of Blake's doctrine, only an internal transformation of the mind, untainted by social struggle, can end a tyranny that is also conceived as primarily mental. As Simmons argues in relation to Fuzon's rebellion in *Ahania*, "the very fact that he revolts against it [Urizen's world] proves the finiteness of his point of view" (160). Equally striking here are the idea that revolt as such is an act of mental limitation — hence, not revolting is always preferable — and the underlying assumption that Orc and Urizen primarily represent clashing mental faculties, and only secondarily, if at all, contending forces in society. This assumption is, indeed, common to a whole school of Blake interpretation.

One might add in criticism that nothing is easier than redemption according to this view. The powerful forgive the oppressed *whenever* they do not revolt, while oppressed people frequently embrace philosophies that stress social forgiveness. So redemption is just around the corner for everyone. The coin-

cidence between such views of Blake's purpose and the repressive psychology of the ruling class is not a trivial or narrowly polemical point, and should make us reconsider the whole set of assumptions that exalts transformation of consciousness over transformation of society and forgiveness over rebellion.

Such a coherent and developed sense of what Blake is doing in the Lambeth poems cannot, perhaps, be fully refuted. All one can do is to indicate where it rests on unsupported assumptions, overlooks important aspects of Blake's treatment, and fails to account adequately for the direction of his thought. *Europe*, as the more complex of the paired early Lambeth works, is the best place to look, and my treatment will focus on the questions of whether cyclical patterns are dominant in the poem, whether redemption is shown to be achievable through consciousness alone, and whether the ambiguous character of historical processes is seen as a sign that a social apocalypse is delusive.

Several writers have found in *Europe*'s *Preludium* and in the body of the poem a recurrent cyclic pattern that is broken either at the poem's end, or not at all — revealing the final apocalyptic dawn to be merely another cycle. To Bloom, for example, the *Preludium* establishes Orc's recurrence in "cycle after cycle" (*Apocalypse* 147); to Tannenbaum, Enitharmon's descent into Orc's light (4:17) shows that she "cannot escape the cycles of history . . . seeing Orc as a god who renews her each morning with his red light" (175). These critics also find cyclic patterns emphasized in a more allusive way in the *Preludium*, in the lament of the "nameless shadowy female" for her "dying god" Orc and her statement that she "unwilling count[s] the stars" (2:1), a reference to the repetition of human generations.[38] The account of Enitharmon's descent, however,

38. There is no dying god in the *Preludium*. Bloom argues that Blake alludes to the dying Tammuz in Ezekiel 8:14 and Milton's reference in *Paradise Lost* 1:446-57 (*Apocalypse* 147; *E*903), but Blake's text has no specific echoes of

does not describe daily or epochal recurrence; Enitharmon's sleep lasts unbroken for eighteen hundred years (9:2, 9:5, 13:10), and only her own perceptions place it within a larger cycle that she controls. Nor does Blake treat events *within* Enitharmon's sleep as cyclic, for example by describing an alternation between historic periods dominated by Enitharmon's night mysteries and by Urizen's daytime wars; the essential point is the continuous collusive collaboration between the two. Similarly, the main pattern in the *Preludium* is not a lament over a dying god or a succession of earthly generations; it is a warning-lament over approaching apocalyptic confrontation, similar in tone to Urthona's daughter's "this [is] the torment long foretold" in the *Preludium* to *America* (2:17) but more all-encompassing:

> Unwilling I look up to heaven! unwilling count the stars!
> Sitting in fathomless abyss of my immortal shrine.
> I sieze their burning power
> And bring forth howling terrors, all devouring fiery kings.
>
> Devouring & devoured roaming on dark and desolate mountains
> In forests of eternal death, shrieking in hollow trees.
> Ah mother Enitharmon!
> Stamp not with solid form this vig'rous progeny of fires.
> . . . . .
> And who shall bind the infinite with an eternal band?

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these. For Tannenbaum the reference to "count[ing] the stars" (2:1) is cyclic, since "the stars are a biblical metaphor for the generations of man" (163), but the comparison in Genesis 15:5 between the number of the stars and of Abram's seed can just as easily refer to bringing forth a myriad of Orcs all at one time.

> To encompass it with swaddling bands? and who shall cherish it
> With milk and honey?
> I see it smile & I roll inward & my voice is past. (2:1-16)

The shadowy female's exclamations and questions are essentially about the immediate future; they foreshadow Yeats's "And what rough beast . . . " As with Yeats, the female's dominant emotion — though not Blake's — is fear of the apocalyptic omens; she prays that they not be given earthly form. As a foreshadowing of the poem's main action, this lament focuses not on the generations of a dying god, but on a multiplicity of Orc figures — "vig'rous progeny of fires" — to be brought forth on the earth in the near future. Though the "terrors" have an ambiguous aspect, as noted later, the *Preludium* presents them as appearing *once*, not cyclically. The plea, "Stamp not with solid form . . . " incorporates the poem's subtext, Christ's incarnation, and applies it to the historical appearance of Orc in the eighteenth century. The questions in lines 13-15, with their echoes of Job, point to the impossibility of compassing and taming Orc's energies (in a way, the impossibility of an "Orc cycle"), while the final statement refers to the end of nature's domination and the beginning of an apocalyptic period.

In the most sophisticated argument for the dominance of cyclic patterns in the poem, James E. Swearingen contends that it focuses on "two competing versions of time, either linear succession of events or historical cycle in which everything returns" (111). Swearingen associates the former pattern with Orc and apocalyptic possibility, and the latter with natural cycles embodied in Enitharmon and the shadowy female of the *Preludium*; he argues that cyclic time subsumes linear time within itself and so negates apocalyptic potential (113,

116).[39] Swearingen's reading, however, depends on unsupported assertions about cyclicality in the *Preludium* and on the idea that, as Enitharmon's song is "nightly," the historical time that she dreams is contained within a pattern of repetition (112-14, 115). The poem's decisive moment, however, comes not with Enitharmon's sleep but with her waking, and to take at face value the description, "Enitharmon woke nor knew that she had slept" (13:9; Swearingen 117) is to overlook the highly ironized quality of this event. While Enitharmon believes that she has not slept, and hence that her own natural time will continue forever, she and the rest of creation have been wakened by the sounding of the trump (13:5); Orc's appearance as sunrise over France is in response to this event and not to Enitharmon's own summons, as she imagines. Hence, the placing of the poem's historical events within Enitharmon's sleep is only an apparent pattern — the one Enitharmon herself perceives; her call to her children (plate 14) is unanswered and the events of the poem's end escape her control.

Overall, the references of these interpreters to cyclic imagery, though allusive, are not entirely fabricated. However, the dominance of cyclic patterns that they find in *Europe* depends on exaggerating the importance of such references, ignoring or downplaying imagery of crisis and forward movement, and rather arbitrarily subordinating the latter to the former.

The problems of viewing *Europe* as centering on a transformation of consciousness can be clarified by carefully examining one of the most thoughtful of

39. Hence, for Swearingen, liberation is not to be found in an apocalyptic movement within time, but in a liberation *from* time, in the opening out of perception within any "moment," a pattern he finds both in the fairy's song (plate iii, copies H and K only) and in *Milton*'s hymn to time (28:44-29:3; Swearingen 118 and n.). For discussion of the time-boundedness of apocalypse in *Milton*, see Chap. 6 below. It should be noted, however, that the fairy's song establishes a perspective that both supersedes empiricism and is ungendered (though nominally male). Hence, it offsets the masculinist implications of Orc's struggle

such arguments, that of Tannenbaum, which, as already noted, centers on the poem's commentary on Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity." Blake takes from Milton, in this reading, the idea that "if man, like Christ, is in fact a potentially divine being that has chosen mortality, the only thing that prevents him from achieving his divinity is his lack of consciousness or vision" (Tannenbaum 156). But Blake criticizes in Milton the "Christus Victor" tradition — the idea of Christ as warrior-conqueror and judge at an actual earthly apocalypse (Tannenbaum 173; "Nativity" lines 157-64). Such a concept is both unnecessary and destructive, as it leads to "continu[ing] rather than end[ing] the cycles of history" (173); the narration of Orc's war on the final plates becomes a portrayal of the consequences of remaining enmeshed in cyclic struggles rather than struggling for a visionary transformation of consciousness. Tannenbaum's discussion, however, treats consciousness too generally; for Blake, it is not only individual but also manifested in the awareness and emotions of social groups. The "lack of consciousness" that keeps humans from divinity is expressed not only psychically, but also in the social forms of monarchy and state religion — institutions that embody "fallen" consciousness and act as blockages to achieving it in reality. Hence, to achieve human divinity may require, among other things, overthrowing priests and kings.

In a more particular way, Tannenbaum's treatment misses the full import of Blake's revisions of Milton. Aside from Blake's treatment of the advent, the most important change is the reworking of Milton's treatment of the apocalypse and the vanquishing of the pagan gods. Milton presents the apocalyptic promise in the middle of his poem, only to postpone it to future time; his final section

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against a female-gendered nature.

presents the banishing of the pagan deities as an initial victory over Satan, who is "In straiter limits bound" by their defeat ("Nativity" 169). Blake revises this material in three ways. First, he moves the sounding of the "trump of doom" ("Nativity" 154) from the middle to the end of his poem, where it appears not as future prophecy but as present action. Second, as already noted, instead of the struggle against the pagan deities, Blake presents an implicit division of labor between Enitharmon's nighttime nature deities and Urizen's daylight state religion. Finally, the action that corresponds to the struggle against the deities is the account of Orc's battles and the end of Enitharmon's dream, in which she calls vainly on her children to resume their revels (plate 14). In effect this treatment reconceives the pagan gods as the present gods of war and state religion, the "Kings & Priests" who have "copied" Urizen's book of brass (11:4) in collusion with restricted perception (plate 10) and the worship of nature (Enitharmon's children). Blake's overall purpose in modelling his poem as a parody of Milton's in fact makes little sense unless it is realized that this substitution replaces Milton's conception with the idea that a struggle against monarchy, Christian state religion, and rationalistic science (emblematized in the location of the Guardian's serpent temple in Bacon's seat, Verulam) is the real prelude to apocalypse. While part of this complex amalgam is religious and ideological, part is directly social-political, and this part is manifested in the social rebellion of plates 11-13.

That this struggle is not presented as delusive, merely "the latest [incarnation] about to take place in Europe" (Tannenbaum 165) is indicated not only by the blowing of the trump at the poem's end, but by a further recasting of Milton. Milton's poem, though it celebrates the morning of Christ's nativity, ends with

sunset and the Virgin's laying the child to rest. By this metaphor, it points to the lapse of future time that must occur before the "wakeful trump." Blake's poem incorporates this nighttime period as the eighteen hundred years of Enitharmon's sleep and Enitharmon's sexual dalliance with Orc, and concludes with the dawn, and hence with apocalypse as present event. In the closing dawn, coming at the end of the eighteen hundred years, the transition from ordinary time to apocalyptic time should be felt. Such, at least, is the implication of Blake's own time scheme.

Finally, it should be noted that *Europe*'s ultimate direction is to resolve the considerable ambiguities about historical processes that it introduces. Three crucial sequences show such a sense of ambiguity — that of Urizen's awakening, in the suprahistoric Los/Enitharmon myth, and those of the appearance of the "terrors" and the blowing of the trump, in the present-time sequences of the *Preludium* and Orc's war. None of these moments has ever been fully analyzed, and it is necessary to do so in some detail to make my point.

The first begins with Urizen's escape from his chains following the descent of the "secret child":

> And Los, possessor of the moon, joy'd in the peaceful night:
> Thus speaking while his num'rous sons shook their bright fiery wings
>
> Again the night is come
> That strong Urthona takes his rest,
> And Urizen unloos'd from chains
> Glows like a meteor in the distant north
> Stretch forth your hands and strike the elemental strings!

Awake the thunders of the deep.

[Plate 4] The shrill winds wake!
Till all the sons of Urizen look out and envy Los:
Sieze all the spirits of life and bind
Their warbling joys to our loud strings
Bind all the nourishing sweets of earth
To give us bliss, that we may drink the sparkling wine of Los
And let us laugh at war,
Despising toil and care,
Because the days and nights of joy, in lucky hours renew.

Arise O Orc from thy deep den.
First born of Enitharmon rise!
And we will crown thy head with garlands of the ruddy vine;
For now thou art bound;
And I may see thee in the hour of bliss, my eldest born. (3:7-4:14)

The ambiguity begins with the basic question of who is speaking. Bloom assigns the entire sequence to Los, with Urizen's sons dramatically represented within his speech; Tolley gives the whole passage to Enitharmon; Erdman and Tannenbaum argue that Los speaks first, Urizen's sons in 4:3-9 (after two lines by the narrator), and Enitharmon in 4:10-14.[40] The introductory lines appear to assign the first strophe unambiguously to Los, and the deep sexual desire in 4:10-14

40. See Bloom, *Apocalypse* 148-49 and commentary in *E*904; Tolley, "*Europe*" 126n.); Erdman, *Prophet* 266n. and commentary in *E*803; Tannenbaum 154.

best fits Enitharmon, so that the difficulty appears to center on the middle sequence (4:1-9). But in fact the ambiguities run much deeper: the clear implication of these disagreements themselves is that the identity of the speaker or speakers is, and is meant to be, fundamentally uncertain. It must next be noted — though this point seems not to have been remarked — that though the lines from 3:9 to 4:9 are a song of joy, they are also a war song. To be exact, they are a song of the joys of the wars of the next 1800 years. The "envy" ascribed to Urizen's sons, the fact that Urizen is unchained and "like a meteor in the distant north" (Blake's location in *Europe* for Urizen's war theater), and the call to awaken the "thunders of the deep" all indicate that "let us laugh at war" does not mean enjoying peace but refers to the warrior's anticipation of joy in slaughter. Moreover, though the "elemental strings" are those of musical instruments, they may also be bowstrings; Blake repeats the phrase in *The Four Zoas* with this meaning: "Again the black bow draw / Again the Elemental Strings to your right breasts draw" (VIIB, 92:3-4).

But though the overall situation foreshadows war, the speech contexts thoroughly confuse who is doing the threatening. Though 4:3-9 appear to be spoken by the sons of Urizen, and the ideas of binding life's "warbling joys" and drinking the wines of Los may seem typically Urizenic, binding the joys to "our loud strings" refers back to the "elemental strings" that Los orders *his* sons to strike, and the verb "bind" links up with "now thou [Orc] art bound" (line 13), most probably spoken by Enitharmon. Further, "The shrill winds wake!" may be either narrative description, or a continuation of Los's command to "Awake the thunders" (4:1, 3:14), so that 4:1-2 either set a new speech context or continue the previous speech. Overall, either lines 3-9 are spoken by *Los* (con-

ceivably his sons), in which case line 2 describes Los's triumph in the envy he excites; or *both* Los and Urizen's sons are playing the strings and what is shown is simply the preparations of two indistinguishable camps for a war of mutual aggression. In either case Los is as deeply implicated in the war preparations as Urizen, and the sparkling wine is a spoil of war, to be gained by binding the warbling joys.[41] It should be noted, too, that the war is deflected into a deeply collaborative relationship in which Enitharmon orders her sons Rintrah and Palamabron — here thoroughly negative spirits — to collude with Urizen's rule. (Such a collusion would be consistent with 4:3-9 being spoken by Enitharmon, conspiring with her sons against Los, but this cannot be true of the passage as a whole.) Blake's deeply ambiguous account can ultimately *not* be read in any one consistent way, and this impossibility appears to be the point — as subsequently in *The Four Zoas*, Blake may be presenting clashing accounts of the same events, in which it cannot be determined just who is envying, binding, and striking the strings of war.

The ambiguous moments in the *Preludium* and the Orc-Urizen war can be described more briefly, but they are crucial because they match each other and because both involve the role of the Orc or Orcs whose action marks the poem's present-time events. In the *Preludium*, does the shadowy female's reference to "howling terrors, all devouring fiery kings" (2:4) mean that the terrors are kings who are all-devouring and fiery, or that they all devour fiery kings; or, finally, does she bring forth *both* terrors and kings, Orcs and their adversaries? According to Blake's usual trope, "terrors" should be Orcs, in which case the ambiguity

41. This reading is consistent with *The Four Zoas*, Night I, in which Los and Urizen prepare for war; though the later treatment cannot be read into this one, the general situations appear similar.

of their relationship to the fiery kings is more pronounced. Ultimately, the syntactic ambiguity of the line does not allow us to decide. The "fiery kings," in turn, are seen again as a single king in the serpent design on plate 10.[42] Visually as well as textually, then, the poem makes it difficult or impossible to decide how its Orc or Orcs are related to its king or kings, at least without considering the overall movement of the poem.

A similar uncertainty marks the attempt to awaken the dead following the increasingly bitter struggle between Orc and Albion's agents — including Rintrah and Palamabron — that climaxes when "the flames of Orc roll heavy / Around the limbs of Albions Guardian" (12:32-33):

> The red limb'd Angel siez'd, in horror and torment;
> The Trump of the last doom; but he could not blow the iron tube!
> (13:1-2)

What cannot be determined here is the identity of the red-limbed angel. The overall context suggests an attempt by either Albion's Guardian or Rintrah to thwart Orc — as "horror and torment" would imply — but it is also possible that Orc himself makes the effort, trying and failing to achieve a decisive victory, as Bernard Blackstone believes. Further, if the angel is Rintrah, as Erdman and Bloom agree, is he to be viewed as genuinely trying to bring apocalypse (Bloom) or as Pitt trying to "blow the iron tube" — to push England into war (Erdman)? Such critical disputes may seem almost comic, yet they point to unresolvable ambiguities: the first half of line 2 supports Bloom and the second half Erdman, "red limb'd" suggests Orc yet Orc is nowhere else called an angel, and so on.

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against a female-gendered nature.

42. For Urizen's reptile form, established in Blake's later work for Urizen, see discussion in Chapter 2 and below (on *Ahania*).

Again, it is inescapable that the deeply marked ambiguities are intended.[43]

All these episodes — one crucial in Blake's mythic prehistory of Europe, the others in his present history — suggest that the real identities and characters of the opposing camps are confused and ambiguous. It is tempting to conclude that this ambiguity is Blake's ultimate point, that *Europe* records a point at which the nature of the European struggle of his day had become so confused that it was no longer possible to take a position. Indeed, it was possible to think this in Blake's time. Bewilderment over events was common in 1793-94. The *Times* was noting that French events had "so often baffled every speculation . . . that the mind is unsettled on what principle to fix for the probable termination of so many disorders" — though it went on to do so with some accuracy (May 2, 1793). Coleridge too recounts, retrospectively, how he "hoped and trembled" at the course of the revolution, and "reproached my fears that would not flee" ("France: An Ode," 49, 58).

However, the large-scale organization of Blake's poem moves in the opposite direction — toward clarification of the sides, the participants, the stakes. It may be, indeed, that one of the points behind the ambiguous episodes I have analyzed is that the nature of fundamental conflicts seems ambiguous until the stakes become fully clear. Overall, *Europe* moves from night to dawn. The action begins at night (3:7 and 9, 5:1 and 10), continues with Enitharmon's 1800-year dream, and draws to its close as she awakens, still at night; only in the last fourteen lines does dawn come. The entire action prior to these lines, then, takes part in the indistinctness and confusion of night and dream; the un-

43. For these interpretations see Blackstone 58; Bloom *Apocalypse* 158 and commentary, *E*904; Erdman *Prophet* 212.

certainties over the identity of the "terrors," over the characters chanting of joy and preparing for war, over who is blowing the trump, are part of nature's night, dispelled by the clarity of dawn.

The action of the final page is important in several respects. First, the underlying trope of sunrise and the specific terms in which it is described are metaphors for the clarification of perception; specifically, Orc's appearance as the sun "in the vineyards of red France" echoes Enitharmon's "we will crown thy head with garlands of the ruddy vine" (4:11) and reverses it, substituting the image of pressing the grapes for that of drunkenness. Second, the dawn is apocalyptic, as the vineyard imagery indicates, and it is violent; the final summons to "the strife of blood" shows Blake's commitment to revolutionary violence. Third, Orc has played the clarifying role; it is his appearance as the sun — and by a traditional poetic pun, the Son, apocalyptic Jesus in the vineyards — that arouses Los. Finally, and most important for my purposes, Orc does not play the apocalyptic role on his own. In the historical drama of plates 11-13, and in *America* as well, Orc has appeared to be leading the strife and at times to be the only combatant on his side; now, a point I shall return to, it becomes clear that Orc's role is to set in motion much larger forces, Los's "cry that shook all nature to the utmost pole" (15:10). In effect, Blake expresses full confidence in the Jacobin dictatorship as of 1793-94 ("the strife of blood"), yet he also shows the strife as the joint work of Orc, Los, and "all his sons" (11) — figuratively, the whole French (and English) people. The implied contradiction between these views does not yet surface in Blake's text.

Reworking the Paradigm: ***Urizen, Ahania,*** **and** ***The Book of Los***

The [First] Book of Urizen, The Book of Ahania, and *The Book of Los*, the

three poems of 1794-95 which are tied together by overlapping subject matter, plot links, and style and sometimes called Blake's "Bible of Hell," develop Blake's myth in three ways: by extending it backward in time to the initial organization of matter and locating the origins of social and psychic repression here rather than in Mosaic-classical times as in *Europe* and *The Song of Los*; by elaborating the myth of Los, previously described very sketchily, and assigning him a central role in the origins of repression as Urizen's antagonistic collaborator; and by working out a more complex and critical treatment of social rebellion.[43] Orc's role is not prominent in these poems; he is a subordinate presence in *Urizen*, does not appear directly in *Ahania*, and is absent altogether from *The Book of Los*. Yet the three works are crucial to an understanding of the Orc myth.

The origins of oppression. Taken together, these three poems present an account of how authoritarian and repressive psychic and social structures could come to exist in the beginning of human society without a superhuman creator. This description particularizes, but also broadens, the scope usually assigned to

43. *Urizen* is dated 1794, the others 1795. The plots are linked in that *Ahania* continues the exodus story begun in *Urizen*, Chap. VIII (though it also doubles back to the time period of chaps. I-IV), while *The Book of Los* gives an alternative version of the events in *Urizen*'s two chaps. IV. A tetrameter line and the use of a bible-style double-column format also link these works and differentiate them from other Lambeth poems. The term "Bible of Hell," originating from a reference in the *Marriage*, pl. 24, is sometimes applied to all the Lambeth works; see McGann "Indeterminate Text" 304 and n. for the more restrictive usage, and more generally for the idea of the intentionally indeterminate ordering of *Urizen*'s text, assumed in my treatment. The intentional indeterminacy presumably extends to the variations in *Urizen*'s title — "*First*" in six of the seven copies, and in the *Preludium* and colophon in five — and, additionally, to the discrepancies among the three works in their coverage of the same events. (See McGann's article, *Census* and *Blake Books* for further bibliographical specifics.) Essick argues that *Ahania* and *The Book of Los* are "not narrative continuations" of *Urizen*, but "variations on its basic themes" (*Language* 140n.).

them. The terms usually employed for the events they recount — creation and fall — are not inaccurate per se, and at least the second mirrors Blake's own metaphors. Yet these terms do not focus on the importance of giving form, on the near-simultaneity of the creation of the human body and human society — with a lapse of only one generation before "cities" are formed, if *Urizen* is to be believed — or, finally, on the creation-organization of matter and society as an organization of social repression and war. At the same time, the myth is usually treated as centering on the creation and differentiation of mental functions. For Morton D. Paley, Urizen represents the "*principium individuationis*" in the individual mind, as well as "the fall of part of the Eternal Mind and the consequent creation of the phenomenological universe," while for John Howard, the central negative role is played by the "selfhood" (the term is taken from its later use in *Milton*), which he terms a "psychological state" (*Energy* 67, *Infernal Poetics* 152).[45] Again, such readings are not inaccurate, but they are far too narrow — an important part of the myth is sexual, and it has a less fully developed social component. While *Urizen* focuses primarily on the psychic components of the overall myth, *Ahania* elaborates the sexual components; the social aspects are developed through metaphor and images in both, and in *Ahania*'s political plot strand.

In what is usually taken as the basic form of the myth, but is really only one of the three forms presented by the three books, Urizen's separation from the Eternals appears as an insistence on ordering perception or existence according to abstract law. The result appears to be the coming into existence of

45. See Crehan 160-64, on the other hand, for an interpretation that ignores mythological meanings entirely and treats Urizen as a fairly literal portrait of Pitt.

an elemental materiality, a landscape of waters, deserts, rocks, and mountains, and an elemental form for Urizen — a womblike space as he perceives it from inside, a dark globe as the Eternals perceive it from outside (*Urizen* 5:3-37). Los's organization of time and of the human body and faculties — Urizen's skull and spine, heart, nervous system and eyes, ears, nostrils, stomach and tongue, and the faculties associated with them — is undertaken on behalf of the Eternals as "Los round the dark globe of Urizen, / Kept watch for Eternals to confine, / The obscure separation alone" (5:38-40). The immediate sequel is Los's own entrapment in the organization of matter he has carried out (his "fall"), as the separation of Enitharmon and Los and the birth and binding of Orc follow in quick succession. *Urizen*, then, reworks and resituates the material on abstract law from *The Song of Los*. In this version, the binding or chaining of Orc's energy and sexuality does not occur as a consequence of Mosaic law; rather, the abstractness of law itself is made derivative of Urizen's desire to order the cosmos, and the binding occurs at the very dawn of the existence of organized matter.[46]

46. The shifting and omission of text segments affect the details of this sequence. In the three copies that include plate 4, the voice of the waters (4:2) provides Urizen's perspective that his laws are not evil but an effort to avoid instability and disorder; this perspective is absent in other copies. Another effect of introducing plate 4 is that what appears as an intervention of Eternals against Urizen's separation in copies without it appears to Urizen as an eruption of sin in two of the copies that have it (in the third the relevant lines are omitted):

> 3. Shrill the trumpet: & myriads of Eternity
> In living creations appear'd
> In the flames of eternal fury. (3:44, 5:1-2, continuous in copies D-G)
>
> 3. Shrill the trumpet: & myriads of Eternity
> Muster around the bleak desarts
> . . . . .
> All the seven deadly sins of the soul
> In living creations appear'd
> In the flames of eternal fury. (3:44-4:1, 4:49-5:2, copies B, C)

Ahania, in background portions of its overall narrative, repeats and revises part of *Urizen*'s creation sequence, giving a distinct perspective on Urizen's separation from the Eternals that focuses on the repression of desire. At the same time, just as *Urizen* reworks *The Song of Los*, so *Ahania* recasts *Europe*'s treatment of sexuality; in particular, it alters *Europe*'s stress on Enitharmon's delusive sexuality, making Urizen's "emanation," Ahania, the victim (and literally the product) of his repression of sexuality. In the poem's second sequence, Urizen is fashioning a bow for vengeance against his rebel son, Fuzon, who has directed an emasculating blow at his genitals. The political implications of this framing plot based on the biblical exodus will be examined later; my concern here is with the bow itself, formed from the ribs of a serpent Urizen has slain. The serpent is the Pharaonic gods of Egypt defeated by the god of Moses, as Tannenbaum has shown (231-32), but also Urizen's projection of his repressed sexual desire: it arose from among the "Eggs" shed by his "dire Contemplations," takes a phallic form, and "With his horns he push'd furious" at the level of Urizen's "knees" (3:10, 7, 17, 15). Urizen's defeat of the serpent, then, is a

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Two copies, then, make the point that what we know as sin is a crystallization of the Eternal in response to the appearance of law (see Mitchell, *Composite Art* 129). Further, in three copies (including G, the latest), the plates describing Los's formation of Urizen's body are ordered so that Urizen has bones before Los has created them, while the opposite is true in three others; one copy omits the bones altogether (C; it is also the only copy with a single Chap. IV). Finally, all copies except one place plate 15 ("Thus the Eternal Prophet was divided") after Los's division but before the formation of Enitharmon and Orc, while one copy places it after these events, as a sum-up; all copies except one place plate 25 (describing social conditions and the net of religion) after the binding of Orc and Urizen's explorations, while one places it before. It should be added that the ordering of the text in *E* does not exist in any known copy, although G has this sequence except for plate 4, which it lacks. For the bibliographical details see the sources previously mentioned.

defeat of his own projected sexuality, which then becomes materialized into a weapon against Fuzon. The serpent image here is extremely rich. It suggests, first of all, that Urizen, as well as Orc, possesses a serpent form — a possibility not treated as narrative fact until *The Four Zoas*. Urizen's serpent form, his denied sexuality, is externalized and turned into his bow. (In contrast, Orc's, as his own rebellious sexuality, is part of his physical body, for example in *Urizen* 19:26 and 30). Second, though the serpent has been associated with recurrence both in general mythology and in Blake criticism, Blake uses it here in a different way. Slain once, in the dawn of civilization, the sexual serpent becomes materialized as a bow henceforth used against rebels; in other words, repressed sexuality becomes a foundation of social oppression. Finally, as the bow is Blake's generic symbol for weaponry, its creation also signifies Urizen's taking on a social identity as a principle of warfare, and shows the connection between war and repressed sexuality (see discussion of *Europe* above).

This account of the origins of repression in the suppression of unacknowledged sexuality is deepened by an interruption to the main narrative that tells the origin of the arrows of pestilence that torment Fuzon's "living corse" on the tree of mystery (4:9-10). This account is marked as retrospective by the repetition of a description of Fuzon on the tree at beginning and end, and the time is specified as "Urizens slumbers of abstraction / In the infinite ages of Eternity" — a textual echo of *Urizen*'s first chapter that refers to the period when Urizen has separated from the Eternals but has not yet been formed by Los (*Ahania* 4:9-10, 11-12, 35-36).[47] Hence, *Ahania* is providing a second perspective on the

47. The equivalent passage in *Urizen* is: "Ages on ages he lay, clos'd, unknown, / Brooding shut in the deep" (3:24-25). The parallelism of the two episodes is confirmed by a renarration of Los's entrapping of Urizen's unorganized bones (*Urizen* 8:7-11, *Ahania* 4:27-30). This is the second of two epyllia, or interpolated brief epics explaining earlier events, in *Ahania* (the first is

separation already narrated in *Urizen*. The arrows, clearly phallic (see, in a different context, Blake's "arrows of desire"), ultimately derive from a complex process in which Urizen's "Nerves of Joy" melt during his slumbers into a "white Lake" of "pain and dismal torment" (4:13-15). Tannenbaum, again with the Mosaic context in mind, identifies the lake as manna, but it is also like semen. The lake generates, or forms by evaporation, "clouds of disease" that hover above it in winged shapes "screaming in blood and torment" — i.e., the arrows of pestilence (4:22, 25-26; see Tannenbaum 238).[48] Simultaneously the lake itself, "scurfd o'er" by "petrific pain," becomes "the bones of man," and in a further important movement Los organizes *some* of the bones into muscles, glands, and organs, while "Most remain'd on the tormented void: / Urizens army of horrors" — again a variant of *Urizen*, which referred to Urizen's "self-begotten armies" during his early, unformed separation (*Ahania* 4:20, 34-35; *Urizen* 5:16). Although it is possible that these bones are those of a later generation, the parallels with Los's actions in *Urizen* and the character of the whole sequence as an interpolation encourage us to identify the bones as Urizen's. The sequence, then, develops the account of Urizen's separation in the earlier

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the story of the growth of the tree of mystery from Urizen's tears in Chap. III). Tannenbaum astutely notes that Blake combines these and other uses of epic parody with uses of biblical-prophetic style, giving each interpolated episode a present-time significance (248-49). However, his own analysis of *Ahania*'s themes misreads part of the sequence as present action (238-39).

48. The white lake varies a passage on the bounding of the "Eternal Mind" by Los in *Urizen*'s creation account, itself repeated nearly verbatim in *The Four Zoas* (*Urizen* IV.[b]3, 10; 10:21-23; *The Four Zoas*, Night IV, 54:1-3). *Ahania*'s version makes the connection between bounded mentality and suppressed sexuality clearer. Los appears in *Ahania* only after the lake has formed (4:27).

poem by specifying that Urizen's separation from the Eternals is simultaneously a separation into self and externalized projections; further, it makes clear that his weapons of oppression, the armies and arrows, are materializations of denied desire.

The social component of Urizen's formation, though less explicit in the texts than the sexual aspect, is present in both *Urizen* and *Ahania*. The Urizenic separation as a "Self-clos'd, all-repelling" entity (*Urizen* 3:3), though traced primarily as a psychic and sexual division, is also shown as a social division. Though Urizen is a "solitary one in Immensity" (3:43), he is not simply a solitary individual, but also social groups that are solitary from unified human existence. This collective aspect is implied in the reference to his "self-begotten armies" (5:16). As with his "army of horrors" (*Ahania* 4:34-35), these are the woes he looses on the world, but they are not to be taken only in a metaphorical sense; the term "armies" refers specifically to Urizen's social role as king and mobilizer of real armies in war. Such a reading is necessary for two reasons. First, like Blake's other mythical characters, Urizen is not a single being, but a principle that appears both within individual minds and as a characteristic of social groups. Hence, what is told as a creation myth involving primal beings can also be seen as representing divisions occurring within early human societies, and subsequently reproduced continuously in social life. Second, war — which with oppressive labor will come to be the social activity most associated with Urizen — is itself the ultimate expression of the "selfhood," since it represents the organized group killing of human beings by others. If, then, Urizen's separation refers at least prospectively to his collective aspect as war, the separation from the Eternals is in one aspect a differentiation of *groups* of people from

a more general community, and it foreshadows the division of society into contending castes and classes. Urizen's ambition to create "a joy without pain, / . . . a solid without fluctuation" (4:10-11, copies A-C) is, then, not just a psychic attempt to escape the "inevitable mixture of joy and pain in eternal existence" (Howard, *Infernal Poetics* 158); it is also a necessarily vain effort to create a society stabilized by the intertwined Urizenic *social* principles of domination, state, church, and law: "One King, one God, one Law" (4:40, A-C).

In the same way, the creation of Urizen's body, a constraining of disorganized matter seen in text and plates as a chaining of Urizen (13:26, plate 22), also has a social aspect as a shackling of human creative ability in the form of oppressed labor. The design for plate 11 (whose text describes the forming of Urizen's heart, eyes, and ears) shows two figures, one with a hammer or maul and the other chained among flames, with a leaning tower in the background (in most copies). In one aspect, the figures are Los and a half-created Urizen (the head of this figure in most copies is skeletal). Simultaneously, however, the hammer, chains, tower, and flames are emblems of social processes: labor, slavery, and their role in the building and destruction of civilization. The point is made differently in the late copy G, which lacks the chains and tower. Here, the left figure is fully fleshed (inconsistently with Urizen's state in the text) with medium-olive or greenish yellow-brown skin and a suggestion of African features. Even without chains, the two forms now suggest the relationship between free and slave labor, and it is notable that the free laborer sinks back in exhaustion while the slave figure's lips are drawn back over white teeth in a rictus of pain, or perhaps a cry. (See figs. 17-18.)[49] Finally, the closing plates of *Urizen*,

49. Of the copies I have examined, A-C are all similar in the skeletal appearance of the left figure; the skull appears fleshless, the nose is foreshortened as if lacking flesh, the jaw and eye-sockets are black and hollow, and the neck

which narrate the formation of Urizen's children and the population of the cities of Africa, open out into a series of text and graphic images of social oppression: the ox waiting for slaughter, the dog kept from the "wintry door," the division of city from city, and, in a full-page plate, a dog and a begging child, apparently shut out by the same wintry door (25:1-2, 28:17-18, plate 26).

The social dimensions of the Urizen myth are also apparent in *Ahania*. The "arrows of pestilence," it will be recalled, spring from Urizen's original separation, and take form as weapons of torment against the rebel Fuzon. They are therefore a materialization of human division between people, in the form of morality and social repression. The complexity of human divisions, simultaneously psychic and social, also appears in *Ahania*'s renarration of Los's shaping of Urizen. Here, some of the bones formed from Urizen's tormented desires become his body, as psychic armor or restraint, while those left over become social repression, his "army of horrors." Finally, Urizen's division materializes as Ahania. Though the narrative calls Ahania the "mother of Pestilence" (2:43),

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appears as a column of vertebrae. Some details differ from copy to copy, as does the coloring. Copy A (Yale Center for British Art) has pale pink flesh with green-gray tones, similar to that of the right figure. In B (Morgan Library) the figure is a pale green with yellow-tan highlights, and some blue on the skull. Copy C (Yale; fig. 17) is the most skeletal in color — white with gray and some tan-yellow tone, with the neck vertebrae suggested by dark brown strokes. In copy G (Rosenwald Collection; fig. 18) the predominant greenish yellow-brown is darker than khaki and lighter than olive drab, with some darker olive areas and yellowish highlights. The head, though emaciated and with black or hollow eye-sockets, is clearly fleshed, with flesh visible around the nostrils and lips; the lips are visible and white between them suggests teeth, details absent in A-C. The throat is thicker than in A-C, and fleshed, with vertebrae no longer visible. *Blake Books* 176 fails to note the "fleshed" quality in G; *Illuminated Blake* 193 does so, but does not note color differences. Mitchell reads the figure in G as denoting imprisonment by "the body itself," because of the absence of the chain (*Composite Art* 151).

her "pestilential" status is, like the arrows, a projection of Urizen's repression of his own desires as pestilence. At the same time she, like the arrows, is a projection that acquires separate identity, though in an opposite sense. Thus she is literally an "emanation" or externalization of the desires that Urizen denies. While this makes her equivalent to the lake and cloud (her tears fall from "clouds / Eternal," 4:50-51), she represents that portion of the lake and cloud that escapes Urizen's control, and that assumes a function of redemptive memory (or prophecy) in Chap. V and in later Blake works.

Ahania's vision in Chap. V, while primarily an imaginative conceptualization of a unified human sexual existence, is also a vision of the social world created by the "army of horrors." Ahania wanders among mountains "where bones from the birth are buried / Before they see the light" (5:46-47). The reference to the leftover bones of the lake suggests that one form of the army of horrors is unborn, murdered, or starved children. More generally, the image suggests the death-in-life of modern social existence that Blake often pictures through the suffering of children, as in the final lines of "London," or the child at the "wintry door" of *Urizen* 25 and its associated plate. The accompanying design, showing dead bodies and a severed head, further underscores the connection between the denial of sexuality, depicted in the text, and the social oppressions of war and executions. (Its topical reference to France is discussed below.)

Two points must be made about the social oppression discussed here. First, it is not merely an expression of deeper psychic phenomena. The "organization of perception" in Blakean terms means *the way in which the human mind organizes the world.* The conventional dividing line between psychic division and

social division does not exist, because the material and social worlds with their divisions of nationality, sex, and class are functions of the current inability of the human mind to organize reality without such divisions — *except* in a visionary grasp of futurity. However, such a visionary leap is not by itself enough to materialize the vision, since the results of the inability to organize a unified humanity confront us as priest-kings and dead children (e.g., in the designs for *Europe* 11 and 5). Blake's way of representing this complex relationship is to show the formation of material objects out of thoughts, such as Urizen's bow out of his "dire contemplations." Such objects have the character of aspects of reality that become independent of the minds that created them: no king can abolish the oppression of subjects. They become transformed only through arduous labor such as Los's, which is mental but also corresponds to social processes. Social oppression, then, is not reducible to "mental error" although it stems ultimately from an error in the mind of humanity as a whole. Second, although Blake presents the organization of social oppression (as of other kinds) as a myth of origins, the processes he shows are both historical *and* continuous, contemporary. The division of the Eternals is both a division of ancient humanity, and also a division that occurs daily, continuously — in the different paths of children in different classes and races, for example, humanity *divides* daily. Urizen is hammered into shape every day, Los drops his hammer every day, Orc is chained down on the mountain *every day*, in the real world we live in.

Orc, though not prominent in *Urizen*, plays a key role in its social myth. Orc's cries after he is bound down, we recall, awaken both "The dead" (20:26), in an expression of Orc's function as apocalyptic tribune, and Urizen himself. In a parallel process, Urizen's sons come into independent existence; the sons,

originally the four elements of air, water, earth, and fire (Fuzon), take on human form despite Urizen's will.[50] This awakening of the inanimate parallels Orc's awakening of the dead, and may be a manifestation of it — the text specifies that "All things" hear Orc's voice (20:28), and this would include the elements. The logic behind the parallelism becomes clear in Urizen's response:

> he [Urizen] curs'd
> Both sons & daughters; for he saw
> That no flesh or spirit could keep
> His iron laws one moment. (Chap. VIII; 23:23-26)

The organization of matter that Los carries out, resulting in Urizen's formation and the promulgation of his laws, carries its own cancellation, since as a binding of energy it is a binding of that which struggles to become unbound. This contradictory reality of the organization of human energy — that it is bound and struggles against its bonds — is expressed both in Orc's cries and in the inability of flesh or spirit to keep Urizen's laws. In psychic terms, these events signify that the repression of id, energy, or desire can be nothing but an act of mental and physical violence that creates its own opposition; in social terms the same is true of the domination and suppression of laboring and oppressed people. These repressive acts, moment by moment, create *and* try to blunt the struggle against themselves: "That the delicate ear in its infancy / May be dull'd; and the nostrils clos'd up" (*The Song of Los* 7:5-6). Thus, the organization of repres-

50. Urizen's daughters likewise assume human form, but they spring from "green herbs & cattle / From monsters, & worms of the pit" (23:20-21). Blake's reasons for giving the daughters monstrous and disgusting origins, as opposed to the elemental substances embodied in the sons, are not clear, unless they are simply misogynistic.

sive society is not simply a fall that will continue until it is canceled by a providential event. Rather, this "fall" generates its own countermovement. The last four text plates of *Urizen*, though they complete the crystallization of oppressive civilization, are also a rise — the beginning of resistance to Urizen by his sons, leading to the revolt of the Fuzon faction, and of resistance to Los by Orc.[51]

Restraint, imagination, and resistance: Urizen, Los, and Orc. The second major revision in Blake's myth in these three poems is his development of the figure of Los. Several preliminary points should be made about how Los has been treated in standard accounts. First, under the influence of early symbolist readings that pegged Los as "Poetry, the expression in this world of the Creative Imagination" or as "Poetic Genius" in his manifestation as Urthona and the "spirit of prophecy" as Los, he has been viewed as a manifestation of mental or imaginative powers alone. This treatment persists in recent criticism. The fullest exploration of Los, that of Leonard W. Deen, characterizes him as "Poetic Genius in the single person," the "Eternal Prophet opposing the Eternal Priest, Urizen." John Howard, too, sees the Urizen-Los division as one existing psychically between "rationality" and "creativity" and socially between the biblical roles of "priest" and "prophet."[52] Though such characterizations contain valid points — the prophet/priest distinction is based in Blake's own usage — they do not recognize Los's full complexity. In the second place, many accounts take at face value the benign characterization of Los's role as laboring mercifully on be-

51. This point is particularly well expressed by Howard, *Infernal Poetics* 171-72; yet I differ from Howard's conclusion that *Urizen* shows "an ever-darkening world" (174).

52. For these approaches see Damon *Dictionary* 246 ("Poetry"); Percival 36 ("Poetic Genius" and "spirit of prophecy"); Deen 1, 26; Howard, *Infernal Poetics* 153, 160, 163.

half of the Eternals (*Urizen* 5:39). Tannenbaum, for instance, does so implicitly in reading Los as Jehovah and Urizen as the Elohim in the biblical Jahweh-Elohim division. In this view, Urizen's triumph in *Urizen* and *The Book of Los* is "the triumph of justice over mercy" — though Tannenbaum ultimately sees Los as a "failed redeemer" (203-206 *passim*; 206; 269). Criticism indeed tends to divide on whether Los's negative role begins only after Urizen's creation (Deen, Tannenbaum) or is implicit in this creation (Howard). In either case — and this is the third point to note about the criticism — accounts of Los's "fall" tend merely to *narrate* it, or relate it to Blake's appropriation of biblical traditions (Tannenbaum), but not to explain its fundamental meaning; a more specific analysis is required, for example, than simply saying that the episode is "an allegory of the fate of [despairing] poetic imagination," that Los's "motives are not love but fear," or that out of pity, "Los-Jehovah appropriate[s] to himself . . . the characteristics of Elohim-Urizen" (Bloom, commentary *E*907; Howard, *Infernal Poetics* 164; Tannenbaum 206).[53] Finally, once Los's actions are accounted for, it will be necessary to return to the Orc myth to see how its overall shape is affected by what has been learned about Los, a point ignored in the criticism.

Though in his individual aspect Los is indeed an embodiment of prophecy and imagination, his emblematic smith's hammer and his affiliations to Hephaestos point to a second, collective aspect in which he stands for human labor, the creative application of human intelligence to the material world. The function that links these roles is the giving of form. This is, of course, the central aim of the poet or artist, and the role of the prophet is to give imaginative

53. Pity appears (13:53) as the narrative *consequence* of the decay of Los's fires (13:44).

form to the past and its links with the possible future. But, in addition, the role of labor is to materialize form through the transformation of matter. It is a commonplace of Blake interpretation that Los's formation of Urizen is a synecdoche for the creation of the material (and, I would add, social) world, and that Blake revises traditional accounts of creation by making it the work of human rather than divine faculties. Indeed, so far as Los creates both Urizen and woman, and marks out a series of "age[s]" while doing so (*Urizen* 10-13, Chap. IV [b]), he shows that sexuality, time, and God are all human creations. It is less well recognized that Blake stresses the *materiality* of the creation process, traditionally ascribed to divine will manifested immaterially in speech. Los's creations — the body, the sexes, time, and God — are truly works of human imagination. But they are also works of human labor, because they are embodied in forms created by labor. Urizen, after all, in one aspect is kings and priests, who could not exist without the material wealth produced by labor. The materiality of this process — the aspect that is the function of labor — is continually emphasized in text and design references to Los's hammer, tongs, bellows, fires, and furnaces, to his work in iron and brass, and to the fetters, rivets, and chains that he forges (*Urizen* 7:8, 8:11, 10:9-10, 15-18, etc.; plates 11, 18, 21). Such references are an instance of the tenor-vehicle reversal I have already noted (Chap. 1.) While on the narrative surface the references appear as metaphors for the shaping of Urizen, it makes more sense to view the "tenor" as "vehicle" and vice-versa: Urizen himself is the metaphor, for human psychic, sexual, and social processes, and the terms that appear to be figures for his creation represent the actual reality of human social existence.

Los, then, has dual roles, as imagination and as labor, and this is critical to

understanding his "fall," in which

> 1. In terrors Los shrunk from his task:
> His great hammer fell from his hand:
> . . . . .
> [5.] Los suffer'd his fires to decay
> Then he look'd back with anxious desire
> But the space undivided by existence
> Struck horror into his soul. (*Urizen* Chap: V; 13:20-21, 44-47)

Los has performed an act of forming (shaping and imprisoning) existence that is necessary for a divided society to exist at all. But in the process he allows *his* fires to dim and is trapped in this diminished existence. He can no longer mentally bear the undivided spaces of the Eternals. As imagination and equally as labor, he has given form to existence, but takes on the imprisoned form that he has created — hence his further divisions, the creation of the sexes, the birth and binding of Orc, etc. Los's dual role helps us to understand what is occurring. As a human faculty, labor cannot exist without organization. In history, human labor has been yoked to kings and priests, who have mastered and organized it. At the same time, the imaginative faculty itself has differentiated itself from kings and priests only intermittently; as Blake was later to argue, both the classical artists and writers and their modern followers are "slaves of the sword," who "would if they could, for ever depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War" (*Milton*, Preface, copies A-B). Blake, indeed, would be falsifying if he did not show both processes.

Thus, if Los as labor has wielded his hammer in history, it has necessarily been to enrich, empower, and exalt Urizen. But Los as imagination has been

complicit in this process. Blake represents this complicity as Los shrinking "In terrors . . . from his task" (13:20) and finding himself unable to look at the spaces of the Eternals (45-47). Since Blake would view the defining characteristic of prophecy or imagination as its ability to look from the "fallen" world to the world of the Eternals, Los's inability to do so is the sign of being unable to maintain his prophetic role — that is, his independence of Urizen. Blake represents this inability as the enclosure of both characters in the same space: "a cold solitude & dark void / The Eternal Prophet & Urizen clos'd" (13:39-40).

It now becomes clearer what the "fall" in *Urizen* means. By organizing Urizen and then dropping his hammer, Los as imagination abdicates the task of organizing Los as labor to Urizen. By doing so, however, he himself — imagination itself — becomes "closed" together with Urizen and takes Urizenic forms. In Blake's account — a highly critical one — Los acts as complicit double to Urizen and, at the same time, as a rival unable to break from him.

This point makes clear the overall meaning of Los's binding of Orc. The treatment in *Urizen* develops Blake's account of Orc in several ways. It pushes his binding back to the period of the first organization of human society, as noted earlier. It also makes the Oedipal qualities of Orc's relationship with Enitharmon more explicit than in *Europe*, and traces these to pre-adolescent and even to pre-natal existence, where Orc's embryo becomes a phallic "serpent / . . . / Round Enitharmons loins folding" even within the womb (plate 21; 19:26-28). More important than these details, however, is the overall parallelism between Los (not Orc) and Urizen. Urizen's separation from the Eternals revolves around his *wish* to limit experience and bind energy (plate 4, copies A-C), but it is Los who *succeeds* in these tasks. His binding of Orc both narratively

recapitulates his earlier chaining of Urizen and complements it, in the sense that the shaping of oppressive reason must be followed by the restraint of rebellious energy; in both instances, Los carries out what Urizen himself cannot accomplish. Similarly, Los's restraint of Orc's desire parallels and recapitulates Urizen's externalization, defeat, and materialization of desire as recounted in *Ahania*. Thus, *Urizen* shows a tacit collaboration by which Los accomplishes the restraint of energy that is Urizen's ambition. This account is not arbitrary, or a result of characterological or plot dynamics alone. Rather, it is deeply mythic, in the sense that it accounts for the known shape of the world. *Urizen*'s account shows a central truth about society: restrictive reason and its social forms of kingly-priestly rule cannot create the varied forms of human social life without some kind of collaboration by both imagination and labor.

Blake's problem is to find an adequate poetic expression for this process. The explanation in *Urizen* — that Los shrank from his task "In terrors" — is only partial, and its elaboration requires the additional accounts in *Ahania* and *The Book of Los*. While the former concentrates on the sexual dynamic underlying Urizen's sequestration, the latter revises the account of Los's role in *Urizen*. Before examining this account, it is necessary to return briefly to *Urizen* 5-6, where Los appears in an apparently benign role, "[keeping] watch for Eternals" (5:39). This image has largely been taken as objective narrative fact. Within six lines, however, a contradiction in narrative viewpoints becomes clear. Los feels Urizen "rent from his side" (6:4), and thus attaining separate existence for the first time, whereas the earlier narrative has shown Urizen separating from the Eternals and taking form among rocks, forests, etc., within his womb or black globe (5:3-37):

8. And Los round the dark globe of Urizen,
Kept watch for Eternals to confine,
The obscure separation alone;
For Eternity stood wide apart,

As the stars are apart from the earth

9. Los wept howling around the dark Demon:
And cursing his lot; for in anguish,
Urizen was rent from his side: (Chap: III [II in B, D-G]; 5:38-6:4)

The rending of Urizen from Los can be explained as a mere characterological metaphor — Los feels the separation of Urizen from the Eternals as a tearing loss (Los). But an explanation is possible that is at once more radical and more consistent with other narrative inconsistencies in the poem: what is perceived by the Eternals as the formation of a dark globe is perceived by Los as his own act of giving existence to Urizen.[54] This point suggests in turn, however, that the sequence from 5:38 to 6:6, including Los's function as watchman, narrates from the Eternals' perspective a role that Los, viewing events from a more egocentric perspective, does not perceive and may not accept. Such a difference in perspective is implied by the reference to the "dark globe" (5:38), a repetition of the "black globe / View'd by sons of Eternity" (33-34) which suggests that verse 8 represents the Eternals' viewpoint, and by the appearance in verse 9 of Los's howls, tears, and curses, absent in the earlier passage. It is pos-

54. Deen accepts Urizen's birth from Los's side as narrative fact, and it is necessary that he do so to support his view of Los as the "source" figure, Poetic Genius, from which the others spring (65, 49).

sible, then, that Los's role as he perceives it is not the same as that assigned to him by the Eternals. Such a possibility is consistent with the fact that an alternative account of the entire creation sequence, stressing Los's jealousy and egocentricity, is given in *The Book of Los*.

It has been customary since Frye to say that "*The Book of Los* intersects *The Book of Urizen* at its fourth chapter" (*Symmetry* 254; Bloom commentary, *E*908; Tannenbaum 251); in fact the intersection occurs earlier, in *Urizen*'s Chap. III/II, with the image of Los keeping watch, which in *Los* is renarrated as:

> 6: Raging furious the flames of desire
> Ran thro' heaven & earth, living flames
> Intelligent, organiz'd: arm'd
> With destruction & plagues. In the midst
> The Eternal Prophet bound in a chain
> *Compell'd to watch Urizens shadow*
>
> 7: Rag'd with curses & sparkles of fury
> Round the flames roll as Los hurls his chains
> Mounting up from his fury (3:27-35; my emphasis)

Los here is consumed by envy, materialized as the chain that binds him as he is compelled to watch Urizen's shadow. The intelligent flames — projections of Los's fury, from which they rise — are distorted by his rage until they are destructive and pestilential, and give neither light nor heat (3:49-4:1). Los's service to the Eternals, and, indeed, the Eternals themselves, are not mentioned. As the action proceeds the flames are "driv'n" from him "In trembling and hor-

ror" (45-46), imprisoning Los in a vast rock "solid without fluctuation" (4:9), until he shatters the rock and

> rent, the vast solid
> With a crash from immense to immense
>
> 3: Crack'd across into numberless fragments
> The Prophetic wrath, strug'ling for vent
> Hurls apart, stamping furious to dust (4:16-20)

The rock "solid without fluctuation" recalls the state "solid without fluctuation" that Urizen has tried to create, and the crash recalls the "terrible crash" with which "Eternity roll'd wide apart" in the earlier poem (*Urizen* 4:12 [copies A-C], 5:4-5). Los, then, repeats the causes and effects of Urizen's "fall," with the difference that he is himself stifled by the unfluctuating state his envy creates, and must smash it. But it is unclear whether his "impatience" (4:15) is with his own bondage, his inability to bear watching Urizen, or both. While the smashing of a solid form is positive, as always for Blake — and as suggested by the parallel with Orc's "That stony law I stamp to dust" (*America* 8:5)[55] — the "fall" is still catastrophic, a literal fall that continues until Los throws out his limbs "in wrath," apparently stabilizing his whirling fall, allowing his wrath itself to subside, and moderating his descent (4:38-39).

Though Los's wrath has been called "Prophetic" (4:19), the context suggests that it is still mixed with envious fury, and that only when this fury subsides can Los's downward plummeting be stopped. Further, Los's downward plunge is essentially a retelling of the moment in *Urizen* when "His great hammer fell

55. As noted by Tannenbaum 256, 279.

from his hand" (13:21); the repetition emphasizes that we are getting alternative versions of the same event, this one making the fall a consequence of Los's internal state of envy at Urizen and rage at his own confinement. Though Los then begins constructive work — as human imagination and labor have carried out the work of building civilization even under Urizen's rule — Los in this version has *lost* Eternal vision even before his work begins. (The pun in his name is especially telling here.) In the ensuing sequence, Los first organizes his own organs, mind, and lungs, then separates the deep and the ether, chains down Urizen's spine "Hurtling upon the wind" (5:15), forges the sun, and binds Urizen to it (4:44-5:47). Thus the creation drama of *Urizen* is repeated, but with the major terms reversed: Los acts out of envy, he creates his own body before chaining Urizen's, and he does not shape Urizen's body at all, but only binds it.

The pathos of this account is increased by the prefatory verses spoken by Eno. At once psychic and social in focus, they describe a time when

> Not Eyeless Covet
> Nor Thin-lip'd Envy
> Nor Bristled Wrath
> Nor Curled Wantonness

existed, because all wants were satisfied (2:10-13). As always in Blake's evocations of unified existence, the speaker projects this existence onto "Times remote" (2:7), while the reader is free to reconstruct the vision as one of a possible future without envy or wantonness. But in either case, the juxtaposition of this song with Los's envy in the following verses suggests that Los himself brings these vices into the world. Urizen, it is true, already exists, and the reader can

fill in his contribution from a knowledge of *Urizen* and *Ahania*. But *Los* makes clear that Los's role is not simply to limit and order the chaos that Urizen has caused; through his own envy, he contributes to the introduction of the ills.

Los concludes with Urizen's brain and heart forming the four rivers of Eden, by hermetic tradition equivalent to Adam's body, and Adam himself appears in the final lines as "a Human Illusion / In darkness and deep clouds involvd" (5:56-57). In Leslie Tannenbaum's influential reading, this represents the victory of the Elohim principle: "Urizen-Elohim triumphs over Los-Jehovah: the mind of fallen man is enclosed in stone, and the human heart is enclosed in the waters of materialism, thus completing the human illusion" (258). But his account misses the point that these events are Los's work. If Urizen has won, it is only with Los's help: Los himself has created the form of existence in which Urizen becomes the human race's Adam. Moreover, "Los smild with joy" on completion of his world (5:45) — providing another answer to the question, "Did he smile his work to see?" The echo links Los, the blacksmith, to the ambiguous smith-creator of the Tyger and Lamb, and implies that the human faculties of imagination and labor are fully complicit in forming our world of betrayed innocence, victimization, and ultimate violent opposition to these processes.

The name of *these* faculties is Los. Overall, *Los* revises *Urizen* by pushing Los's loss of prophetic vision farther back, making it precede rather than follow his shaping of Urizen, and giving it equal responsibility for the creation of a restricted human existence. Together, the two books portray a Los who undertakes heroic labors, yet acts in part from envy, "suffer[s] his fires to decay," parallels Urizen in the binding of energy, and, as imagination, abandons himself

as labor to Urizen's command.[56] This portrait is consistent with the brief account of Los in *Europe* — a Los who is so like Urizen that it is narratively impossible to tell whose sons are singing the song of war in 4:3-9. It also concurs with the more extended portrait in the first five nights of *The Four Zoas* of a Los dominated by rivalry with Urizen and by jealous rage and fear against Enitharmon and Orc. Finally, it helps explain a detail in *Europe* that at first appears a mere textual inconsistency: the first point made in Los's speech to his sons is that "strong Urthona takes his rest" (3:10), and yet Los himself, a form of Urthona, is obviously *not* at rest. The added contexts of *Urizen* and *Los* suggest that the characterization is literally true: Urthona, the Eternal form of Los, is indeed asleep, while the Los of war and jealousy is active. In this case the meaning of Orc's dawn "in the vineyards of red France" at the end of *Europe* is amplified: it wakes not simply Los, but the prophetic faculty in Los.

This analysis in turn suggests a new reading of Los's significance in Blake's early work. Rather than showing an "essential similarity between the tyrant and the rebel" (Tannenbaum 47), Blake shows a deep similarity and collusion between *imagination* and tyranny, an inability of imagination to work free of a destructive collaboration-rivalry with Urizen, and to assume command of its own allied faculty of human labor. Moreover, in these books, Los attains a full prophetic faculty — an awareness of the past and of possible futurity — only when he responds to Orc: to Orc as sunrise in *Europe*, to Orc's howls "above the

56. A similar point is made by W. J. T. Mitchell's interpretation of plate 26 of *Urizen*, the begging child, whom he sees as Orc in the historical London of 1794. As Mitchell observes, the image is especially disturbing "because we cannot blame the child's condition solely on the rationalistic 'Urizenic carpentry' which structures his world. The imagination (Los) has helped to build this world, and has in this poem abandoned the child to it" (*Blake's Composite Art* 163).

Alps" that provide the occasion for *The Song of Los.* The next chapter will examine what becomes of this pattern in later work.

Orc, Fuzon, and France. The third revision of Blake's myth in the three "Bible" poems is in his treatment of social rebellion and the French Revolution, and occurs through the political plot of *Ahania.* There is a broad critical consensus that, in Fuzon, Blake comments on political revolution through a typological identification of the biblical exodus with the French Revolution and the role of Moses with that of the Jacobins, Robespierre in particular. There is disagreement on whether Fuzon is additionally to be identified with Orc, as Frye, Erdman, and others agree, or whether, as Morton D. Paley and some others argue, Blake creates Fuzon in order to avoid a wholesale condemnation of Orc.[57] Some of these identifications may be too narrow — Fuzon's passion, for example, ties him to Danton more than to the cold Robespierre. Overall, however, equation of the poem's exodus story with the French Revolution is valid. Indeed, Moses was a long-standing emblem of political liberation, as in Milton's invocation of him as "Thou . . . who didst redeem us from being servants of men!" (*The Readie and Easie Way* 463). The connection was one that occurred naturally to the typological minds of the period; in America, both federalist and antifederalist writers compared their causes to events of the exodus.[58] French supporters of the revolution made the connection themselves: in 1793 a speaker in the National Convention urged the "sacred Mountain" to become

57. See Frye 214; Erdman, *Prophet* 314-15; Simmons 159-161; Quasha 267; Paley, *Energy* 81; Tannenbaum 226; Howard, *Infernal Poetics* 188, 197.

58. For Thomas B. Wait of Maine, an antifederalist manifesto was "like the Thunder of Sinai — it's lightnings were irresistable"; federalist Noah Webster was certain that posterity would count the debate over the constitution "with the promulgation of the Jewish laws at Mount Sinai" (*Debate* 1:727, 129).

"the Sinai of the French .... Holy Mountain! become a volcano, in which shall be consumed every heart, that wishes to destroy liberty," and a quasi-liturgical public festival "honoured the 'holy Mountain' " (*Times* September 20, 1793, 1; Lefebvre 77). Whether or not Blake was aware of these particular events, they give added point to his treatment of a failed exodus, in which the rebel Fuzon is felled by a boulder that becomes Sinai. In Blake's hands, the idea that the French "Mountain" is Sinai becomes a criticism of a revolutionary faction that seeks to establish its own policy as divine law.

Blake makes his criticism of Fuzon (and Jacobinism) in three interrelated ways. He shows that Fuzon tried to assume Urizen's role:

> 8: While Fuzon his tygers unloosing
> Thought Urizen slain by his wrath.
> I am God, said he, eldest of things! (Chap: II:[d]; 3:36-38)

Blake's first criticism, then, is that Jacobinism attempted to replace Urizen — to become a quasi-divine power and, in consequence, create a new oppression. By and large interpretation has stayed at this level, and has assumed, moreover, against the evidence of the text, that Fuzon is in some sense successful: "the energy principle triumphs only to become similar to what it rebelled against"; Fuzon's "overthrow of Urizen is merely a replacement of one authoritarian figure by another" (Paley, *Energy* 81; Howard, *Milton* 65). Blake's point is broader, however, than simply noting the desire to replicate tyranny. To replace Urizen would be to rule by Urizenic law — by restraint and denial of desire. The application of this point to a revolution in Blake's own time that could compare its leading faction to Sinai implies a critique of its ideology as timid, unwilling to

trust the energies it releases. The point, then, cannot be that the "energy principle triumphs," but that the desire to replace Urizen *undermines* rebellious energy — an idea Blake will develop in *The Four Zoas*.

This point dovetails with a deeper one: Fuzon's belief that he can replace Urizen is an illusion that brings his destruction. Urizen, only wounded by Fuzon's "fiery beam" (Chap: 1st; 2:44), has *not* been "slain by his wrath," but has been poisoning with his own blood the rock that fells Fuzon and then falls to earth as Mount Sinai (3:20, 45). Rather than absorbing and perpetuating Urizenic law — though this is his intention — the rebel is defeated by this law, and the poem attacks him for having thought he could utilize it. As a treatment of the Mosaic exodus, the idea that Moses was "poisoned" by the law he created might be only a mordant way of saying he absorbed its poison. But as applied to a contemporary revolution the same metaphor makes the more trenchant point that an attempt to replace Urizen and rule through Urizenic law brings not a new Urizenic tyranny, but defeat and the continuation of Urizen's own rule. Blake's criticism of Fuzon's Urizenic ambitions is not directed against the revolution as such; Erdman is correct to note that Fuzon's "fiery beam" remains a "pillar of fire to Egypt" after Fuzon's downfall (2:44-45; *Prophet* 315). Rather, the attack is against Fuzon's attempt to deify himself — in historical terms, the Jacobins' bid for supreme power and their effort to present themselves as the sole votive priests of Reason.

In this context, the corpses and severed head shown on the last plate function in several ways. Erdman takes the scene as "a variant version of Fuzon's death" (*Prophet* 315), and there is no reason to exclude this reading, but the reference to the guillotine complicates any easy reading of Fuzon as hero-

victim. Rather, within the French allegory, as the victims of the Terror, the heap of bodies is the result of Fuzon's attempted self-deification — Blake's criticism of Jacobinism here is direct and brutal. Within Blake's overall myth, the design refers to Ahania's vision of future oppression, and so to the victims of slaughter throughout history. Finally, the topical and mythic contexts taken together suggest that the political murders of a revolution that has ended in such an effort at self-deification are no different from others of Urizen's six-thousand-year rule.

Blake's third and most fundamental point about the French Revolution is made by implication. *Ahania* is linked to *Urizen* through its continuation of the exodus story begun in that poem's last chapter. *Urizen*, however, has narrated Orc's chaining and its consequences in earlier chapters. This point suggests an answer to the vexed question of Orc's relation to Fuzon. If the Fuzon narrative in *Ahania* is read continuously with *Urizen*, the sequence of events is that Orc is bound and his cries awaken the dead and, by implication, Urizen's sons (Chap. VIII), one of whom, Fuzon, leads the revolt that begins in *Urizen* (Chap: IX) and continues in *Ahania*. Fuzon, then, is *like* Orc, as indicated by their shared imagery of fire and tigers, but he is a distinct and contrasted principle; Fuzon's rebellion is ultimately a response to Orc's cries, but it is not Orc's rebellion. *Orc is chained to the mountain* during the whole action of *Ahania*; Fuzon's rebellion originates and is corrupted and defeated while Orc, as elemental resistance, remains in chains. This unspoken context, indeed, makes Blake's criticism of Fuzon and Jacobinism even sharper, for to take Urizen's place would mean to rule *over Orc*; Fuzon's revolution has never recognized the animating impulse that created it.

Blake's treatment in *Ahania*, then, draws a distinction between elemental resistance and the specific French revolutionary dictatorship, a distinction he had earlier blurred in his references to Orc as "the terror" and to Los calling his sons to "the strife of blood." The point is not, however, that the strife of blood has been wrong, any more than it is that Fuzon's call to his brothers and sisters to leave Egypt was wrong. The idea that Blake is criticizing revolution as such falsely equates Orc with Fuzon, reads Fuzon's aspirations to godhead as Orc's, misses the point that Fuzon fails, and, most fundamentally, ignores Orc's continuance in chains. This metaphor establishes not that Orc's resistance becomes Urizenic tyranny, but that a revolution that lifts itself above Orc and seeks godlike power while Orc remains chained is doomed.

Blake's implication that Orc remains chained during Fuzon's rebellion is not, itself, a new thought. Such a criticism of the French revolutionary process was raised by French radicals themselves. In the Jacobin Club in August 1793, for instance, Danton was quoted as saying:

> The people for a long time past have lived only upon their tears. They alone have fought for liberty, and others have enjoyed the fruits of their toils; merchants and people of fortune have availed themselves of the Revolution, to appropriate to themselves the spoils of the Nobility and the Clergy. . . . [I]f the Sans Culottes do not in their turn enjoy the Revolution, we must begin again the same Revolution against the merchants and rich people, which we have carried on before against the Clergy and Nobility. (*Times*, September 14, 1793, 1)

Such statements, however, were made by a political leadership that equated the sans-culotte cause with its own power. Blake's identification of Orc with the

revolutionary dictatorship in *America* and *Europe* had accepted this equation. What is new in *Ahania* is the idea that the revolutionary dictatorship itself, and not just the merchants and *nouveaux riches*, is among those who have risen while Orc remained chained. The specific radicalism of such a conception needs to be stressed. Abstractly, conservatives as well as radicals should be able to utilize Orc's continued enslavement as an attack on a particular revolution. Yet to do so carries so great a burden of acknowledgment of past injustice that opponents of revolution tend not to use such arguments contemporaneously, though (like Carlyle and Dickens) they may do so from a later vantage point. At any rate, such arguments are largely absent in Burke and other contemporary anti-revolutionary polemicists, who preferred to focus on general charges of tyranny and on the suffering of the nobility, rather than on the specific continued oppression of the poor.[59] The argument tends to fall by default to radical opponents of a revolutionary regime. Blake's use of it signals a socially radical criticism of the Jacobin dictatorship for having failed to free Orc. At the same time, it begins a process of differentiation in his treatment of the processes represented by Orc.

Orc and the Direction of Blake's Development

Orc's multisidedness is fundamental both in Blake's elaboration of the symbol in the Lambeth poems, and in his further development of it in later

59. In a partial exception, Admiral Lord Hood, commander of British Mediterranean forces, charged in a proclamation to the French public that the revolutionary leaders "have amused you with the Sovereignty of the people, which they constantly usurped; they have declaimed against the abuses of Royalty, in order to establish their tyranny" (qtd. *Times* September 16, 1793, 2). However, the *Times* itself criticized the anti-monarchist flavor of this proclamation, particularly Hood's promise to restore the 1789 constitution, with its provisions for limited monarchy (September 20, 1793, 2).

work. Two different aspects of this multisidedness must be noted: the connectedness of Orc's roles, and — apparently paradoxically — the fact that he may simultaneously play different, even contradictory parts in an overall process.

Social, sexual, and psychic oppression and resistance — in the past, historical present, and apocalyptic present — are interconnected from the beginning in Blake's presentation, but it is only with the sequence of *Urizen*, *Ahania*, and *The Book of Los* that their links are traced rather than presented intuitively. These three poems show a process of separation from unified existence that involves a differentiation of psychic functions (Los from Urizen), the suppression and externalization of sexual function (the melting of Urizen's "Nerves of Joy"), and the manifestation of suppressed psychic function as aggression (Urizen's bow and the arrows of pestilence). At the same time, these differentiations are social. Abstract reason in effect solidifies in a social form as the rule of law, kings, and priests; imagination fails to direct labor, and both are subordinated to social tyranny; resistant energy takes form socially as rebellious slaves and prisoners, as wandering children and women. Thus what is shown as a split within a unified human imagination becomes a split society. Indeed, since in Blake's terms society as well as the physical world are products of human perception — what he will ultimately specify as collective human perception, the way humans work together to create their own existence — a split in human perception must create a split society. The obverse is true as well — a split society will continually recreate divided and limited perception — including the habits, ideas, and personality structures that perpetuate such a society. The implications are complex. On the one hand, Blake will come to believe that a mental reformation is

necessary in order to truly transform human relations. On the other hand, such a reformation does not remove the need for social struggle, since oppressive institutions recruit and produce their own human agents, persons who believe in those institutions, find in them their deepest being, and are ready to die for them. This problem, only latent in the Lambeth works, is one Blake will later explore intensively.

Placing the division in imagination and society at the dawn of human existence provides logic to Blake's already-existing portraits of Orc bound throughout history and of Orc as apocalyptic promise: a split originating in the foundation of human society can end only with the total transformation of that society. Indeed, the pattern of this myth, involving character-roles that are stabilized at an early stage in a historical myth and that involve analogues for the characters in social processes and institutions — Urizen as kingly-priestly rule, etc. — produces a historical pattern of continual opposition, an epochal impasse that can be broken only by the eventual apocalyptic shattering of the blocklike, and blocked, forces. Blake's apocalyptic endings — whether or not convincing to the reader — are thereby seen to be the necessary outcome of a historical plot that is otherwise balked.

Such a pattern in Blake's myth tends not to lend itself to the cyclic exchange of character-roles supposed in much criticism. It tends, as well, to preclude the large-scale historical cycles posited in some accounts. Abstractly, it is true, a conception of epochal counterposition of forces could allow for periodic historical cycles within it, such as those discussed speculatively in Volney's *The Ruins*, whose account of early religions we know to have been similar to Blake's. (See Chap. 2 above and Mee *passim*.) Blake's social myth operates at

a different level from Volney's, however; it focuses not on the changing forms of social rule, but on the underlying restraint of human ability (Orc) and the rise of kingship and priestship as social principles (Urizen). Blake's historical account tends to work imaginatively in terms of a pattern of continually deepening catastrophe and eventual recovery, as in the fall-and-rise patterns of both *Urizen* and *The Song of Los*. Where he does show a pattern like Volney's, in the political plot of *Ahania*, he shows that the cyclic processes that a Volney identifies work only on the surface of society, and do not involve the deeper patterns embodied in the blocklike oppositions of his main characters (here, signified by the implied binding of Orc throughout the poem's action).

At the same time, the conceptualization of history as an isometric tension of opposed blocklike forces tends to modify the idea of equivalence between characters stressed in some critical studies. Specifically, Orc and Urizen are seen — most notably in plates 8 and 10 of *America* — to share characteristics not because of the possibility of a fluid exchange of positions or roles, but because of the necessity, within the terms of the myth, of a hard, unflinching opposition.[60] Los and Urizen, on the other hand, are seen to share a different kind of equivalence in the pre-redemptive stages of Blake's myth — again not one of cyclic exchange, but one of parallelism and deep-level collusion. Urizen's vision conceives a world of boundaries and divisions, and Los's hammer creates it; Urizen's shedding of his sexuality into the white lake (where it becomes the basis for the arrows of pestilence) is repeated in Los's chaining of Orc. The introduction of Orc, however, breaks the symmetry of the Los and Urizen myths.

60. The masculinizing assumptions contained in such polarities as "fluid" versus "hard" seem to fit Blake's underlying conceptions of sexuality.

Orc, unlike the arrows of pestilence, escapes Urizen's and Los's control. He does this even while still chained: the moment when "All things. heard the voice of the child / And began to awake to life" (*Urizen* 20:28-29) begins the upward curve of *Urizen*'s plot, because the child's cries begin to animate both dead nature and the dead of history. (While Ahania, Orc's equivalent in the Urizen myth, also escapes Urizen's control, her lament does not have this effect.) At this point Blake's myth economically conflates the beginning and end of time. Orc's cries affect the time to come by ensuring that Urizen will reign only over a world of continual opposition; they anticipate an end of time in which the dead of *past* history will be redeemed. Orc, still chained, prevents the collusion of Los and Urizen from settling into stasis. Ultimately, in *Europe* and *The Song of Los*, the unchained Orc breaks the symmetry between Los and Urizen, realigning Los's role to one of opposition.

Hence one sees a pattern in Blake's early myth that is almost diametrically opposite to that often assumed. Rather than an Orc who is the functional equivalent of Urizen and a Los who represents the prophetic voice of imagination, one sees an Orc who (with those he animates) is the *sole* principle of resistance during a history in which Los — whether directly as in *Urizen* and *The Book of Los*, or in rivalry as in the war song in *Europe* — has largely collaborated with the essence of Urizen's rule.

Certain problems in Blake's development of the Orc symbol must now be mentioned. One has already been noted, the ambiguities in the presentation of Orc and the waking of the dead in plate 6 of *America*. In the plate as a whole, Orc is both speaker and listener. Within Orc's speech, which is a vision of a mass awakening, does his call, "Let the slave grinding at the mill, run out into

the field" (line 6) respond to the resurrection in the preceding lines ("The bones of death . . . / Reviving shake . . . "), or retroactively produce it? And within the narrative context of the poem, does Orc's speech awaken the youth in the plate design, or respond to his waking? These possibilities refer to quite distinct accounts of the way in which prophecy — in this case revolutionary prophecy — is heard. In one, the prophetic message produces the acts it describes, while in the other, it provides perspective and guidance to the already awakened "dead," whose awakening therefore occurs in a way not described in Blake's text, and perhaps impossible to describe. These ambiguities are not removed by conceptualizing Orc as "mass rebellion" or "mass desire." Such a designation does indicate that Orc stands for collective processes. But in fact collective processes are never uniform, so that merely labeling Orc as a collective being does not mean that his call is heard in the same way and at the same time by everyone. In effect, the design points to this situation (since it already distinguishes between a conscious, speaking Orc in the text and a just-awakening Orc in the design), but slurs it over in picturing the entire people as an awakening youth who hears and receives the message of liberation. The text, on the other hand, embodies two quite distinct ideas about revolutionary awakening without seeming to.

This point raises a further question: are the ordinary people whom Blake so brilliantly metaphorizes through apocalyptic imagery as the reviving dead, truly "dead" (or "asleep," the figurative conception Blake will later employ)? To ask this question is, it turns out, to raise a whole series of issues intrinsic to both revolutionary and prophetic modes of thought: how is the present "consciousness" of ordinary people, or, to be more exact, their ideas and systems of

belief, related to the ideas and systems of belief that prophets and revolutionaries urge? Are the former "false consciousness," indeed a kind of sleep or death, as Marxist thought conceptualizes them? Or are they simply people's own "consciousness" (beliefs), one among many systems of ideas — a possibility that the metaphors of sleep and death do not suggest? In sum, the death-resurrection and sleep-waking metaphors point to, but also blur over, the problems of whether and how the people are to be inspired, convinced, or even coerced to act as the prophet thinks necessary. These difficulties tend not to be apparent in radical periods, when "consciousness" seems to be changing rapidly; they become glaring in periods of political and cultural retreat. But the problem is present even in periods of developing radical thought and action. It is not acknowledged directly in Blake's text, however, even though it is inherent in the metaphor of awakening; it must be inferred from the ambiguity in his imagery.

These problems in the portrayal of revolutionary awakening essentially involve the relationship of conscious minorities to larger populations; they are not trivial problems and will preoccupy Blake in later works when he recognizes them more clearly. They in turn are closely related to a second problem involving leaders and broader popular groups, which is embodied in Blake's reference to Orc as a "terror." I have argued that in this metaphor and the accompanying image, in *Europe*, of "the strife of blood," Blake endorses both revolutionary violence and the specific policies of the Jacobin dictatorship. The metaphors, then, conflate two distinct kinds of violence: that of mass or mob action, as in the storming of the Bastille, the women's march to Versailles (October 1789), and the uprisings and massacres in August and September '92 and May '93 — and that of the Jacobin terror. Blake's metaphors and designs implicitly present

these as if they were the same. Blake was, perhaps, responding to the upward swing of mass actions in 1792 and 1793, which might make it plausible to view the declaration of terror as "the order of the day" (September 1793) as a response to the popular will. But even in instituting measures such as the "maximum" in that same month, Danton also limited the meetings of the neighborhood sections, cutting off a forum for potential mass pressure. Moreover, as the government lost lower-class support in the following months, its police powers were used against the poor and against radical factions. With the execution of the Hébertists (March 1794), "the government . . . forestalled popular action by doing away with its leaders" (Lefebvre 89). In the succeeding months, the government forced the section committees to dissolve altogether, and worked to institute a regime in which, according to Lefebvre's relatively sympathetic account, "all administrative bodies would be subordinated to the government through centralization; all resistance would be broken by its 'coercive power,' that is, through the Terror; and anyone disobeying its law would be an 'enemy of the people' and deserving of death" (91). The number of prisoners in Paris alone grew to 8,000, and 1,376 persons were executed in the seven weeks before Robespierre's fall (Lefebvre 124).[61] On the eve of Thermidor, Lefebvre sums up, the "greatest part of the nation" opposed this policy and the sans-culottes began again to "[show] their disaffection in various ways" (131). Hence in making Orc "the terror," Blake was mixing together the militancy, organization, and violence of the popular mobs and the violence of a regime that held back, and in part terrorized, these same groups. This latter violence unfolded fully only after September 1793, but it should be remembered

61. The regime's lower-class support was always much weaker in provincial cities, the countryside in general, and of course the Vendée.

that *Europe* is dated 1794.

The problems I am referring to here are raised in one of the most cogent left-wing critiques of Blake's political vision. David Aers criticizes *America* and *Europe* (as well as *The Four Zoas*, as discussed in the following chapter) as failing to present a positive vision of popular cooperation and self-organization. For Aers, the final lines of *Europe* are "replete with the violence of war. The only interaction is that in which people reduce each other to threatening objects, things which are to be destroyed.... Coming from the author of the *Songs* this is a peculiar version of radical human transformation" (253). Aers further argues that the account of social oppression in *Europe* (and similar accounts later), with its images of the youth "hid in gloom," the citizens "With bands of iron round their necks," etc., shows such a "desolately one-dimensional society" that Blake "leaves no spaces in which a counter-culture can be created, no agents which might make alternative forms of relations and ideas, and certainly no prefigurations of the regenerate society" ("Representations" 253; see *Europe* 12 and discussion above). Though similar, these comments focus on distinct points, and one is much more valid than the other. The first, while accurate on its face, misses the point that Blake's concern in both *Europe* and *America* is not to show utopian cooperation, but the process leading to it; in effect, both poems center around the opposition between *America* plates 8 and 10, and, rather than showing the creation of utopia as a simple assertion of cooperative values, they present it as the endpoint of a violent and horribly destructive struggle. That is Blake's perspective. One may certainly raise the question of how and whether a dehumanizing social process can give rise to a humanized society, as gradualist and pacifist arguments have traditionally done. But one can also ask from the

opposing side whether humanized-nonviolent methods can win against a dehumanized enemy — *another* long-standing question. Aers's initial criticism, then, too easily assumes that Blake should show a "radical human transformation" in each of his works; the issue that Aers identifies has to be recognized as an ideological *question* present in Blake's early view of revolution.

Aers's second criticism is far more telling. The issue he raises here, of how an agency for transformation can arise in a world unremittingly oppressive and destructive to personality itself, is related to the problems posed by the metaphor of awakening. Both the social portrait and the apocalyptic metaphor imply that those who are dead or asleep cannot change their situation until somehow "awakened" by ideas or political forces coming from outside the community life of ordinary people. In part, however, Aers's criticism fails to deal closely enough with Blake's imagery. The awakening voices given in his narrative to Orc are, in part, transcendent and apocalyptic traditions that are very much part of the common life. On another level, Orc and Urizen's sons both stand for irreducible impulses of assertion and rebellion that cannot be totally stamped out; that is why "All things. heard the voice of the child / And began to awake to life." Beyond these specific points, Aers does not see that Blake's later works pose — indeed, they revolve around — the very issue of agency that he is raising. *The Four Zoas*, I will argue, is partly concerned with how to carry out apocalyptic change when the agency for it is unclear. The "redemptive" portions of that poem, as well as the whole of *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, are efforts to reimagine the agency for apocalypse and how it can be brought into action. *Jerusalem* is concerned, as well, with the issues of coercion and violence that Aers raises in his first comment. These later works maintain and deepen the picture

of social life as radically beaten down and permeated with competitive and mutually destructive ways of living. At the same time, they try to show how an agency for transformation can arise; indeed, they show, in this role, the very sense of mutuality whose absence Aers is criticizing here, though it is true that Blake cannot specify how that sense will arise.

To pursue this point now would be to anticipate later chapters. Here, it should be noted that both the problem of agency — how groups of people come to be committed to revolutionary change — and the related problem of elite versus mass or mob action, are *real* problems, ones that exist in the real world. Blake is not so much answering these questions as asking them. *America* and *Europe*, indeed, come closest to answering them in a particular way, by sliding over the distinction between revolutionary elites and ordinary people, and by treating the "awakening" of oppressed people as a response to a voice coming, in effect, from the air (*America* 6). At the same time, as already noted, the image is open to a less determinate reading: the boy awakens *somehow*. Such a reading lacks the implicitly authoritarian implications of the dominant image; in this reading Orc (and Blake) cannot determine when or how the awakening will occur but must simply do what they can to bring it about. The final image in *Europe* builds on such a reading: here, Orc's role is to stir Los into action, while the "strife of blood" comes through Los's call to "all his sons" (15:11). As I have argued, "All his sons" must mean all the sons of France, so that Blake's metaphor points to a complex process in which the people at large settle accounts with their rulers. The image, then, suggests a more complex political process than the single image of "the terror," but it does not directly face the problems posed by identifying revolution as such with Jacobin dictatorship.

The political plot in *Ahania* begins the process of differentiating the two. Blake's poetic means of showing this differentiation is a division in his symbol of resistance, whereby the ambitions of supreme rule and the identification with Moses which he is criticizing are embodied in one character while the deeper processes of social liberation remain attached to the absent character of Orc. This procedure points to an aspect of Orc's multisidedness mentioned briefly above: the fact that this and other Blakean symbols can stand for distinct and even contradictory aspects of the same process at once. Orc is both a quality in the individual brain and an aspect of collective humanity; hence, he is a part of both rebellious individuals and dispossessed social groups. It is entirely possible, then, that in one aspect he may speak as a liberator while in another he remains chained, as the oppressed population. It is only another step to say that Orc in one aspect may become an oppressor — so far as that oppression arises out of an originally revolutionary process — while in another aspect he remains the oppressed. In the complexity of real social life, Orc may be diverted, tamed, and Satanized in one layer of society while he remains chained in another. Blake works out one poetic method of representing this process in *Ahania*, dividing the two functions between Fuzon and an absent Orc, but he will adopt another, more radical procedure in *The Four Zoas*.

CHAPTER FOUR

Unbound From Wrath

In *The Four Zoas*, Blake develops and extends, but also transforms, the symbolism of the Lambeth prophecies.[1] He adds characters, elaborates and alters his myth of origins, and introduces a new layer of symbols utilizing traditional Christian imagery. Most important, Orc is literally reshaped, becoming a serpent and, simultaneously, a subterranean human residue. He loses his central place in Blake's scheme of redemption, yet he is not replaced by a new symbolic form capable of playing the same roles. Orc's treatment marks a crisis in Blake's view of human transformation.

It is a crisis in the external world as well. The years of Blake's work on

1. In citing this much-revised poem, I reproduce the idiosyncrasies of *E*'s usage as exactly as possible; for example, the last page of Night VIIA is 98 [90]. *E*'s first number usually, though not always, indicates the order of the page, while bracketed numbers, when used, refer to the different numbering used in Keynes's edition. In Night VIII, the order of the manuscript pages is so confusing that I add the page in *E*, e.g., 115 [111]:24, *E*386. I omit *E*'s designation of the first and second portions of divided pages, since line numbers locate the references unambiguously. I cite Nights traditionally, as Night I rather than "Night the First," etc.; the latter are Blake's titles, but they are awkward to use consistently. Finally, as in Chapter 2, I treat Nights VIIA and VIIB as variant versions rather than a continuous text. On the poem's dating and the complexities of its evolution, see varying arguments by Margoliouth, *Vala* xxiii-xxv; Bentley, *William Blake, Vala or The Four Zoas* 157-66 and "The Date of Blake's *Vala*"; *E*817-818; Mann, "The Final State of *The Four Zoas*"; Essick, "*The Four Zoas*: Intention and Production."

The Four Zoas, roughly 1797-1807, are those of the defeat of French and English Jacobinism, the consolidation of Napoleon's dictatorship in France, the Two Acts of 1795 and later attacks on civil liberties in England, and the longest European war in modern history. Peter Linebaugh describes the background to the struggles of London dockers in 1798:

> The context was one of defeat.... In the spring the London radicals were imprisoned, the treason trials of the United Irishmen began, and the hope of a coordinated republican rising in the three kingdoms was dashed when Napoleon decided to invade Egypt not Ireland. By late summer 1798 the repressions began in earnest: 30,000 [Irish] peasants were slaughtered by staged hangings, unstaged massacres and 'hunting the croppies'. And the migrations began to Prussia, to Glasgow, to the Caribbean and to the Thames, carrying with them their news, songs and struggles. (432)

These alterations in the historical world changed, as well, Blake's presentation of that world and his characters' struggles. David Erdman has noted one aspect of this change, Blake's increasing reliance on his symbolic vocabulary to disguise his politics in a situation in which, as he noted in his comments on Watson's *Apology for the Bible*, "The Beast & the Whore rule without controls" (*E*611).[2] But the importance of Blake's remark goes far beyond the defensive purpose Erdman assigns it. The comment bespeaks a changed social scene in which radical opposition, while not eliminated, was scattered and dangerous; social in-

2. Erdman, *Prophet* 301; see 296-305 for an interpretation of the Tharmas material in *The Four Zoas* as commentary on issues of free speech and censorship. For the Two Acts and other measures see Thompson 145 and Chap. 5 *passim*.

justice was pervasive; popular opposition was intermittent and enthusiasm for war and repression high; and there was no clearly perceptible agency for radical change comparable to the Corresponding Societies and the crowds that rallied to them in 1793-95. Such a situation requires rethinking not just the language used to convey a radical social message, but the message itself.

That *The Four Zoas* grows out of the ebb tide of the radical Nineties is not a new thought. This idea is implicit in several of the standard readings considered below, though they focus on the end of "illusions" about France, rather than on the English scene (e.g., Paley, *Energy* 90). With regard to Blake's English contexts, Stewart Crehan reads *The Four Zoas*, as I do, as a response to defeat: "[T]he division, sterile conflict, atomisation, disorganisation, and sense of retrogression that we find in *The Four Zoas* clearly reflect the period after 1795" (303). But Crehan sees *The Four Zoas* simply as a reflection of the mood of defeat, whereas I see it as an effort to assess the political — and the broader religious and spiritual — implications of the new period, and to preserve Blake's revolutionary message while recasting it.

The Four Zoas, then, is a crucial work in both Blake's intellectual development and the intellectual history of its time. It is one of the first systematic efforts by a critical intelligence profoundly influenced by the American and French Revolutions, and the English radicalism of the 1790s, to come to grips with the failure of those movements and the consequent complication of hopes for social liberation and human transformation. Beyond these concerns, the poem initiates a rethinking of Blake's conception of apocalypse, a process that will continue in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. Both of these aspects involve the branching fates of Orc. Orc's metamorphosis, and especially the process of temptation

leading up to it, are the crucial moments in this crucial text. Yet they have received relatively little examination, and much of that has been superficial.[3] To understand how Blake's views did and did not change in *The Four Zoas* requires a close examination of Orc's transmutation and its consequences, each set in the context of the poem's overall argument. As a preliminary it is necessary to glance at the interpretive traditions, old and new, that have deformed our understanding of the work.

Most though not all readings of *The Four Zoas* have assimilated the poem to the view so influentially argued by M.H. Abrams, that Romantic literature involved a redefinition of apocalypse as mental rather than social, an internalization in which "the millennial pattern of thinking . . . persisted, with this difference: the external means was replaced by an internal means for transforming the world"; the "mind of man," as distinct from revolutionary action, was seen as having the power to transform the world "by means of a total revolution of consciousness" (334). Accommodating *The Four Zoas* to this view by the simple device of ignoring all its political imagery, Abrams writes that the poem's "central subject" is "the fall of man's [*sic*] imaginative faculty and its education in experience to the stage at which it is capable of the highest and most compre-

3. For Frye's glancing treatment of the temptation, in *Symmetry* 223, see Chapter 2. Aileen Ward, whose major discussion of Orc is noted below, does not mention it. Morton D. Paley, one of the few critics to examine Orc's crucial reply to Urizen (80:27-42) in any detail, interprets it in a sense opposite to mine, as showing Orc's surrender to wrath; see *Energy* 115-16, discussed below. Erdman, *Prophet* 375-76, focuses on Urizen's "crust of bread speech" rather than Orc's reply, though he briefly recounts Orc's division as he sees it. Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson discount the significance of the temptation scene, calling it a mere "debate" that "settles nothing in the plot" (*Design* 143). The recent study of David Aers, discussed below, endorses Paley's reading and alludes to Orc's speech in a textual reference without examining it (254).

hensively human art" (261). Among detailed treatments of the poem, Morton D. Paley's in *Energy and the Imagination* is typical in seeing *The Four Zoas* as apotheosizing a "regeneration through the Imagination," in opposition to one occurring through "revolutionary fraternity"(155, 154).[4] And this aspect of the poem, for Paley, epitomizes the later Blake's emphasis on mental transformation. The contrast between the millenarianism of Brothers and Southcott and Blake's outlook, Paley contends, is "the difference between the external and the internal, between the unrealized promise of a failed messiah and [Blake's] 'Allegory address'd to the Intellectual Powers' " ("Prince" 292).[5] Other critics, who argue that Blake underwent a religious conversion or renewal in this period, essentially hold that he reached this same point by an alternative route. So, for Bernard Blackstone, the later Blake "moved away from external revolutionism, and found in the teachings of Christ a more radical reversal of accepted values" (327; 121 for connection with *The Four Zoas*). There exists something like consensus, then, that *The Four Zoas* occupies an essentially mental or spiritual, and also essentially individual landscape — using Abrams's terms, it is a "myth of mind" retelling the biblical fall and redemption as a story of division and reintegration within "each human individual" (258, 256).

Not all such readings acknowledge a social dimension in the poem at all. But in most of those that do, Orc's metamorphosis is the moment of reversal in the text. For Paley, Orc's degeneration marks the transformation of rebellion

4. Paley maintains but does not elaborate this view in his later *The Continuing City: William Blake's* Jerusalem (1983).

5. Paley is quoting Blake's letter to Butts, July 6, 1803, in which Blake speaks of his labor on a "Grand Poem," possibly *The Four Zoas* (*E*730; see also the previous letter to Butts, *E*728-29). It should be noted that to describe a poem as "addressd to the Intellectual Powers" is not the same as saying human life can be transformed by mental means.

into a "manifestation of the will-to-power" (116), the corruption of "rebel" into "revolutionary" in the terms of Camus's modern parable, and "the point where . . . something like an 'Orc cycle' can be said to exist" (115). To Harold Bloom, Orc's change signals that "revolution is just that, revolution, the revolving of another cycle of revolt aging into repression" (252). And in Aileen Ward's important account of Orc's evolution, Blake here recognizes that "revolutionary violence does not . . . change the minds of men but hardens them," and so is "changed into the repressive power it first opposed"; "triumphant violence harden[s] into regressive power." The transmutation symbolizes "the forces of Energy perverted and leagued with Urizenic power," while Blake, for his part, "reject[s] Orc" — the idea of revolutionary upheaval — in favor of "a deeper change in men's hearts" (217-218, 223).

Several recent readings challenge aspects of these well-established views while maintaining their core assumptions. George Anthony Rosso's recent book on the poem assaults the misconception that Blake's philosophical-religious and political concerns can be separated, and restores historical contexts slighted in much criticism. But Rosso takes a traditional view of Night IX as an "internalized," mental apocalypse, though one that involves a "collective" rather than merely "individual" redefinition of reality (148, 151). David Aers, whose concern is to criticize what he sees as virulent strains of violence and misogyny in Blake's social views, echoes Ward's assessment of Orc: "Orcian rebellion involves profound collusion with the dominant Urizenic reality." Unlike Rosso, Aers views Night IX as an apocalypse of social vengeance that is in no sense regenerative, and contrasts to it the "radical transformation of subjectivity and social practice" shown in Los and Enitharmon's reconciliation in

the extension of Night VIIA ("Representations" 254, 270). Yet despite their opposed views of Night IX, both Rosso and Aers endorse the standard opposition between violent social revolution and the transformation of consciousness, and find the latter truly redemptive.

Donald Ault's *Narrative Unbound* (1987), finally, has challenged traditional emphases in a more radical and problematic manner, both by interpreting Blake's poem as involving continual clashes of perspective and a pervasively indeterminate narrative line, and, more centrally for my purposes, by viewing it as subverting rather than affirming the idea of apocalypse. Ault assumes that the "fall/redemption/apocalypse model" of Blake interpretation, which he associates primarily with Frye and Bloom, must affirm "the desirability of a teleologically closed or unified text or 'system' " (xv and ff.). His argument against the text's closure thus is simultaneously an argument that it subverts its apparent apocalyptic message. Ault applies this point particularly to Night IX, in his view not a Night of apocalypse but of "counter-apocalyptic resistances" (347).[6]

Despite their differences, both the traditional approaches associated with Paley, Abrams, Bloom, and Frye, and the deconstructive tack favored by Ault converge in important ways. With respect to Orc, they accept his Urizenic affinities while missing his close connection with the redemptive threads of Blake's narrative. And with respect to Blake's view of apocalypse, though they recognize Blake's loyalties to the radical movements of his time, they place these loyalties within an imaginative, mental, or linguistic, rather than collective and social conception of liberation. Paley, as a major interpreter of the apocalyptic in Romantic visual art, is an instructive example. Discussing the epic style of rendering biblical subjects that he terms the "apocalyptic sublime," Paley

6. The phrase is Ault's title for his entire section on Night IX (347-468).

acknowledges the prominent social content in the work of Blake, Francis Danby, John Martin, and others. The "libertarian themes" that these artists "frequently introduced" in their paintings, Paley notes, show that "the apocalyptic sublime was immediately related to the great upheavals of the period." Nevertheless, though Blake believed history would move toward a Last Judgment or apocalypse, "[a]t first Blake saw this process embodied in the revolutions of his time; later he conceived of it as acting through the artistic imagination" (*Apocalyptic* 175-76, 71). So, without discounting Blake's political concerns, Paley firmly subordinates them to the idea of imaginative transformation. The otherwise disparate accounts of these interpreters coalesce in a consensus that depoliticizes and privatizes Blake's later work as a whole and *The Four Zoas* in particular.

My purpose in this chapter is to attack this consensus. In *The Four Zoas* Blake's view of both "fall" and apocalypse remains simultaneously psychic, social or political, and perceptual. Apocalypse in this poem is a social upheaval, seen from three perspectives as a directly social revolt by the poor and oppressed; the apocalyptic resurrection of the dead and their judgment of the earth's oppressors; and a harvest celebration whose themes are equality, fraternity, and the downfall of social and political tyranny:

> Attempting to be more than Man We became less said Luvah
> As he arose from the bright feast drunk with the wine of ages (Night IX, 135:21-22)

> we know
> That Man subsists by Brotherhood & Universal Love

We fall on one anothers necks more closely we embrace
Not for ourselves but for the Eternal family we live
Man liveth not by Self alone but in his brothers face (133:21-25)

Go down ye Kings & Councellors & Giant Warriors
Go down into the depths & hide yourselves beneath
Go down with horses & with Chariots & with Trumpets of hoarse war
(134:7-9)

Apocalypse is also a recovery of sexual unity and psychic integration, aspects that I assume without discussing them specifically. And, centrally for our understanding of Blake, it is a human act. There is a considerable orthodox Christian machinery in this poem (as well as *Milton* and *Jerusalem*), and the point that its seemingly providential interventions actually signify human acts will require discussion in both this and subsequent chapters. But, in any case, while this machinery is indeed mobilized in Night IX, in essence the action is carried out by human agents — the poor, the arisen dead, the human faculties and populations Blake calls zoas, and the central overseeing figure of Night IX, variously identified as the Eternal Man or the Regenerated Man:

The Eternal Man arose he welcomd them to the Feast
The feast was spread in the bright South & the Eternal Man
Sat at the feast rejoicing (133:1-3)

If this utopian vision is relatively clear, however, the means to achieving it and the problems of social power that it poses are not. Two problems in particular that were latent in the Lambeth poems are taken up, and not fully resolved,

in *The Four Zoas*. One is the inadequacy of Orc's elemental resistance to create a sustaining understanding of oppression and to see through the temptations of power; the second is an ambiguity about the active or passive role of the people. Both are problems of agency — of specifying the human populations that will or can realize a utopian vision.

The first of these problems finds expression in Orc's split in Night VII and the assumption of serpent form by one of his aspects. However, contrary to the views of Paley, Bloom, Ward and others, Orc's transformation does not take place through a "perversion" of Energy into mere "wrath," but through the *dissipation* of wrath — a subtle but fundamental difference. And rather than a mere division of one mental process from another, Orc's schism is best seen as a social division, a division of Orcs against Orcs. Further, Orc's division, rather than being counterposed to Los's commencement of his prophetic labors in the extension of Night VIIA, dovetails with it; both processes help make possible the apocalypse of Night IX.

Night IX itself is where the second problem comes into play. Night IX does show a genuine apocalyptic rebellion; Ault's attempt to find in it an undermining of apocalyptic fantasies by negative subversions must be rejected. The interconnections between Orc's transformation and the redemptive Los imagery (both in Night VII), and between these and the apocalyptic scenario in Night IX, break down the opposition between redemption and vengeance that most interpreters, Ault included, have taken for granted. But Blake's denouement is complicated by awareness of different social alternatives and a questioning of their implications. Radically contrary readings of the poem's conclusion by different interpreters, the juxtapositions of counterposed imagery

that Ault has noted, and Blake's failure at crucial points to find a convincing symbolic language all point to sharp ambivalences about the means and content of apocalyptic transformation. Rather than showing a systematic deconstruction of the idea of apocalypse, however, such uncertainties may show Blake's willingness to examine unsolved problems. Orc's split and the near-disappearance of his human form are events that point to a profound difficulty in conceptualizing apocalypse. In these terms, what appears in *The Four Zoas* is not simply vision, but a crisis of vision as well. Politically it is the crisis of maintaining a revolutionary outlook when the social movements originally seen as embodying it have receded and revealed their political weaknesses; artistically, it is the crisis of showing a renovation of human existence without a complete symbolism for doing so.[7]

The Social Landscape of *The Four Zoas*

To read the apocalypse of *The Four Zoas* as a social event, we must first establish that the poem as a whole refers to a social landscape, not merely a vista of the mind. Of course, it is not hard to find passages of explicit social commentary in *The Four Zoas.* Aside from the apocalyptic passages in Night IX, segments detailing present or historical social oppression include the Nuptial Song sung for Los and Enitharmon in Night I, incorporating a myth of the

7. My approach here has points in common with what Jerome J. McGann calls "dialectical paraphrase," essentially a procedure of referring outside the literary work to ideological assumptions visibly incorporated in it, while regarding the work as an imaginative expression in its own terms, not just a reflection of embedded ideology; see *The Romantic Ideology* 148. However, I do not share McGann's assumption that the political assumptions of such works can be straightforwardly identified as "ideology" in the Marxist sense, that is, distorted representations of a reality that can be known scientifically.

origins of war; Enion's lament at the close of the bridal feast; Vala's "mourning among the Brick kilns" in Night II, with its references to the Jews' slavery in Egypt; much of Urizen's exploration of his "dens" in Night VI; the war song of the Elemental Gods in Night VIIB, and others.[8] One of the most notable examples, which also shows Blake's capacity for sudden, stunning reversals of perspective, is Night II's narration of what Urizen perceives as his creation of the material universe:

> The Bands of Heaven flew thro the air singing & shouting to Urizen
> Some fix'd the anvil, some the loom erected, some the plow
> And harrow formd & framd the harness of silver & ivory
> The golden compasses, the quadrant & the rule & balance
> . . . . . .
> In human forms distinct they stood round Urizen prince of Light
> Petrifying all the Human Imagination into rock & sand
> Groans ran along Tyburns brook and along the river of Oxford
> Among the Druid Temples. Albion groand on Tyburns brook
> Albion gave his loud death groan The Atlantic Mountains trembled
> Aloft the Moon fled with a cry the Sun with streams of blood
> From Albions Loins fled all the Peoples and Nations of the Earth
> Fled with the noise of Slaughter & the stars of heaven fled (24:9-12, 25:5-12)

What begins as a celebration of celestial order and the joy of creation, echoing the "sons of morning" in Job, becomes a catalogue of human oppression, whose

8. See I, 14:16-16:12; 17:1-18:8; II, 31:1-16; VI, 70:5-71:14; VIIB, 91:24-93:19.

references to the Druid temples and Tyburn conflate ancient human sacrifice and modern judicial execution. Albion's death groan refers to Albion's murder, perhaps by Luvah, in a version of the poem's "fall" myth narrated at the start of Night II, but here it signifies the continuing murder of Albion every day in the historical world, further detailed in the continuation of the passage.[9]

But if the poem's social focus were confined to individual passages such as these, its social commentary could be considered incidental, merely detailing one of several aspects of human suffering to be overcome through a transformation of perception; it could even be considered central to the purpose of showing that an apocalypse of imagination creates a mental Jerusalem in the midst of suffering and oppression — Frye's "continuing city in the England of the Satanic mills" (*Symmetry* 355). These have, in fact, been the contentions of a critical tradition that has leached social content out of Blake's basic myth while accepting the topical identifications of historical readings as a kind of quasi-interesting second dimension.

In reality, the social focus of *The Four Zoas* is integral to its *entire* myth, and so established in its title, epigraphs, and opening sequence. It has long been noted that Blake's revised title, *The Four Zoas*, creates an English plural by adding *s* to what is already a plural in Greek, the *zoa* mentioned in Revelation 4:6 as a translation of the four "living creatures" of Ezekiel 1:5 (Bloom commentary, *E*948). The coinage, however, has usually been treated as a lapse

9. The entire passage from "Petrifying all the Human Imagination," through 25:33 was interlineated or lined in from the margin, providing a second perspective on the celebration of Urizen's glory in the original wording. The "Atlantic Mountains" refer to Blake's use of the myth of the sinking of Atlantis (see also *America* 10:5-10). Later segments detail an archetypal fratricide (25:17-20) and show the sons of Jacob presiding over imperialist commerce (lines 25-28); for the contemporary reference to the English textile industry, see Erdman, *Prophet* 332.

or a decision made for euphony — for Margoliouth an error that "an Oxford scholar could have told him" not to make, and for Frye a "very sensibl[e]" anglicization (*William Blake* 174, *Symmetry* 273). It seems not to have been noticed that in pluralizing a plural form, Blake is stating that the four entities that make up the "Zoas" are themselves plural; each "Zoa" consists of *beings*.[10] Hence, it is not sufficient to gloss the Zoas simply as "the four fundamental aspects of Man," i.e., body, reason, emotions, and imagination (Damon *Dictionary* 458). While this meaning is valid, the creatures are also collectivities, groups of people, whole populations; and the warfare of the Zoas and their eventual regeneration are social events.

This emphasis on the Zoas as social entities is broadened in the poem's epigraph into an attack on social oppression. Given by Blake in Greek, the epigraph defines the "Intellectual Battle" of the opening verse paragraph (3:3) as a struggle "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" — an emphasis Blake will return to in a crucial passage in Night VIII defining Satan. The epigraph thus has a two-sided quality. At least in intention, it forswears a struggle against actual persons. On the other hand, it focuses on the evils of social institutions and practices, most specifically the

10. Blake's Greek was more than casual; he began studying it during his stay with William Hayley in the Sussex countryside, and toward the end of his visit he wrote to his brother James, "I go on Merrily with my Greek & Latin: am very sorry that I did not begin to learn languages early in life as I find it very easy" (January 30, 1803, *E*727). The neuter singular-plural endings *-on/-a* are basic forms that any student of Greek would learn early. Blake's coinage is probably a late one; in *The Four Zoas* it occurs only in the title, a late change, and according to Bentley the first "datable mention" of the term is in a letter of 1808 (*William Blake, Vala* 156).

tyrannies of state and church.[11]

From the collective nature of the Zoas and the public and institutional character of the spiritual enemy, Blake's emphasis shifts again in the second verse paragraph to the collective quality of human reunification:

> Four Mighty Ones are in every Man; a Perfect Unity
> Cannot Exist. but from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden
> The Universal Man. To Whom be Glory Evermore Amen (3:4-6)

Together with the biblical citations Blake adds, these lines are a compacted statement on the nature of the Mighty Ones, and a biblical commentary as well. As so often in Blake, two ways of reading the lines are possible. The first, indicated by the punctuation, is that a "Perfect Unity" of the Mighty Ones is impossible, but that the "Universal" or unified man may come to exist "from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden." Such a reading distinguishes between what is attainable for "Man" and for the superior inhabitants of Eden, and makes salvation essentially providential. The alternative reading glosses *but* as *except* and takes "The Universal Man" as an appositive, and so has exactly the opposite meaning: "a Perfect Unity / Cannot Exist" *except* "from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden / [which is the same as] The Universal Man." Here universal

11. The text is Eph. 6:12. I cite the King James Version; for Blake's favorable view of its rendering of the Greek, see the same letter to his brother, *E*727. Keynes translates the Greek differently, but still with an emphasis on "rulers of this life" (*Writings* 263n.). Bloom's commentary bowdlerizes the verse into a reference to "psychic forces" (*E*948). Donald Ault very acutely notes that "not against flesh and blood" signifies that the enemies are "too co-optive to manifest their oppressiveness palpably.... [They] perpetuate social oppression through essentially invisible 'powers' that control consciousness" (496). Nevertheless, this contrast between physical and psychic control is too simple; Blake emphasizes both, for example in his references to "Tyburns brook," i.e., capital punishment.

brotherhood becomes the means for achieving psychic unity. Blake's citations add a second dimension. One of the cited passages from John equates the brotherhood of the Christians with Jesus' unity with the Father, and the other mentions the incarnation of Jesus (Blake adds the Greek for "he dwelt among us" in the margin). Blake's text, then, provides his gloss on these orthodox verses: the four Mighty Ones are the Christian brotherhood, and the word made flesh, Jesus' incarnation, is the unity of all humanity, the "Universal Brotherhood" that achieves "Perfect Unity" as the "Universal Man." The psychic unification of the four faculties existing in "every Man," therefore, is to be attained only through universal brotherhood, and the mystical and communal body of Christ is to be seen as a union of human faculties in community. Blake's text powerfully plays orthodox against antinomian conceptions of Christian community, and providential against communal ideas of salvation.[12]

Finally, the social character of Blake's landscape is made clear by the opening sequence of the action proper, in which Enion and Tharmas accuse each other of responsibility for the harboring of Jerusalem in Tharmas's bosom:

> O Enion
>
> Why hast thou taken sweet Jerusalem from my inmost Soul
>
> Let her Lay secret in the Soft recess of darkness & silence
>
> It is not Love I bear to [Jerusalem] It is Pity
>
> She hath taken refuge in my bosom & I cannot cast her out.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Enion said — Thy fear has made me tremble thy terrors have sur-
>
> rounded me

12. Keynes's text resolves the ambiguity by repunctuating in agreement with the second reading (264), but the original punctuation is important precisely because it forces the reader to choose between meanings.

> All Love is lost Terror succeeds & Hatred instead of Love
>
> And stern demands of Right & Duty instead of Liberty.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I have lookd into the secret soul of him I lovd
>
> And in the Dark recesses found Sin & cannot return (4:10-14, 17-19, 26-27)

Two aspects of this passage stand out in the present context. (I will note a third below.) First, the poem's subject, from the beginning, is human disunity. What Tharmas sees as giving refuge to Jerusalem "in my bosom," Enion sees as harboring sin in Tharmas's "secret soul" (lines 14, 26-27). The issue is not which of these views is "right" but that the discrepancy exists at all. One can view the division of Tharmas and Enion simultaneously as historical, giving one of several versions of the origin of human disunion, and as present history, a narration of divisions that every day prevent the deliverance of Jerusalem. (Among other things, the episode is an archetypal marriage quarrel, almost comical except that in such quarrels people do feel their entire worlds shattering exactly as Tharmas and Enion do.) In either case, the poem is posing the question of why humanity is divided. The immediate narrative context focuses on sexual division, and this is both a psychic problem, and a social problem in its own right; the division between male and female exists within the psyche and family, but also within society, as distinct social roles and power for the sexes.

In a second aspect, however, the poem's focus from the beginning is on the social division of human society as a whole, the loss or hiding of the heavenly city, Jerusalem, and the imposition of an ethic of law in place of "Liberty" (line

19). While the immediate plot suggests familial-sexual meanings for all these terms, they bring with them insistent political and socially radical overtones. "Liberty" necessarily recalls "Wilkes and Liberty" and the Liberty Tree, Jerusalem the apocalyptic prophecies of the Nineties and the long history of Protestant plebeian radicalism. The addition of "Jerusalem" to Blake's manuscript through substitution for earlier uses of the personal names of Enion and Enitharmon (lines 9, 11) underscores the point.[13] While Tharmas's action in sheltering "Enitharmon" within his bosom can be encompassed within a primarily sexual and psychic plot, substituting "Jerusalem" forces the sexual jealousy plot to be read dually, as a subject of the poem in its own right and as synecdoche for the loss of human liberty as a whole.

The inextricable weaving of social oppression and liberation into the poem's basic symbolism is also evident in an additional aspect of the Tharmas/Enitharmon material that involves the structure of Night I as a whole, and points to Blake's procedures elsewhere. Without a full analysis of its complex structure, it can be noted that Blake's first Night divides into three primary segments, respectively concerned with Tharmas and Enion, Los and Enitharmon, and the Council of God.[14] These sequences at first seem quite different but in fact are versions of one another, at least in part. Most obviously, the final segment retells the Tharmas-Enion story, giving a new account of the concealment of Jerusalem and adding a prominent role for Urthona; it also offers a distinct version of the Urizen-Luvah conflict already mentioned in the Los-Enitharmon

13. Erdman emends "Enitharmon" to "Jerusalem" in line 13 as well, on grounds of consistency and the syntax of line 14 (*E*819).

14. 4:6-8:1; 8:2-16:22, with Enion returning briefly at 17:1-18:8; and the final four pages — 19-22 as originally bound, 21-22 [20] in *E*'s confusing renumbering.

section. Less overtly, the long Los-Enitharmon segment, which initially appears as a sequel to the Tharmas-Enion material (the pair are born from Enion at 8:2), actually overlaps with part of it. The "Nine Times" that Los and Enitharmon pass "among the forests" (9:20) parallel the "Nine days . . . & nine dark sleepless nights" in which Enion weaves the Circle of Destiny (5:23), and both refer to the same events, the prehistory or perhaps the entire history of humanity. (Both also parallel the nine Nights of Blake's poem, which contain all of human history.) Hence, the Los-Enitharmon pages provide another view of the content of Enion's weaving. But while the weaving appears as a story of primal sexual division, and the Los-Enitharmon story begins the same way, the latter soon adds a second dimension. The couple's sexual jealousy brings Enitharmon to pray for Urizen's intervention; despite the immediate sexual context, the prayer is a call to create repressive social institutions and war:

> Descend O Urizen descend with horse & chariots
> Threaten not me O visionary thine the punishment
> The Human Nature no more shall remain nor Human acts
> Form the rebellious Spirits of Heaven. but War & Princedom & Victory & Blood
>
> Night darkend as she spoke! a shuddring ran from East to West
> A Groan was heard on high. The warlike clarions ceast. the Spirits
> Of Luvah & Vala shudderd in their Orb: an orb of blood!
>
> Eternity groand & was troubled at the Image of Eternal Death (11:21-12:04)

Placed at the exact center of the Night, at the end of eleven of its twenty-two pages, the prayer is followed by the shuddering of heaven and earth, a sign of fall drawn from *Paradise Lost* (IX:1000-1004). This narrative sequel is, in effect, the granting of Enitharmon's prayer. Hence, Blake's text merges an account of sexual division insensibly into one of the creation of social oppression, and defines the latter as one meaning of the "fall."[15]

This account of the origin of social oppression is subsequently recast in the Los-Enitharmon Nuptial Song, with differences that need not be detailed. The repetition of Eternity's groan at the end of the Nuptial Feast (18:9) shows, indeed, that *all* the intervening material (pages 12-18) has been an elaboration of the inner content of Enitharmon's prayer. The key point, however, is that the division of humanity presented in the opening pages as a familial-sexual division is here *re*presented as a human social division and as the origin of war.

In the Night's concluding segment much of the first two sequences is retold yet again as a story of division between the faculties of humanity represented by Urizen and Luvah, including war and oppression among its consequences: "Jerusalem his Emanation is become a ruin / Her little ones are slain on top of every street" (21 [19]:1-2). Once more, the details are not salient here. What should be noted is that the same fundamental "plot" of human division is presented as three parallel myths, the first sexual, the second social, and the last a more abstract narrative of the split between aspects of humanity that are also, in part, collective social groups. Each of these three sequences is inter-

15. The reader may find Ault's diagramming of Night I (figs. 1.1 and A.1-4) helpful in sorting out the Night's intricacies. However, Ault errs in finding the Los-Enitharmon material fully bracketed within earlier and later material dealing with Tharmas and Enion; Enion's second appearance is simultaneous with the Los-Enitharmon marriage feast, which ends at 18:8, disrupting Ault's schematization. My thematic interpretation differs from Ault's.

twined with the others, and none has priority as an "authorial" telling. While the version told by the Messengers of Beulah seems to gain authority because it comes last and because it retells parts of both previous sequences, its details differ from theirs in ways that can be privileged only by an *a priori* assumption of the Messengers' reliability. Yet even if the Council of God, which hears the Messengers, is considered a privileged gathering, the Messengers are only messengers, and Beulah is an intermediate realm in Blake's topography, the source of sustaining visions for those who sleep (see 5:29-37). It is best, then, to treat the three segments as interrelated and coequal. Hence, Blake's fundamental myth in *The Four Zoas* is at once sexual, centered on divisions between male and female; social, centered on war and social oppression; and psychic, centered on division among human faculties.

The same technique of stressing different aspects of experience in distinct episodes that turn out to be versions of one another is followed elsewhere, for example in three episodes presenting the songs and laments of Enitharmon, Enion, and Ahania in Nights II and III. Since these reinforce the pattern established by the Night I material, they need not be examined so closely. Again, as in Night I, three characters present sexual, social or class, and psychic-perceptual accounts of human misery. The first passage, a long speech by Enitharmon closing out a debate-quarrel for supremacy with Los, is a hymn to sexual possessiveness and sexualized murder, including lines from the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* originally referring to the liberation of female sexuality, which take on a sinister glow in this context. Enion's song, which follows immediately, recasts material from the same poem and *Urizen* into a lament over economic competitiveness, class inequality, and the killing of the poor in wars.

Finally, Ahania, in Night III, presents another fall narrative, partly overlapping earlier ones but involving new material on the religious worship of abstracted human divinity. The three sequences appear to be separate and unrelated accounts of the cause of human divisions. However, the separateness of the accounts is undermined by their narrative contexts. All three episodes unfold from a collusive decision of Los and Enitharmon to "plant divisions" between Urizen and Ahania by "conduct[ing] the Voice of Enion to Ahanias midnight pillow"; Los testifies that Enitharmon sometimes appears to him as Ahania and sometimes as Enion; the narrator relates that Enion's song disturbs Ahania's sleep so that she rises and has a vision of Enion's "Spectrous form"; and Ahania reports that her vision came during her sleep, though she does not give a dream-source for the vision.[16] In short, Ahania's vision is her waking remembrance of Enion's lament as conducted to her pillow by Los and Enitharmon, and Enion's lament itself may be in part a ventriloquized projection of Enitharmon's voice, though the intensity of its social grieving is Enion's own. Once again, apparently distinct sexual, social, and perceptual narrations are seen to be interdependent.

While both the perceptual and the sexual strands of Blake's plot have received ample attention in criticism, the centrality of social oppression has been consistently underplayed in interpretations of *The Four Zoas*.[17] Social criticism is not, indeed, an incidental or detachable portion of Blake's scheme, a holdover from his acknowledged radicalism of the 1790s, even a sign of the

16. The three major speeches are at 34:58-92, 35:1-36:13, and 39:15-42:17. The interconnections noted above occur at 34:3-4, 34:38, 36:14-18, and 39:13.

17. Erdman is of course the exception, along with DiSalvo and Rosso. It may be noted, too, that this aspect of the poem was more readily acknowledged in interpretations prior to Frye's, including those of Mark Schorer (originally published 1946), S. Foster Damon (1924), and Milton O. Percival (1938).

transitional character of this text. It is integral to this text's picture of human division. The sundering of human faculties that has created humanity as an "Individuality" prostrate on the Rock of Ages (in the original ending of Night I[18]), is not merely psychic and cannot be healed by psychic means alone. As presented by Blake's text, it has taken form in social groups and their conflicts and in the institutions of human oppression that Enitharmon calls down in the central moment of Night I, institutions that now embody this sundering: "War & Princedom & Victory & Blood" (11:24).

Orc and Luvah

Unlike Blake's earlier prophecies, *The Four Zoas* presents Orc as the avatar of another character, Luvah, one of the Zoas, and Orc's roles and divided fate are bound up with Luvah's social nature. Luvah is conventionally associated with the emotions, as the pun on "love" suggests; for Damon "Love is the greatest of the emotions, and Luvah includes all of them, especially its opposite, hate" (*Dictionary* 255). As the inclusiveness of this comment suggests, such thumbnail identifications tell us everything and nothing. There is a sense in which they are useful indeed. Emotion, or passion, is the common denominator for all the protean, metamorphosing roles Luvah plays, ranging from Urizen's adversary in the war for cosmic mastery to the slaves who build civilization (I, 21-22 and elsewhere; II, 26-27 and elsewhere). Nevertheless, there is a need for a more specific identification if Luvah's relation to Orc is to be understood.[19] Jackie DiSalvo, in her reading of *The Four Zoas* as a mythic version of biblical

18. 18:14-15. For the placement of the original ending just before, and then just after this material, see *E*827.

19. For a valuable reading stressing an aspect I do not emphasize here, the sexual aspects of Luvah and Vala, see Hagstrum, "Babylon Revisited."

and modern history, has collated a series of Luvah's social roles: as tribal warrior and coveter of the land; as the power-hungry figure who destroys tribal unity; as slave after the class division of tribal society; in his "fallen" aspect, as material force in the production process; in his symbolic aspect, as representative of human suffering who comes to be associated with Jesus; and others as well (198-235 *passim*). Several of these involve slavery or generalized oppression, and the question is whether there is any link between these and the others, besides the overarching one of "emotion" or passion. In DiSalvo's terms the link is the transition from classless to class society, in which Luvah as the embodiment of tribal egalitarianism necessarily ends in the oppressed position. In terms of Blake's conceptual allegory, the organization of oppressive society involves the subordination of untrammeled energy and sexuality to the restrictive rationality that strives to impose "One King, one God, one Law" (*Urizen* II, 4:40 [copies A-C]). Both these aspects are closely related: social class rule requires shackling and channeling the energies of the suppressed.

The conflict that creates this system is not presented directly in *The Four Zoas* but narrated by different characters in the form of overlapping, partly contradictory memories or visions explaining the shattering of what they believe was primal harmony. There is, however, no direct description of this state, and the text gives no grounds for believing it ever existed; all the characters are already at war when they first appear. This is true not only of Tharmas and Enion, but particularly of Los and Enitharmon, who are first seen in what seems to be an early stage of human society. The characters' memories of an ideal state, then, function both as consoling fictions and as imaginative conceptualizations of their own capacities for reunification and emancipation, projected onto a

mythic past. In turn, their legends or "memories" of the clash that resulted in the present society ("fallen," in the terms used in most Blake criticism) center, in different versions, either on a conflict between Urizen and Luvah over control of Urizen's horses of light (or chariots of morning) or on an infidelity plot involving Albion, Vala, Luvah, and, indirectly, Urizen. Sometimes both of these elements are present. Each of these basic accounts has its own competing versions, partly traceable to the narrators' defensive rationalizations: Luvah steals the horses, is offered them, or persuades Urizen to give them; Vala sleeps with Albion, spurns Albion for Luvah, and so on. In one version, presented by the narrator, Albion resigns his scepter to Urizen while asking leniency for Luvah.[20]

These narratives have been approached in one of two ways. One has seen them as varying versions of Blake's myth, and hence has cited them selectively, collated them into an "ideal text" by seeking points of consistency (Damon), or simply listed them sequentially, with an attempt at establishing some as authoritative (Wilkie and Johnson). Or, they have been approached as their narrators' fantasies, rationalizations, and projections, with attention precisely to their discrepancies — not as parts of Blake's myth but as myths of Blake's characters (Ault). The latter approach is far closer to the truth but overlooks the common situation in the narrative proper that they disguise and justify. What is common to all the versions is not what they relate, but that they all serve to explain to the characters this common situation, namely, that *Luvah always appears within the narrative as victim or slave*. Hence, their function is precisely that of myth, which, according to Bronislaw Malinowski, "is always used to account for extraordinary privileges or duties, for great social inequalities, for severe burdens

20. For a concise summary of the "fall" narrations, see Wilkie and Johnson, Appendix B.

of rank" (qtd. in DiSalvo 93). Blake's myth — rather, countermyth, which seeks to account for such inequalities in the way of critical exposure — thus embeds within itself the characters' own myths. In these myths, Luvah appears in various guises, even as the present master of the horses in Ahania's version (39:2-11), which is influenced by Urizen's terror that Luvah will reappear to enslave him, and as stealer of light in Orc/Luvah's own "recollection" (80:39). These versions contain their own truths: the slavemaster, for example, has reason to fear that the slave is the true master of his horses. The salient point, however, is that the present positions of Urizen as supreme ruler and Luvah as slave and dominated labor constitute the underlying situation in the narrative proper for which each version serves as a "remembered" past.

With this in mind we can examine one of Luvah's key appearances, his immersion in the "Furnaces of affliction" in Night II, to see his social role more precisely. This scene, which occurs in the midst of the account of Urizen's labors of creation, centers around Luvah's own story of his sufferings, a version of a cyclic account of Vala's growth as a nature deity and his own unrewarded devotion to her. Most commentary has focused on this speech as a key to Blake's meaning; Bloom, for example, calls it "a natural history of natural religion," and adds that its aftermath, the immolation of both Luvah and Vala, shows that "the destructive energy of all mystery-religion consumes both Luvah and Vala" (commentary, *E*552-53). If we look not at Luvah's statement but at the encompassing narrative, however, we see that it is a description of enslavement, though neither Luvah nor the narrative voice — deeply infiltrated by Urizen's point of view — seems aware of this fact.[21] This conclusion emerges from a

21. Luvah himself implicitly blames Vala for her indifference, and Urizen only secondarily, for spiriting her away from him. The narrative voice encourages this idea by stressing Vala's delight in Luvah's sufferings; by leaving it

consideration of the text's implied topology and its metaphors. Topologically, Urizen's dominion over the world from the sky is conditioned on Luvah's being imprisoned on (or under) the earth. As described at the start of the creation sequence, "Terrific Urizen strode *above*, in fear & pale dismay / He saw the indefinite space *beneath*" (24:2-3; my emphasis). This latter space is where Luvah and Vala are first found (24:5) and, implicitly, where the furnaces are located. Further, at the end of the sequence, the consumption of Luvah in Vala's flames (his own sexuality) is the condition for Urizen's creation of the cosmos; Luvah is the metal that is eventually poured into Urizen's molds, and Vala is the fuel that

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ambiguous whether Urizen or Vala caused his imprisonment; and by casting Urizen in the role of an onlooker: "Luvah *was cast* into the Furnaces of affliction & sealed / And Vala fed in cruel delight, the furnaces with fire / Stern Urizen *beheld* urg'd by *necessity* to keep / The evil day afar" (25:40-43; my emphasis). The very deflection of blame and casting of Urizen in a passive role, however, should make us suspect that both the narrator's and Luvah's voices are influenced by Urizen's self-justifying viewpoint. Similarly, in his speech Luvah acknowledges his murder of Albion, confirming a statement of the narrator in the Night's opening lines (23:7). Yet Luvah's reference to Albion as "That human delusion" (27:18) echoes Urizen's earlier statement, "The Spectre is the Man, the rest is only delusion and fancy" (12:29). Thus, what first seems to be a confession backed by objective statement turns out to be a presentation of Urizen's view of the universe. In contrast to Luvah's confession, the creation narrative itself presents Albion's "loud death groan" as a consequence of *Urizen*'s action of "Petrifying all the Human Imagination into rock & sand" (25:9, 5). In short, both Luvah's and the narrator's account of Albion's smiting are marked by rationalizations of Urizen's viewpoint — if we accept the creation narrative, provisionally, as "true." The question then is: why should we do this — why prefer a version that makes Albion Urizen's victim over one that makes him Luvah's? Blake's text forces the careful reader to ask exactly these questions and to *take responsibility for the answers*, since the text itself does not provide answers. In my view, the salient questions are: what social consequences flow from assuming that "passion," rather than "reason," is the slayer of Man? and, what weights are to be given, respectively, to accounts of mythic origin and of social structures?

melts the metal (28:3-10). In addition, while several of the Luvah/Urizen myths focus around the incident of Luvah's taking Urizen's horses, the creation begins with the organization of production under the control of "Bands of Heaven" (Urizen's region) and Urizen's lions, horses, tigers, and leopards; and it ends with Urizen holding the plow as it is dragged by Luvah's bulls (24:9-25:3; 28:9-10).

In short, the various myths of the horses present a disguised justification for Urizen's control of the animals of creation, including the bulls of Luvah's sexuality, in the narrative itself. Luvah's casting into the furnaces is then evidently an enactment of the enclosing of sexual energy and the organization of production under Urizen's sole control, and only secondarily and subjectively an expression of the "destructive energy of . . . mystery-religion." The melting-down of Luvah is not only, as it first seems, a metaphor for the torments of sexuality, but also a conceptualization of the conversion of human energy into material goods and the using up of human life and strength in the labor process. This point should remind us of Blake's tendency to reverse metaphorical tenor and vehicle: the furnaces that seem metaphors of sexuality are also real, material furnaces. Further, when the dead Luvah and Vala appear in a subsequent passage as living slaves (30:55-32:2), we need to think not only of the tendency of all Blake's characters to "die" only provisionally, but also of a very different point, the plurality of each Zoa. In the long construction of human society through slavery, Luvah and Vala have died many times over in the mines and furnaces, yet also lived in torment in the same places.[22]

22. Luvah and Vala undergo separate development in later Nights. Luvah is reborn as Orc in Night V, as discussed below; Vala is reborn from the union of the Spectre of Urthona and the Shadow of Enitharmon in Night VIIA, bursting the gates of Enitharmon's heart (85:13-14). Upon Vala's reemergence she becomes a presiding figure of war; see the war songs in VIIB and her debate

A further aspect of Luvah is as victim of war. This imagery is developed in references to Luvah as France in Night VIIB, where Luvah is crucified in the sequence of war songs placed between the two narrations of Orc's rape of Vala (92:9-15; the whole war song is later used, with variations, in *Jerusalem* 65). Less obvious, perhaps, is Luvah's identity as victim of war in general, but the link is made in connection with the important image of Luvah's "robes of blood." In Night I, a vision appears to Luvah and Vala:

> Eternity appeard above them as One Man infolded
> In Luvah[s] robes of blood & bearing all his afflictions
> As the sun shines down on the misty earth Such was the Vision (13:8-10)

The vision is redemptive, and its associations are to the blood of the lamb; in Night VIII, the Lamb will appear in Luvah's robes (101:1 and elsewhere), and the introduction of the vision on page 13, as a lined-in marginal addition, seems designed to prepare for this later appearance. To understand the underlying content of this Christian imagery, two points need to be understood about it. The first is that the robes of blood are a revolutionary image — in their original context, Revelation 19:13, they are connected with Christ's destruction of the wicked. I postpone this point, however, until discussion of Night VIII below. Second, the vision needs to be put in its narrative context. It is introduced just

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with Orc in *Milton*, discussed below and in Chapter 6 respectively. This differentiation from Luvah's development as Orc draws on Vala's delight in Luvah's sufferings in Night II, and more generally on Blake's negative conception of the "female will."

before Los and Enitharmon's feast, with its Nuptial Song of war, the first part of which is sung by Mt. Ephraim:

> See the river
> Red with the blood of Men. swells lustful round my rocky knees
> My clouds are not the clouds of verdant fields & groves of fruit
> But Clouds of Human Souls. my nostrils drink the lives of Men
> . . . . . .
> Call to thy dark armd hosts, for all the sons of Men muster together
> To desolate their cities! Man shall be no more! Awake O Hosts
> The bow string sang upon the hills! Luvah & Vala ride
> Triumphant in the bloody sky. & the Human form is no more (14:11-14, 15:5-8)

In this sequence, with its echo of Enitharmon's prayer to Urizen, Luvah and Vala appear as spirits of war. But they are also among its victims; later in the Nuptial Song, their bones are melted in furnaces, in an anticipation of the furnaces of Night II (16:1-2). Most important for understanding the large-scale imagery of Luvah, however, is that the occurrence of the Nuptial Song of warfare immediately after the interpolated vision of the robes makes the song echo and amplify the vision: the bloody rivers and clouds of souls in the song *are* Luvah's robes of blood. The wounds and blood of Luvah, which the One Man in the vision bears redemptively, are those of humanity in war, so that the crucified Luvah's "death of six thousand years" (92:13) refers to the crucifixion of human victims in war throughout historical time.

Luvah's social aspect, then, is the suppressed and sacrificed of history, the slaves, laborers, and slaughtered soldiers whose blood and bones cement the

works of Urizen: "Who built the seven gates of Thebes? / The books are filled with the names of kings." At the same time, as images of furnaces, melting, and harnessed bulls make clear, Luvah is entrapped and channeled sexual energy utilized in the construction of a civilization of sexual and social repression. These, however, are identifications already noted, though with less specificity, for the historical aspects of Orc (Chapter 3). In Luvah, then, Blake has divided out these features of Orc and developed them as part of his mythic history of oppressive society, freeing the Orc symbol for more specific treatment.

Before examining that treatment, it is pertinent to note several points about Blake's mythic history. First, Blake's account is not chronological or a mythologized narration of ancient and/or Christian history. Repeated efforts have been made to read it this way. Frye, for example, identifies the first four Nights with the Golden, Silver, Brazen, and Iron Ages of classical myth, and the first three of these with the falls of Tharmas, Luvah, and Urizen respectively, in Nights I-III (*Symmetry* 278 and 278-91 *passim*). DiSalvo, more specifically, reads the poem as "a universal history, with its ancient chapter concentrated . . . in the first four nights" and later Nights covering the Christian era (186; see also 139-42). Crucial to such an attempt, however, is a sequential reading of Nights I-IV that, in fact, is disrupted by the links *among* many of their apparently successive episodes. Most crucially, the "Groan" that "shuddring ran from East to West" at the midpoint of Night I is heard again not only just before the Night's final segment, as noted above, but also at the moment of Urizen's fall at the end of Night III, as "A dolorous groan . . . / . . . / Loud strong a universal groan of death," and once more after Urizen's binding in Night IV, when "The Empyrean groand throughout All Eden was darkend," repetitions implying that all

these are the same moment.[23] Further, identifying Urizen's downfall in Night III with the collapse of ancient empires requires localizing Los's shaping of Urizen and Orc's birth and binding (Nights IV and V) as references to the rise and perversion of Christian culture (see DiSalvo 221-24, 233-34). While Blake approximated this time scheme in *Europe* and *The Song of Los*, he moved away from it in the later Lambeth books (whose only datable events are the formation of Urizen as Adam and the exodus). Rather than offering a specific time scheme, then, *The Four Zoas* appears to rework events of biblical history into an account of the origins of repressive society, but one focused on parallel, perhaps simultaneous processes. To oversimplify, we can say that Night I centers around the creation *on earth* of gods, war, and princedom; Night II on the rationalization of the universe, social oppression, and the suppression of sexuality; Night III on the division between sexuality and rationality in fear of repressed desire (Luvah); Night IV on the primal organization of matter and oppression (Urizen) with the aid of labor and imagination (Los). Three of these accounts end with the same groan (Night II ends with Ahania's unease) and all are aspects of the same event.

23. 12:1-2; 18:9; 44:8, 11; 56:12. In addition, at the start of Night II Urizen rises "from the bright Feast," also called "the Feast of envy," an occurrence that coordinates Night II with the nuptial feast of Night I, at which Urizen is present (23:9-10; 16:15); this same moment of Night I shows Urizen "With faded radiance sigh[ing]," and so is linked as well with the start of Night III, where Ahania asks Urizen why he "sighs" as he sits with "his light obscurd" (16:16; 37:5, 11; pointed out by Ault 141). Thus the action of Nights II and III appears to be simultaneous, and to coincide with or follow immediately upon the feast of Night I. The repetition of the groans may also mean that Urizen's "descen[t]" in Night I at Enitharmon's prayer, his "down rushing" in ruin in Night III, and his binding by Los in Night IV are all the same event, the establishment of Urizen's geometric cosmos as a kingdom of blood and war on earth. (It will be recalled that in the *Book of Los* Urizen's binding creates him as Adam, a similar incarnation of Urizen as "fallen" life on earth.)

That Blake's account is not chronological, however, does not mean that historical change has no place in it. First, the later Nights do move forward in time to a recognizable eighteenth-century world, though the shift is without defined historical mileposts. More specifically, Urizen, in his aspect as the ruling classes of oppressive civilization, has a cyclical existence that reflects the periodic rise and fall of these civilizations. This cyclical aspect appears during his exploration of his "dens" in Night VI, the Night that also brings us to the modern period. During his wanderings, Urizen's fundamental aspects, symbolized by his books, are unchanging, but he himself undergoes recurrent deaths and rebirths:

> wearied dead [Urizen] fell his limbs reposd in the bosom of slime
> As the seed falls from the sowers hand so Urizen fell & death
> Shut up his powers in oblivion. then as the seed shoots forth
> In pain & sorrow. So the slimy bed his limbs renewd
> At first an infant weakness. periods passd he gatherd strength
> But still in solitude he sat then rising threw his flight
> Onward tho falling thro the waste of night & ending in death
> But still his books he bore in his strong hands & his iron pen (70:27-35)

In its immediate context, this passage refers to Urizen's fitful progress on his voyage through the dens. More basically, the exploration itself constitutes a survey of repressive society that also fills the time between the initial formation of civilization and the impending contemporary confrontation with Orc. In this context, Urizen's repeated deaths and resurrections appear to refer to the succession of states and empires; Luvah and Orc, as the rulers' slaves and pawns of

war whose chains remain despite the rise and fall of empires, undergo no similar cyclic succession.[24]

By separating out Orc's historical functions into Luvah, Blake's revamped myth accomplishes three things. First, it integrates the long-term aspects of Orc's identity, under Luvah's name, into the treatment of root psychic and social processes. The historical suppression and domination of slaves and workers, the repression of sexuality, and the connections between sexual and social repression find their names in Luvah. Second, the revised myth leaves Orc to function as a particular manifestation of these suppressed forces, their opposition to Urizen and the transformation of creative sexuality into oppositional energies. Finally, the change in Blake's myth allows the poem to explore in a much more complex way than before the relations between these oppositional energies and the other key forces of Blake's universe — law, rationalistic religion, ruling class deceit and treachery, and war (Urizen and Vala), and creative labor and art (Los and Enitharmon).

Orc and Urizen

Orc's initial appearances in *The Four Zoas*, in Night V, are marked by a heroic, prophetic tonality that nevertheless contains deep ambiguities. Before he is first seen in Night V, as the narrative begins to trace the gathering of opposed forces that will explode in the apocalypse of Night IX, Orc's entrance has been anticipated by several earlier references. In Night I, in the final strophe of the Nuptial Song, he is awaited as a "fierce Terror" who will burst "from the

24. Ironically, then, Frye should have traced a "Urizen cycle"; see Chapter 2.

loins of Enitharmon" (16:9) as a form of Luvah. In Night III, Urizen envisions a "Prophetic boy" who will grow up to supplant him (38:6-7). Though Urizen is thinking of Luvah, he is sensing Luvah's advent as Orc. The use of the term "Prophetic" is important, as it is not usually applied to Orc — in *America* he is a "terror," and in *Europe* a "horrent Demon" (8:1, 4:15). The term is more associated with Los, and Los, indeed, is described in almost the same phrases as Orc: "fierce prophetic boy" and "young Demon" (*The Four Zoas* 9:35, 12:23). The terms used for the two characters, then, leave ambiguous the relationship between them and the roles they will potentially play.

Orc is first felt as Luvah, in a song of demons that heralds war on earth and makes clear his transformation of Luvah's suffering into active opposition: "The Enormous Demons woke & howld around the new born king / Crying Luvah King of Love thou art the King of rage & death" (58:21-22).[25] At the song's end he is named as Orc (59:21). His first extended description occurs following his binding, and it is here that his prophetic qualities are felt. The portrayal of Orc attended by "ten thousand thousand spirits / . . . going forth & returning / At his enormous call" (61:13-15) associates him with God in Milton's "When I consider" ("Thousands at his bidding speed / And post o'er land and ocean"). It further recalls numerous other Miltonic and biblical passages involving the numbers of God's and Christ's ministers (e.g., *Paradise Lost* V:588 and VI:767, Daniel 7:10, Revelation 5:11). No mere parody, the lines also closely echo passages at the beginning and the very end of the poem. In Night I, in an ironic allusion to Milton's war in heaven, Urizen is described as attended in his conflict with Los by "Ten thousand thousand . . . host of spirits on the wind: / Ten thou-

25. For this invocation's parodic references to Wesley and Crashaw, see Paley, *Energy* 103-104.

sand thousand glittering Chariots." In the final lines of Night IX the regenerated earth "beams forth ten thousand thousand springs of life" (12:32-33, 139:3). Once noticed, these verbal echoes overlay Orc's imagery with two distinct sets of associations. The ten thousand thousand spirits raise genuinely prophetic possibilities through their Miltonic and biblical referents and their anticipation of Night IX, but also establish a parallelism between Orc and his adversary Urizen, which will be acted out in Nights VII and VIII.

A similar dualism marks the terms applied to Orc's person. A sequence of images links him not merely with rebellious energy, as criticism has conventionally recognized, but with natural fecundity, the expansion of perception, and the prophetic role. His nostrils "breathe a fiery flame"; his locks "are like the forests / Of wild beasts"; his bosom "is like starry heaven expanded all the stars / Sing round" (61:24-28). The connotations are sexual, but more broadly creative as well; the beasts mentioned — lion, tiger, wolf, eagle — are ones Blake has used throughout his early works to stand for excess, sexuality, and energy, both creative and destructive. Orc's senses (and his breast, as seen above) have the quality of expansion Blake associates with perception in unfallen or relatively benign states: his eyes "the lights of his large soul contract or else expand / . . . / Expanded they behold . . . / The Elemental Planets & the orbs of eccentric fire" (61:18-23). Blake accentuates these aspects of the description by placing his text on a page selected from *Night Thoughts* that shows a stern, martial youth riding on a cloud, his left hand resting on a higher cloud and his right pointing to the earth below.[26]

26. According to Magno and Erdman, identifiable features of the earth include "Africa and the Mediterranean at the lower left and the British Isles just under [the youth's] pointing finger" (59). Grant, Rose, and Tolley concur that in the engraving's first state, used here, one of the continents resembles Africa (32-33). However, the shapes above the "Mediterranean" do not resemble Eu-

Yet Orc is also described through images of precious metals and jewels, which often have negative connotations for Blake. Four of the five metals mentioned, gold, silver, ruby, and emerald, later reappear as part of Orc's serpent scales; the one that does not reappear, of course, is adamant (61:20, 62:5; 80:28, 101:9-14). Further, two separated sets of images anticipate the ambiguity of a critical later moment. The description of Orc's breast modulates into an anticipation of Night IX's harvest imagery and the pastoral dance of insects during its wine presses episode: "there waves the harvest & the vintage rejoices . . . / . . . / The golden Moth builds there a house & spreads her silken bed" (61:28-31); a later reference to warriors who "drink and rejoice over the slain" (62:7) looks forward to the sadomasochistic tortures of the same episode. Orc's imagery at this stage, then, points divergently to a possible prophetic role and to a possible corruption of that role.[27]

Three points should be noted about Orc's appearances in Night V. First, in his own person, Orc appears as the victim of sexual rather than political or class suppression. His chaining, in a reworking of *Urizen*, comes as retaliation for his Oedipal coupling with Enitharmon. The most important change in the presentation is that Orc's embrace of his mother is overt and occurs at fourteen,

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rope, and I regard the identification as fanciful. It might be noted that in the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection's two copies of the engraved *Night Thoughts*, tentatively identified as colored by Blake and by "Mrs. Blake," several of the areas shown as land in one are shown as water in the other; apparently the Blakes were not then thinking about Africa. The design is reused, again with positive connotations, on page 119, in the context of the Eternal Man's stirring on his rock.

27. See Paley, *Energy* 103-108 for the view that the liberatory associations of Orc's imagery in this passage are canceled by the subsequent ingrowing of Orc's chains; for an argument that the expansion and contraction of Orc's eyesight show its limitedness, see Evans, "The Apocalypse as Contrary Vision" 327.

the age of puberty (60:6-8). The embrace is sketched as an openly sexual one, and Los, on the ground and bound with the chain, or band, of jealousy, appears hardly older than his son.[28] In *Urizen*, Orc's age and the embrace are not specified, and in the associated plate Orc appears as a slim boy, frontally embracing his mother but with his face gazing up at hers — though directly below her breasts (VII, 20:6-20; plate 21). Even more than in *Urizen*, then, Orc is bound as an act of sexual suppression. Nevertheless, his defiance quickly becomes social. His main adversary is not his father but Urizen, the overlord of this creation. In Night VI, their approaching conflict takes on political overtones, drawn from the anti-Jacobin repression of the mid-1790s, when Tharmas and the Spectre of Urthona combine to prevent Urizen from reaching Orc. The Spectre mobilizes "like white clouds rising from the Vales his fifty two armies / From the four cliffs of Urthona" (75:21-22), an apparent reference to Britain's cliffs and the fifty-two counties of England and Wales. Historically, this rousing of the English people in Orc's defense might refer to such events as the acquittals won by Thomas Hardy and others in the treason trials of November-December 1794, or the huge demonstrations and the mobbing of the king's carriage the following autumn. (See Thompson, *Making* 135-36 and 143-45.) But in any case the images clearly imply a popular mobilization, not a purely psychosexual event.[29] Further, Urizen's approach to Orc through his own dens

28. Nevertheless, the embrace may not happen. The text says that "Los beheld" the embrace, but it has also told us, twice, that Los "became what he beheld," so that what he "beholds" here may be a projection of his jealousy. (See V, 53:24 and 55:22.)

29. Erdman notes that lines 19-22 are taken verbatim from the early, canceled plate C of *America* (lines 14-17), except that the mobilization is now to stop Urizen rather than the Americans (*Prophet* 374). Ault argues that the "combatants are aspects of one another syntactically and semantically," a point I do not find persuasive, and that "[t]heir battle is interior" (234). The fifty-two armies can also be seen as weeks, by association with Los-Urthona's function as

has led him through locales where he see parts of his suppression of Luvah and Vala occurring as present action — for example, "women marching oer burning wastes / Of sand in bands of hundreds & of fifties & of thousands strucken with / Lightnings . . . upon their shoulders," a reworking of parts of Vala's slave lament (70:21-23; 30:4-16). Since Urizen's dens are a field of his own power that is also, implicitly, the field of Orc's opposition, these sights are elements of his approaching contest with Orc. Orc's incorporation of Luvah's identity, with its social-historical meanings and its linkage between suppressed sexuality and social oppression, makes possible this rapid shift toward a social focus in what is still overtly a sexual plot.

In a related point, Orc, though initially greeted by the Demons as a recurrence of Luvah and a "King of rage & death," develops new attributes through his binding. Hatred is not necessarily negative in a revolutionary framework. Nevertheless the Demons' song suggests a limited hatred of revenge and envy, a point emphasized by the phrase "new born king," an ironic echo of the earlier "Song of Liberty" in the *Marriage*, where the Orc figure is a "new born terror," "fire," or "wonder," but never a "king" (verses 7, 8, 10). Orc's godlike qualities appear in tandem with his chaining. This aspect of Orc's identity has complex social meaning. It leads to a divergence between roles as avenger-persecutor, suggested by the Demons' song, and as violent opponent of oppression, suggested by the entry into the narrative of the stars, tigers, elemental planets, etc., in conjunction with the chains. It also sets up an uncertainty over whether Orc can retain these godlike emblems if freed from his chains — indeed, whether he

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master of time (DiSalvo 74).

can free himself at all, since his powers are associated with the chains. Finally, the chains become ingrown, "a living Chain / Sustained by the Demons life" (63:3-4). In this aspect they suggest a reflexive quality in the rage of oppressed people, a failure to break clear of a resentment that is not cyclic (in Frye's sense of an evolution of rebellion into oppression) but self-perpetuating, like Orc's "furious circles" in *Europe* (4:16; see Chapter 3). These problems have been dealt with by pat formulas, like Paley's "The chain cannot be struck off, for the psyche now contains its own principle of repression.... When Orc does break loose later in the poem, it will be to impose a new oppressive reality on society" (*Energy* 108). Rather than any simple meaning, the Demons' song, the semi-divinity of chained Orc (who is nonetheless a "Demon" himself), and the chains' feeding off Orc suggest divergent and contradictory possibilities in *real social processes* — possibilities for self-emancipation, continued enslavement, or self-destructive vengefulness existing at the same time in the same social formations, and perhaps among the same or different individuals, political tendencies, or social strata within the collective being known as Orc.

Finally, Orc's howls effect the opening up of the poem's previously blocked and collapsed narrative movement — the stasis that prevailed at the end of Night IV. In this sense, the end of Night V is an elaboration of the closing pages of *Urizen*, when "All things. heard the voice of the child / And began to awake to life" (VII, 20:28-29). Orc's howlings set in motion a complex set of occurrences. In Enitharmon, they cause the bursting of her heart's gate (anticipating the closing pages of Night VIIA), and also its reclosing, and hence the mobilization of the contrasting figures of Ahania, whose role throughout the poem is relatively positive, and Vala, associated with "delusive" sexuality and war. In

Urizen, Orc's cries cause the rifting of the bonds with which Los has bound him (they are, however, self-regenerating and will reappear as the Tree of Mystery in Night VII) and his going forth to seek Orc/Luvah. Orc's howls also bring about Urizen's lament for his own fallen condition, with its ambiguous conclusion: "perhaps this is the night / Of Prophecy & Luvah hath burst his way from Enitharmon /... Then love shall shew its root in deepest Hell" (65:10-12). Usually glossed as ironic in view of Urizen's dread of Luvah or "love,"[30] these lines can be read differently if we do not insist on an unambiguous meaning for the Urizen symbol. They recall Urizen's fear at Ahania's foretelling of his overthrow (Night III, 39), but in a way that almost yearns for such an event — for *genuine* love in deepest hell. The point, as often in Blake, is contradiction. Each fallen being shows, at one or more points throughout the text, an awareness of his/her "previous" unfallen nature, or capacity for unrealized possibilities contrary to current existence. Always latent, these potentialities are capable at certain points of coming into the narrative as splits in the characters. Although this does not happen here, Urizen's closing lines express sexual jealousy, power madness, and hope for love simultaneously.

Urizen reaches the "Caves of Orc" at the beginning of Night VIIA after a long journey through his own "dens" in Night VI. The journey is patterned, as has often been noted, on Satan's journey from hell to earth in Book II of *Paradise Lost*, though the parallels are reordered, condensed, and altered. By building Night VI around such parallels, Blake sets the stage for a Urizenic reenactment of Eve's temptation by Satan. But this does not occur; what does occur illustrates — as do the parallels noted above — that simultaneous incorporation

30. See for example Bloom's commentary, *E*957.

and reworking of prior materials that has been identified as characteristic of prophetic form (Wittreich, "Opening the Seals" *passim*). In place of the Satanic temptation of a female figure, Blake offers the temptation of a male, set in a hell or desert rather than Eden. Tempted with relief of suffering, and then with knowledge and earthly glory, Orc's initial response is contemptuous defiance rather than submission. In short, the temptation is patterned not on *Paradise Lost* but on *Paradise Regained*, and invokes the figure not of Eve, but of Jesus. This fabric of incorporated biblical/Miltonic material should force us to consider Orc's submission as a failure to fulfill a potentially redemptive role; to view his response to Urizen as a *choice* rather than an enactment of embedded cyclic patterns; and to see in his simultaneously Adamic and Christlike affiliations a comment on the weakness of resistance based on instinctive defiance without a full understanding and rejection of the tempter's enticements.

Urizen's first temptation, like Satan's in *Paradise Regained*, is relatively brief. Urizen asserts that Orc's sufferings are self-induced and, by implication, can be terminated at will. In an addition to our understanding of the temptation scene's political contexts, Martin Bidney has shown that Blake here probably draws on the account of Cortés's torture of the Aztec prince Guatimozin in William Robertson's *The History of the Americas*, originally published in 1777 and well known in Blake's lifetime. In particular, Urizen's supposition that Orc is, in imagination, "bathd in rivers of delight on verdant fields" (78:36) is an echo of Guatimozin's contemptuous dismissal of his sufferings, "Am I now reposing on a bed of flowers?"[31] Orc easily scorns this temptation ("Thy Pity I contemn scatter thy snows elsewhere" [78:43]).

31 30. Bidney 195-96, quoting Robertson 2:389. Bidney places Guatimozin's story in an "Orc cycle" context, and not all his specific evidence is convincing, but overall his thesis is persuasive. He also misses the homosexual implica-

The next sequence is a single complex movement corresponding to the temptations of knowledge and earthly glory (79:20-80:26). In an ironic inversion of Jesus' temptation with philosophical wisdom in *Paradise Regained*, Urizen bids Orc to "Read my books explore my Constellations / Enquire of my Sons & they shall teach thee how to War" (79:20-21) — to share in the Urizenic knowledge of warfare, elaborated repeatedly throughout the poem. Next, in what corresponds to Satan's offer of worldly glory, Urizen urges Orc to "Enquire of my Daughters who . . . / Knead the bread of Sorrow" (79:22-23). As the bread is also called the "bread of Orc" (line 28), it is not immediately clear whether Orc is to knead it or — "compelld hungering on the cold wind" (line 29) — to eat it himself. In Night VIII, Orc in his serpent form will indeed be seen eating the bread, which becomes part of his snake's skin of jewels and precious metals (101:17-20). In the temptation scene, he is not shown eating it, and only the outcome, his metamorphosis, makes clear that he has done so. More precisely, the outcome in which he yields to Urizen's wiles *constitutes* the eating of the bread. Before this can happen, however, the nature of the bread must be further revealed, since the first temptation has shown that Orc is not susceptible to the weakness of bodily need.

This clarification occurs as the daughters sing the words of Urizen's book of iron while the bread pours from an iron pail and through their iron hands

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tions of Urizen's fantasy about Orc's "rivers," evident in Blake's sketched illustration for this page. The drawing shows a mature, chained Orc on his back; heavy shading over his genital area obscures a kneeling male figure with a large erection, and with his head on Orc's loins, presumably a representation of what Urizen is fantasizing. See Magno and Erdman, plate 78 and commentary, and Bentley's *William Blake's Vala or The Four Zoas*, plate 78, where the obscured figure is clearer. Guatimozin, it may be noted, is another name for Cuauhtémoc, the major hero of the resistance in Mexican tradition (and even today; Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the leftist presidential candidate in 1988 and 1994, was named for him).

(lines 31-34), making it apparent that the bread is formed from the book's words. Simultaneously, Urizen himself, reading from his book of brass rather than that of iron, bids the daughters to practice deception: "Let Moral Duty tune your tongue / But be your hearts harder than the nether millstone" (80:3-4). Urizen then gives a justly famed illustration of what he means:

> Compell the poor to live upon a Crust of bread by soft mild arts
> Smile when they frown frown when they smile & when a man looks
> pale
> With labour & abstinence say he looks healthy & happy
> And when his children sicken let them die there are enough
> Born even too many & our Earth will be overrun
> Without these arts If you would make the poor live with temper
> With pomp give every crust of bread you give with gracious cunning
> Magnify small gifts
> . . . . . .
> Flatter his wife pity his children till we can
> Reduce all to our will as spaniels are taught with art (80:9-21)

David Erdman has convincingly related the bread to Pitt's "Brown Bread Bill" of November 1800, which sought to cut consumption as an answer to price inflation (365, 367-69). Several commentators have explored its allusion to Malthusian doctrine (Schorer 277-78, Bloom *Apocalypse* 250-51, Paley *Energy* 113-15). Ault, in contrast, has made the sexual aspects primary, arguing, in effect, that the political content of the book of brass, from which Urizen reads, sublimates

the "repressed sexuality" of the book of iron (261). This comment, while acute, overlooks the fact that if ideology can sublimate sexuality, so to can sexual longings act as psychic bulwarks for political and class repression. The quasi-Malthusian doctrine of Urizen's speech, then, would represent the real content of his books, not a disguise for it; Orc's sexuality would be the psychic lever by which Urizen suborns him.

This view accords with the narrative context of the speech: Urizen is seeking to enlist Orc's aid — partly by appealing to his Oedipal rage against Los — to bring Enitharmon under the tree of mystery and to let the Spectre, in collusive copulation with her, "have dominion over Los the terrible shade" (80:8). It will be noted that the two do, in fact, copulate in the Los-Enitharmon plot segment that follows, though the outcome is not what Urizen hopes. The phrase "have dominion" is immediately echoed in the first word of Urizen's reading, "Compell." In sum, "Compell[ing] the poor to live upon a Crust of bread" is what giving the Spectre dominion over Los *means*. Urizen's effort to entice Orc into an effort to dominate/compel Los is an attempt by a ruling power practiced in both force and deceit (the books of iron and brass) to convert Orc's elemental rebellion into a tool for mastery over the qualities Los represents — in Blake's overall myth, labor and the imagination. Politically, this means converting the French Revolution into a means of suppressing the French (and English) people. And the lure used for this purpose is power. The bread is that of power, as its utilization to humiliate the poor makes clear; the hunger in Orc that Urizen appeals to is the hunger for power. The bread is both to be consumed by Orc, as a literal incorporation of Urizen's techniques, and to be offered by him to others, in an application of those techniques. Yet Orc's im-

minent submission to Urizen for the sake of power is itself a capitulation to Urizen's power, as evidenced by the term that keeps echoing in this exchange — "*compelld* hungering on the cold wind," "*Compell* the poor," and, in Orc's response, "A Worm *compelld*" (79:29, 80:9, 80:31; my emphasis).

Before examining Orc's reaction it is necessary to look more closely at Urizen's speech; decoding in terms of the Brown Bread Bill and Malthusianism, while suggestive, does not tell the whole story. The key to the speech lies not in overt compulsion but in the phrase "soft mild arts." This phrase prefigures Orc's reply, and in the present context is equivalent to the "gracious cunning" mentioned a few lines later (15). Urizen's appeal to "soft mild arts," and his offer of them to Orc as a technique of rule, evoke a political tradition of rule by deception rather than force alone, characteristic of England at least since 1688; Orc's response, stressing the words "deceit" and "hypocrisy," is likewise to be read in relation to this tradition. Pertinent here is the example of the legal system, as it is relevant to an episode I will return to below, that of the judge and prisoner in Night IX.

It is a commonplace to say that English judges in the eighteenth century imposed hanging for minor thefts, and indeed, the law provided death sentences for such offenses as sheep stealing, cattle maiming, breaking into buildings to steal or destroy linen, smuggling and plundering foundered ships, and theft of goods worth forty shillings. Prisoners were actually hanged for crimes such as stealing beer-pots, stealing 21 yards of silk and bombazine, and, during riots against impressment, killing a deputy — compared with a fine of one shilling each for members of the pressgang who stabbed to death a resisting river-worker. During the political repression of the Nineties, too, jail terms of up to

five years were handed down for saying "I wish success to the French" or "No George, no war."[32] Such instances make clear the meaning of Urizen's book of iron. But the book of brass was widely used too. The frequency of actual hangings was low; "roughly half of those condemned to death during the eighteenth century did not go to the gallows, but were transported to the colonies or imprisoned" (Hay 43; see also 22 n. 3). Leniency could be used as public policy, as when Burke urged after the Gordon Riots that in view of "the temper of the publick at this moment," only six executions should be carried out, but with the greatest publicity; in fact, however, 21 persons were put to death.[33] The reasons for leniency, besides tactical considerations like Burke's, included an internalized ideology of fairness, but above all the effect was to reinforce the discretionary powers of judges and therefore the dependence of prisoners on their class masters: "The pardon is important because it often put the principal instrument of legal terror — the gallows — directly in the hands of those who held [social] power" (Hay 48). In this way, "graciously granted mercy could produce gratifying deference . . . [and] helped create the mental structures of paternalism" (42). The Urizenic echo of "graciously granted mercy" is striking and significant; alongside brutal force, paternalism and manipulated deference were central to the gentry's panoply of techniques of rule, and these are the focus of Urizen's "soft mild arts."

While Urizen's speech refers immediately to Pitt's England, it has French referents as well. By the time Blake began writing *The Four Zoas* in 1796-97 the regime of the Directorate had already wiped out most of the social reforms of

32. For statutory sentences, see Hay *et al.* 42, 59, 21, 164-68, 186-87, 36; for hangings, Linebaugh 337-41, 433; for jail terms, Thompson 175.

33. Hay 50, quoting Burke, "Some Thoughts on the Approaching Executions"; Linebaugh 364.

the revolutionary period. But of more relevance to Urizen's speech and the Orc myth generally, the laborers and nonworking poor of Paris who were a key part of the social base of the Jacobin regime were already under substantial attack by that regime while it was still in power in 1793-94. Driven by price inflation that bypassed legislated maximums while wage maximums were more successfully enforced, workers in late 1793 and early 1794 demanded higher wages, better supplies of food, the right to change jobs, etc., mostly in small-scale actions but sometimes in protest delegations or sizable demonstrations. They were answered with arrest and imprisonment for such offenses as creating a disturbance over the impossibility of buying butter and eggs; threatening a grocer; shouting "that the workers should be able to live like the others"; violating the law forbidding associations of workers; agitating for higher wages; striking; and leaving work to take higher-paying jobs (Rudé 133, 135, 136).[34] Here, visibly, is Urizen's book of iron, and perhaps also the book of brass if the official ideology making the sans-culotte the beneficiary of the revolution is taken into account as a factor blunting coordinated responses. Despite its primary reference to England, the armory of methods that Urizen offers to Orc also describes the social policy of both the Jacobin and Thermidorean regimes.

Besides these specific social allusions, Urizen's speech continues the large-scale symbolic action of temptation, completing the offer of arts of war with an offer of parallel "soft mild arts" of rule. The elements mentioned in the two speeches — "War," "labour & abstinence," "soft mild arts" — comprise the array of techniques of earthly power which Urizen is offering Orc.

Orc's reply forms the axis on which his role in the poem turns:

34. For a slightly different analysis, emphasizing wage earners as relatively favored compared to shopkeepers and artisans, see Lefebvre 108-110.

Then Orc cried Curse thy Cold hypocrisy. already round thy Tree
In scales that shine with gold & rubies thou beginnest to weaken
My divided Spirit Like a worm I rise in peace unbound
From wrath Now When I rage my fetters bind me more
O torment O torment A Worm compelld. Am I a worm
Is it in strong deceit that man is born. In strong deceit
Thou dost restrain my fury that the worm may fold the tree
Avaunt Cold hypocrite I am chaind or thou couldst not use me thus
The Man shall rage bound with this Chain the worm in silence creep
Thou wilt not cease from rage Grey Demon silence all thy storms
Give me an example of thy mildness King of furious hail storms
. . . . . .
Terrified Urizen heard Orc now certain that he was Luvah
And Orc began to Organize a Serpent body [. . .] (80:27-44)

The speech dramatizes the furious struggle within Orc, in which he simultaneously rages against Urizen and feels himself submitting to him. But it is the specific form of his submission that must be examined. The core of the passage is the words "Like a Worm I rise in peace unbound / From wrath." Wrath, rebellious hate of the oppressor, is the quality Orc names as slipping from him. This statement is of the greatest ideological, political, and conceptual significance. Orc's wrath is what gave him the godlike qualities noted earlier, in his first appearance, chained and raging in Night V. The *loss* of this faculty, not its continuation, is what transforms him into Urizenic form. In contrast, then, to the canonical interpretation that Orc shows the transformation of mere rebellious energy into tyrannical repression, it is — at least in Orc's mind — the sub-

verting of his rebellious energy and the division of his spirit that accomplish this transformation, to the accompaniment of a series of images implying weakness: "Thou dost *restrain* my fury that the worm may fold the tree" (line 33; my emphasis).

Undoubtedly, the limited, instinctual quality of Orc's rebellion is what makes him susceptible to such a temptation. Unlike the first temptation, which left Orc unmoved because its offer of relief from suffering appealed to weakness *against* wrath, the second succeeds because power is enough like wrath to seem identical to one who lacks larger understanding. Orc's confusion can be linked to the narrowness of his wrath, its egoism (shown by his repeated Oedipal encounters with Enitharmon), and its lack of creative vision and compassion, qualities that will be seen in Los's labors. The result is a mental division that itself undermines the will to resist. Orc's speech shows just such a division: condemnations of Urizen ("Curse thy Cold hypocrisy") alternate with rage at his own subversion by Urizen's temptation ("O torment O torment A Worm compelld"). The repetition of "compelld" (line 31), already used to refer to Orc's hunger and then as a paraphrase of the "dominion" Urizen hopes to achieve, is the sign both of Orc's confusion and of the subtlety of the temptation that provokes it.

None of this however obviates the point that Orc's transformation occurs through the *dissipation* of his capacity for wrath. In the complex movement surrounding the central moment in Orc's speech, "hypocrisy" (line 27) is one of the key words. Orc is right to call Urizen a hypocrite, but the term is also a psychic projection: Orc is feeling and resisting *his own* transformation into a hypocrite. The word also anticipates a key moment in the uprising in Night IX, and its use

there refers back to this moment of Orc's inability to stand fast against the temptation of hypocrisy. A second key term is "worm." Orc feels himself "Like a worm . . . in peace unbound," "A Worm compelld," and asks, "Am I a worm" (lines 29, 31). The term refers both to his perception of his weakness in failing to withstand the transformation, and to his new state, as he perceives it; it leads to an apothegmatic line, reminiscent of the *Proverbs of Hell* — "The Man shall rage bound with this Chain the worm in silence creep" (line 35) — which powerfully reflects his divided consciousness. From Orc's human perspective a man rages while a worm creeps. The transformed Orc will be shown later in the text as a serpent who does indeed rage; yet, because of the weakening of Orc's resistance to Urizen and his adoption of Urizen's characteristics, from Orc's still-extant human perspective his raging is the submissive creeping of a worm.

The syntactic and perceptual ambiguities of this passage are extreme. Among other points, it should be noted that Orc perceives himself to be still bound ("Now When I rage my fetters bind me more"), and feels his *wrath* slipping from him, while the narrative tacitly implies that his *chains* are slipping away — once he has assumed serpent form, the chains are no longer mentioned. These correspondences suggest that what is presented as a loss of wrath, an assumption of serpent form, and (implicitly) a loosing of Orc's chains is the same process seen from different angles, an act of submission that robs Orc of his capacity for genuine defiance as it frees him to rage destructively in his serpent body. Though Orc's binding has been a condition for Urizen to tempt him at all ("I am chaind or thou couldst not use me thus"), once his wrath slips away his chains slip off, too. A significant word here is "restrain." The chains, of course, have been a restraint, but as Orc's wrath weakens he states to Urizen, "*Thou*

dost restrain my fury . . . " (my emphasis). What Orc perceives as Urizen's restraint is his own loss of wrath; what is being described is an internalization of Urizenic ideas that makes external binding unnecessary because it vitiates rebellious anger. In this branch of the narrative (Night VIIB will be considered below) Orc does not burst his chains; the chains disappear as he loses his wrath and submits to Urizen's enticements.

A second aspect of Orc's serpent form emerges from what at first seems only another ambiguity in the text. Orc's statement "already round thy Tree / . . . thou beginnest to weaken / My divided Spirit" seems at first to indicate that Urizen is the serpent round the tree — not Orc, who subsequently appears as serpent.[35] The ambiguity goes beyond a mere confusion in Orc's speech. In playing the role of a tempter, Urizen, in terms of traditional iconography, *is* acting as serpent. Orc is assuming Urizen's characteristics, as his instruction in the "arts" of war and deceit shows; in becoming a reptile, he is implicitly taking Urizen's shape. Though Urizen's reptile aspect is expressed here only through text ambiguity, it becomes overt in Night VIII. Hence Orc's serpent form mirrors a real, though still only latent, aspect of Urizen.

While the overt focus of Orc's speech is on his transmutation, other aspects of it, which seem at first to refer only to his mental torments, anticipate both his vestigial survival in human form and, more distantly, his immolation and regeneration in Night IX. Orc's reference to his "divided spirit," beyond describing his anguish, points to the way in which this division later assumes ob-

35. Ault, who points out this ambiguity, analyzes it as a perceptual discontinuity, arguing that Orc is perceived as serpent by Urizen but by himself as worm (262). As my treatment indicates, I regard both Urizen's and Orc's reptile forms as real within the text, not mere projections.

jective narrative form. And Orc's view of himself as a worm, though it refers immediately to his assumption of serpent form, alludes as well to a chain of insect imagery running throughout the poem, culminating in the "Man is a Worm" passage of Night IX (133:11-26). As Edward J. Rose has pointed out in an important discussion of "Blake's Human Insect," the worm/caterpillar's capacity for metamorphosis makes it for Blake a symbol of the transformative possibilities of humanity (231 n. 38 and *passim*). Thus the imagery which overtly anticipates Orc's appearance as a serpent contains coded references to his eventual regeneration.

In this pivotal moment of Blake's text, then, one aspect of Orc has indeed become Urizen's double, as the confusion surrounding their common latent reptile forms implies. Yet the way in which this change occurs, and its consequences, are both central to its meaning. Orc does not match Urizen through the extension or triumph of his rebellious wrath, but through his submission to *Urizen's* methods and thought processes, through grasping at the lure of power. And, crucially, this process is accompanied by the split in Orc himself.

What is being described is a social and not simply a psychic process. In the poem's larger symbolism — and in Blake's usage since *America* — Orc's chains have signified both sexual and social repression, and the process by which Orc ceases to struggle against them does not unwind them from humanity, but on the contrary, abandons humanity to its suffering. Orc's metamorphosis refers on one level to the Napoleonic degeneration of the French Revolution, a point made in numerous interpretations, including Aileen Ward's previously noted discussion of "the forces of Energy perverted and linked with Urizenic power." Yet Orc's crucial speech suggests not a perversion of revolutionary energy but a

failure to maintain it. Napoleonic France comes to resemble Pitt's England as Orc's wrath *disperses* in mental confusion — in the political allegory, as the mass energies of the original revolutionary outburst, which Orc represented, are blunted and absorbed, leaving the victims of oppression bound down by the state they helped create. But those victims of oppression are themselves Orc; Urizen indeed implies as much in saying he or Orc will rule "all human forms" (81:5), for a part of Orc is among those forms. The division in Orc is between an Orc that has lost its rebellious qualities and become a state apparatus built around war and deceitful rule, and the Orc it has left behind.

Beyond this political allegory, the passage has a larger significance in Blake's allegory of perception. Here, it is instructive to place Orc's wrath alongside its evident opposite, the "mildness" he attributes to Urizen ("Give me an example of thy mildness . . . "). In its immediate context, Orc's use of this word appears simply as an allusion to Urizen's mention of "soft mild arts" (an ironic allusion, since it is followed by "King of furious hail storms"). But given the similarity of both "mild arts" and "mildness" to "in peace unbound / From wrath," the term indicates that to Orc, at least, abandoning wrath is equivalent to adopting Urizen's "arts" of mildness, which are arts of deception. Further, "mildness" has a larger resonance in Blake's vocabulary. While this is the only use of "mildness" in *The Four Zoas*, the adjectival form "mild" is frequently used in contexts indicating deception — twice by Urizen himself, and several times in relation to the Spectre of Urthona, Satan, and the wine presses of Luvah.[36] "Mildness" itself appears in similar contexts in *Milton* (notably *Milton* 7-

36. Night V, 64:21; Night VIIA, 80:9 (as noted above), 82:27, 84:4, 8; Night VIII, 107 [115]:31; Night IX, 137:4. Two other uses are clearly deceptive and six ambiguous. Seven clearly benign uses come in "redemptive" passages, mainly in the extension of Night VIIA and in Night IX.

9, where it is stressed repeatedly — "Satan: with incomparable mildness"; "Satans extreme / Mildness," etc.). These uses should remind us of the close bonds between mildness and deceit, seen historically in the English state and symbolically in Urizen and Satan's similar methods of rule, and now as well in the subverted rebel, Orc. They should remind us, too, that the faculty Satan most lacks is "the Science of Wrath" (*Milton* 9:46; also used in *The Four Zoas*, Night VIII, 107 [115]:36).

This larger vision, the *science* of wrath, is what Orc too lacks. The links between his perceptual confusion, his inability to distinguish Urizen's hypocrisy from his own, and his sense that his wrath is slipping from him suggest that his vision has not been compromised by wrath, but his wrath by lack of vision, so that he cannot maintain it in pure and cleansing form.

Orc, Urizen, and Vala (Night VIIB)

As in Night VIIA, in VIIB Orc's mutation centers on the loss of wrath. It will be recalled that in this version the agent of temptation is the "nameless shadowy Vortex," later seen to be Vala (91:2, 14; see Chapter 2). In this presentation the "Shadow" hovers over Orc, and

> With sighs & howling & deep sobs that he might lose his rage
> And with it lose himself in meekness she embracd his fire (91:4-5)

The passage's metaphorical development elaborates this explicit statement; evidently, the "Shadow" embraces Orc's fire in order to smother it.[37] In the first

37. Jean H. Hagstrum points out this aspect of Vala's embrace, though he interprets the whole episode in a primarily sexual context ("Babylon Revisited" 111).

narration of the scene, this outcome does not occur; Orc remains a "flaming youth" with "wrists of fire" (91:6-9, 17-19). But in the second narration, as Orc's "human form" is consumed in his own fires, it is mingled with the "Shadow's" form and strewn through the abyss "Like clouds upon the winter sky" (93:28), a transmutation of fire into water.

But though the "sighs" and "sobs" make clear the sexual means of temptation, it is an error to read the confrontation in a primarily sexual way. Orc himself identifies the temptation as Urizenic in origin: "Knowing the arts of Urizen were Pity and Meek affection / And that by these arts the Serpent form exuded from his limbs" (91:11-12). These terms, indeed, are very close to those used for Urizen in Night VIIA. Further, the war song of the "Elemental Gods" and "demons of the deep" that separates the two rape narrations is, on one level, a narration of Urizen's power — manifested in the "clarions of Victory," accounts of Luvah's crucifixion and Urizen's mills, and an invocation to Vala, Urizen's partner (92:9, 12-15, 26-33; 92:34-93:19). In effect, this narration substitutes awe at Urizen's power in place of Night VIIA's power-sharing as the enticement to collaboration; the Urizenic mystery for which Vala's embrace acts as a sexual medium is the necessity for Orc to join Urizen or be crushed like Luvah. Affinities with the Nuptial Song in Night I make clear that Orc is up against the power of Urizen as manifested through all sublunary time; his serpent form coalesces when this power appears as a majestic display on a historic scale.[38]

38. The war-song episode has been read both historically, by Erdman, and psychologically, by Ault. Erdman argues that the account of Orc's transformation on page 93 refers specifically to Napoleon's coup on the 18th Brumaire (November 9) 1799, and is datable because it occurs between two sequences of war imagery referring to events of October 2-6 and mid-November (*Prophet* 316-17, 325-28). The problem is that the war imagery itself cannot be definitively dated without assuming what it is invoked to prove, the reference to the 18th Brumaire. Nevertheless, a Napoleonic reference seems inescapable as

Despite their common themes of loss of rage and submission to Urizen, the accounts in Nights VIIA and VIIB have major differences, both from each other and from Blake's originary myth of revolt in *America*, to which Night VIIB refers intimately. One difference between VIIA and VIIB, the presence in the latter of elements open to cyclic interpretation, has already been discussed (Chapter 2). In addition, VIIB more than VIIA traces the failure of the French and American revolutions to the basic revolutionary impulse, and to the originary myth in *America*, while — apparently paradoxically — VIIA much more than VIIB establishes the inadequacy of the political processes of those revolutions and sweeps the originary myth aside. Finally, VIIA shows powerfully that the underlying causes of both revolutions remain unsatisfied.

During the encounter between Orc and the "shadowy Vortex" in Night VIIB, the crucial moment in which Orc breaks his chains repeats parts of the Preludium to *America*, with significant changes. The "shadowy daughter of Urthona," "nameless female," or "Dark virgin" of *America* (1:1, 4, 11) has become the more sinister "nameless shadowy Vortex," and her identification as the war-figure Vala rather than a daughter of earth (Urthona) recasts the episode as a destructive seduction. The sequence in which Orc snaps his chains,

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one dimension of Blake's meaning; see above in reference to Night VIIA. (Erdman's interpretation, incidentally, makes Orc's transformation a result of his victories, since the British campaign to which Erdman refers ended without any gains [328].) Ault's analysis notes, among other points, that the "demons of the deep" have also appeared at the Nuptial Song in Night I and at Orc's birth in Night V (268). The correspondence with Night I is in fact closer than Ault notes. The "Elemental Gods" appear at the Nuptial Song as well; the Night I and Night VIIB songs open and close with very similar frame lines; and their contents are similar — each includes an account of the origins of war and a reference to the Urizen-Luvah horses myth, told in VIIB from Vala's viewpoint. Essentially, the war song in VIIB is a recurrence of that in Night I.

partly transcribed from *America*, is altered by interlineated and marginal additions that refer to Orc's impending metamorphosis, to Urizen's "arts," and to Vala as Urizen's "harlot."[39] Further, in *America* the female's womb "joy'd" following the rape, and she sings a song essentially heralding revolutionary transformation; Orc, bursting from the earth, appears subsequently as revolutionary tribune (pl. 6, text; pl. 10, design). In *The Four Zoas*, the female responds with "howling terror," her song is replaced by the war song of the Elemental Gods and demons evoking war and the powers of Urizen and Vala, and the song leads on to the second version of the rape and the appearance of Orc's snake form. Night VIIB, then, revises *America* by making the initial impulse of social rebellion lead to war and the disappearance of Orc's human form, rather than to a prophecy of liberation and Orc's appearance as defiant youth. Finally, though the political meaning of this originary act is inverted, the story of the rape, a violent assertion of mastery, is retained. Hence, the episode *can* be read politically in the way I have been arguing against — as stating that "triumphant violence harden[s] into regressive power" (Ward 218). True, the sequence contains its own corrective to such a reading, the appearance of the serpent only after the war song's overwhelming demonstration of Urizenic might. But the

39. The additions are given here in italics:

> *Knowing the arts of Urizen were Pity & Meek affection*
> *And that by these arts the Serpent form exuded from his limbs*
> Silent as despairing love & strong as Jealousy
> *Jealous that she was Vala now become Urizens harlot*
> *And the Harlot of Los & the deluded harlot of the Kings of Earth*
> *His soul was gnawn in sunder*
> The hairy shoulders rend the links free are the wrists of fire (91:11-17)

The two transcribed lines also differ from *America* in punctuation and the use of *&* for *and*.

alternative account, in Night VIIA, is a far more sweeping corrective.

In VIIA, the "originary act" never occurs; Orc never bursts his chains. Rather, they slip away, while Orc remains "bound" by submissive collaboration with Urizen. This too is a revision of *America*, less noticeable yet more fundamental; Blake substitutes the compromise of rebellious wrath for any successful rebellion, no matter how qualified. Politically, VIIA presents the political processes of the French and American revolutions as being diverted into the establishment of domination (Urizen's arts of war and deception) from the outset. Presenting the enticements of power as the means of temptation, too — rather than the manifestation of apparently irresistible power as in VIIB — is a far more radical critique of revolutionary failure. Finally, the persistence of Orc's human form in the larger structure of Night VIIA is a statement that the social, sexual, and political impulses Orc has embodied have neither been transformed into repression nor entirely repressed by the growth of Orc's snake form. Politically, VIIA is both a devastating indictment of the collapse of the American and French revolutions, and — ideologically of tremendous importance — a statement that the aspirations that sparked the revolutions remain unsatisfied. While arraigning the failed revolutions, then, the VIIA also frontally assaults the conservative idea that revolution as such is no more than a Satanic thrust for power.

A second aspect of Orc's division is, at first glance, puzzling. Following the appearance of serpent-Orc, Orc in human form never appears actively in the narrative. He is merely referred to, by the narrator and by Los and Enitharmon, as howling or suffering beneath the tree, in a "fiery lake" or "in the deeps"; or as the spirit of an unstated locale of "fires of Orc" (82:24, 38; 85:16, 22; 98 [90]:30, 46; 107 [115]:16). Blake, then, allows Orc's human aspect to per-

sist, only to suppress it almost completely from the narrative. Understanding this feature of Blake's presentation requires going beyond his immediate narrative context to the world of the poem's writing; here, and later in Blake's work, discontinuities and insufficiently motivated occurrences in his texts can best be read as pointing toward unsolved problems whose solutions cannot be known in advance. In this case, it should be remembered that Orc is not merely rebellious energy or desire, but their historical manifestations. Yet by 1797-1807 real appearances of Orc — the American continental militias, the Parisian sans-culotte mobs and women's marches, the English Corresponding Societies and mass demonstrations, much of the English reform press — had disappeared or declined in the face of class stabilization and political repression. In effect, they had "gone underground," exactly where Orc is found. ("Underground" already had its political meaning by this time.[40]) In Orc's almost subliminal appearances in the later Nights, Blake points both to a key social change of the later 1790s and to what will be a continuing problem in his later work, the decimation of the radical social movements of the 1790s and the consequent absence of a clear social agency of apocalypse.

Before seeing how this change is felt in the rest of *The Four Zoas*, it is appropriate to look at an alternative treatment of Orc's fates, which, though inadequate, points by omission to the problem of social agency. David Erdman, whose magisterial work has largely set the parameters for radical Blake criticism, sees Orc's transformation and his overall role in a somewhat different way from mine. In Night VIIA, Erdman argues, Orc does undergo a split. As "Brit-

40. See *OED*, *underground*, adv. 2 (examples from 1632 onward); adj. 4, 4b (from 1677).

ish radicalism, . . . forced to look on, hungering" as the daughters dole out crusts, he becomes a worm, while as "French radicalism," he becomes the Napoleonic serpent (375). In turn, British Orc must somehow recover if Los's prophetic work is to bear fruit, for as Erdman says elsewhere, "Orc must supply the will; the prophet without the rebel is impotent" (255). Attractive as such a reading is, it misses the collusion between Orc and Urizen and constructs a false split between hungry Orc and serpent Orc; Urizen does not simply force Orc to "look on," but offers him the bread as an instrument of rule, and Orc's acceptance creates his serpent form. Further, Erdman's identification of serpent Orc only with the Napoleonic, and not the Jacobin regime, does not fit well with a regime that came to power through direct suppression; Blake's treatment suggests the more profound criticism that in developing a ruling power that repressed the poor, Jacobinism learned "English" methods of rule. Finally, Erdman's analysis slights Blake's struggle, in the last Nights of this poem and in later work, to conceptualize the transformation of society without Orc's agency.

Textually, the starting point for this effort is the extended ending of Night VIIA, to which I now turn; substantively, it is Orc as suffering boy or "human remains," all but invisible in the text and yet, by his presence, setting in motion the rest of the poem.

Orc, Enitharmon, and Los

It has long been understood that Los and Enitharmon undergo a reformation in the extension of Night VIIA.[41] However, both the nature of the refor-

41. As students of the poem know, Blake originally wrote "End of the Seventh Night" after 85:22. At some point, he first added nine lines and a new finish line, and then added another three and a half pages, extending the Night through page 90. (88-89, an unrelated print that Blake cut in half and used for its blank verso sides, contain no text.) *E* confusingly labels the extension as

mation and the role Orc plays in it require some discussion. In the first six Nights, Los and Enitharmon have been as "deluded" (Bloom, *Apocalypse* 252) as any of the other characters. Blake here elaborates and extends the accounts he has given of the couple's activities in the Lambeth books (see Chapter 3) by filling in their early history, which also appears as the early history of humanity. In Night I, we see them wandering in a seemingly idyllic wilderness "in the Moony spaces of Eno / . . . among the forests" (9:19-20), essentially a hunter-gatherer society in which Los and Enitharmon feed on fruits, trap goats for milk, and eat "flesh of Lambs" (20-22). Even now, the wars of sex are in full development; the two are "A male & female, naked & ruddy as the pride of summer / Alternate Love & Hate his breast; hers Scorn & Jealousy" as Enitharmon "drave the Females all away from Los / And Los drave all the Males from her away" (9:23-24, 30-31).[42] In subsequent moments we see Los rejecting Urizen's supremacy because of his own claim to supreme power; claiming to have replaced Urizen as God; "absorbd in dire revenge" and drinking "with joy the cries / Of Enitharmon & the groans of Urizen" as he begins Urizen's binding (I, 12:19-20; IV, 48:15-18; 53:12-13). We see, too, that "terrified at the Shapes / Enslavd humanity put on he became what he beheld" during this process; and that "Infected Mad he dancd on his mountains high & dark" after its completion (53:23-24, repeated at 55:21-22; V, 57:1). Finally, in a moment of major significance that has been misread or ignored in most criticism, we see the ini-

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pages 95 [87] (apparently a misprint — this is the second half of 85), 86, 87, and 98 [90]. See *E*836-39.

42. In Night II the same statement is made about Urizen and Ahania (30:50-51); as Ault notes (128), the repetition indicates the dependence of the Urizen-Ahania plot strand on the seemingly separate Los-Enitharmon plot.

tial building of Golgonooza, usually glossed as Los's "city of art," occur as the building of a prison for Enitharmon following Orc's birth, motivated by Los's fear of being supplanted by Orc:

> over her [Enitharmon] Los mournd in anguish fierce
> Coverd with gloom. the fiery boy grew fed by the milk
> Of Enitharmon. Los around her builded pillars of iron
> And brass & silver & gold fourfold in dark prophetic fear
> For now he feard Eternal Death & uttermost Extinction (59:29-60:2)

All these passages — and others detailing the role of Enitharmon — are consistent with the highly critical treatment of the pair in the Lambeth books, but extend it further: this "Eternal Prophet" is capable of *anything*.[43]

The question, then, is how this deeply negative pair can possibly be redeemed. Part of the answer is, through conjugal love, which effects their reconciliation at several points in the narrative. Another is parental love and remorse, which leads them to try, unsuccessfully, to remove Orc's chain — as this emotion has also caused the rehumanization of Enion and the pity of Tharmas for Los and Enitharmon in other episodes (62:9-32; 9:3; 47:2-8). In the con-

43. Golgonooza is variously seen as a city of "art" (Bloom, commentary, *E*956; Erdman, *Prophet* 384); "Art" (Margoliouth 129; Paley, *Energy* 158); "art proper" (Frye 260); "prophetic art" (Damrosch 233, but in relation to *Milton*; Damrosch does not discuss its role in *The Four Zoas*); a "city of the spirit" (Percival 43, 72); an "artist's heterocosm" (Wilkie and Johnson 106); and a "bower for Enitharmon" (Deen 134; this identification owes something to Tharmas's earlier command to Los to build such a bower; see 49:19). Most of these comments deal with the second building of Golgonooza (see below) and do not discuss its building in Night V. Paley, however, says that Los "has already built Golgonooza, the city of art, 'in dark prophetic fear' of the fires of revolution" (*Energy* 104), catching the mood of this passage but conflating it with Golgonooza's later development; Ault notes the general negativity of this first building and valuably cites similarities with Urizen's building in Night II (196).

tinuation of Night VIIA, Los and Enitharmon's recovery of humanity occurs through a complex sequence in which the love of Orc — both as their individual child and as the imprisoned children of all human history — plays a central role.

At this point in the narrative, the union of the Spectre of Urthona and the Shadow of Enitharmon has engendered Vala, in fulfillment of Urizen's hope to use such a liaison to gain "dominion" over Los; Vala has been given charge of Orc, and her growth has caused the dead to burst from their tombs (85:18-21). A countermovement to Vala's begins with Los's tentative reunification with the Spectre of Urthona, but stalls as Enitharmon reveals that she has eaten the fruit of the Tree of Mystery, and Los repeats her action.[44] In a continuation and reversal of the *Paradise Lost* parallel, dropped in the Orc section of Night VIIA, Los's willingness to join Enitharmon leads not to damnation, but to salvation, as the Spectre "comfort[s] him [Los] / Being a medium between him & Enitharmon" (87:25-26).

Critics have seen the reintegration of Los and Enitharmon and the commencement of their labors as symbolizing the redemptive power of prophetic art (sometimes just "art") as contrasted to the futility of Orcian rage.[45] This is possibly true, but only if we carefully specify what is prophetic about prophetic art. It is social in focus; it joins past and future; and it continues, rather than displaces, the struggle for social transformation previously embodied in Orc. A clue to what is going on lies in the narrator's statement that the union of Los

44. This "fruit" is extremely complex and functions in several conflicting contexts. Among other points, it is equivalent to the "bread of Orc," which becomes part of his serpent skin in Night VIII. For a general treatment of this episode, see Johnson and Wilkie, "Spectrous Embrace."

45. For examples see Frye 298-99; Bloom, *Apocalypse* 255-56; Paley, *Energy* 160-61; Abrams 259.

and Enitharmon "Was not to be Effected without Cares & Sorrows & Troubles / Of six thousand Years of self denial and of bitter Contrition" (87:27-28). This is the span of historical time, frequently invoked in the poem; and Harold Bloom and Leonard Deen, among others, have read the passage as referring to forward time, that is, the time that must pass before the sin of eating the fruit can be expiated.[46] However, this reading must contend with the general absence of a clear historical chronology in *The Four Zoas*, and with the fact that the union of Los and Enitharmon follows immediately in the narrative present, with no indication of a time lapse. Most fundamentally, the scene as a whole rewrites Genesis 2 and *Paradise Lost* IX by making the sharing of the fruit the prelude to reunification rather than the completion of fall; once this anti-orthodox meaning is understood, the orthodox interpretation of the six thousand years as years of future atonement is also excluded. Hence, the reference must be to *past* time, the time of suffering already elapsed in history. In Night VIII, indeed, when Los speaks of himself as "that shadowy Prophet who six thousand years ago / Fell from my station," he echoes this moment: "I divided / To multitude & my multitudes are children of Care & Labour" (105 [113]:48-50; *E*380). The echo suggests that the "Cares" the narrator speaks of here are also retrospective. Los's action in eating the fruit, then, conflates the fall and the positive self-sacrifice of the crucifixion from the present vantage-point of preparation for apocalypse. Los's willingness to join Enitharmon's action — a willingness that leads first to despair but, with the Spectre's aid, to Los's comforting of Enitharmon (87:23, 45) — is mirrored on a larger scale by Los *and* Enitharmon's

46. See Bloom commentary, *E*961; Deen 141. Deen's historical reading forces him to add that the dead who follow Vala are only "proleptically dead" (144).

willingness to absorb and take into themselves through prophetic art the retrospective six-thousand-year history of human torment, and so make possible, in a highly literal fashion, the awakening of the dead that is the first stage of apocalypse.

This reading gains strength from the action that threads through the remainder of Night VIIA, the weaving of counterparts for the dead, which begins following the mention of the six-thousand-year time span. The "counterparts" consist in one aspect of the lost female portions of the dead; in another aspect they are simply "fabricate[d] embodied semblances in which the dead / May live" (98[90]:9-10), that is, representations of the dead in art. What is crucial, however, is that they are not simply representations of humanity in art in general, but of the *dead* in *prophetic* art; moreover, they are not simply *any* dead, but those who died in war and oppression:

> Enitharmon shady refuge from furious war
> Thy bosom translucent is a soft repose for the weeping souls
> Of those piteous victims of battle there they sleep in happy obscurity
> They feed upon our life we are their victims. (98[90]:5-8)

In the crucifixion motif that runs through this section, the victims of battle are to obtain life through Los and Enitharmon's sufferings. At the same time, in a surface inversion of this motif, the embodied "forms sublime" of the "piteous spectres" will provide the "ransoms for our Souls" (98[90]:22-24) to which Enitharmon referred earlier after eating the fruit. The eating of the fruit, then, will find expiation not in "denial" and "Contrition" through future time, but in the act of bearing witness to the agonies of *past* history, the lost lives and potentialities of six thousand years.

Los's prophetic art, then, is specifically one that recalls and incorporates the sufferings of the dead — the history of war and oppression threaded through the foregoing text. The resolve to undertake *this kind* of art marks the moment of the rekindling of Los's fires. Further, the dead are to live in "gardens of labour" (98[90]:10), reminding us that while Los in his individual aspect represents the faculty of art, in his collective aspect — symbolized by his smith's hammer — he embodies that of labor, the creative application of human intelligence to the material world. What Blake criticism has called "prophetic art," then, is an act of bearing witness to the afflictions of the dead and giving the dead life through art and labor in the minds of those who can hear the prophetic message, who are thereby readied to redeem those torments by transforming the earth.

The providential aspects of this episode have been troubling to some commentators. These aspects are manifested, particularly, in Enitharmon's perception of "the Lamb of God descending / To meet these Spectres" (87:52-53). A Marxist writer such as Stewart Crehan finds that in passages such as this one "the Urizen-Orc dialectic merely peters out, and a magico-religious fantasy takes its place" (314).[47] Two points are relevant in assessing this view. First, if the six thousand years are assumed to be retrospective, the "self-denial and . . . bitter Contrition" that the narrator mentions refer not to a long future period of atonement, but to an acceptance of responsibility for the terrors of past history, which the actions of Los and Enitharmon have done much to bring about — in which, indeed, art and labor are fully complicit. Second, what appears in ortho-

47. Crehan is referring specifically to the Christian symbolism in Night VIII, but the point would apply equally to its use here.

dox terms as a providential intervention from outside the world of human action is seen on closer examination to be another way of naming human action. The weaving that Enitharmon undertakes in response to her fear that the Lamb will "destroy" her and Los (lines 53-59) is a part of the complex work by which she and Los give present reality to the dead. This actualization of the dead in prophetic art so that they may "live" and "comfort Orc" is also what weans their spectres from the control of Vala. But, of course, this is exactly what the Lamb's descent to meet the spectres also means. Hence, though Enitharmon herself does not show any awareness of it, her weaving *is* the descent of the Lamb. (I postpone a full discussion of Blake's late religious symbolism to the following chapter, where I will argue that it always refers to collective human activity.)

From a political standpoint as well, the implications of social reconciliation in the conclusion to Night VIIA have provoked comment — ranging from the admiring assessment that "Los has become an artist at the same time he has become a Christian and a peacemaker" to the complaint that "the revisions made to *The Four Zoas* in this spirit seem virtually to remove the central theme of struggle from the plan of the epic" (Deen 156; Erdman, *Prophet* 380). Several points in the final pages contribute to such assessments, notably Enitharmon's reference to Los's "sweet moderated fury" (98 [90]:22) and Los's success in drawing even a portion of Urizen out of war. Blake here clearly broaches an aspect of the pacifist position he was to take in later work, and yet it is far from an absolute position. The division of Urizen, "separating him in sunder / Leaving his Spectrous form which could not be drawn away" (lines 59-60), may have two meanings. In the standard terms of Blake interpretation, it would refer to

the emergence of an unfallen Reason shorn of its "Spectrous" part; in a more directly political sense, to large-scale divisions in the ruling class and its armies. In either case, it is crucial that Urizen is not won over, but rather *divides*, like Orc himself; at either level of interpretation, the implication of reconciliation is qualified.

This point merges with a larger one, the place of these pages in the poem's overall action. In the poem as a whole, the ending of Night VIIA is not itself Blake's account of human renovation — this occurs in Night IX — but a portrayal of preparation for it. Pertinent here is Jackie DiSalvo's contention that in VIIA Blake dramatizes "not an alternative to revolution," but the need for a historical vision to guide it (73); DiSalvo's reading, like mine, seeks to place the Los-Enitharmon material in dramatic context rather than treating it as an isolated thematic statement. From such a standpoint, the spectres who "weeping . . . viewd [Los's] immortal works" (98 [90]:41) are not being lulled away from social struggle to art but are viewing the representation in art of tyranny, the destruction of imagination, and a possible alternative to these evils. Most of all, placing these pages in context reconnects them with the controlling action of the second half of Night VIIA, the plot thread of the spectres. The stakes should be clear: if the dead who have burst from their tombs under Vala's influence continue to be bound to her, they will emerge, in Night IX, to renew war on earth in the service of kings and counsellors; if they are won from her sway they will emerge to overthrow the kings and counsellors. Los and Enitharmon's actions lead toward this event.

In Los and Enitharmon's decision to struggle for this outcome, Orc plays a crucial role. The fabrication of substances for the dead is undertaken "to com-

fort Orc in his dire sufferings" (98 [90]:13). But this is not a matter of making Orc's continued sufferings bearable. It is a decision to end them by "breath[ing] forth on the wind / The spectrous dead," that is, by making the afflictions of the historic dead visible in art; and to draw present-day warriors "from out the ranks of war," in part by *splitting* Urizen, and in the process "Thus dividing the powers of Every warrior" — in one meaning, encouraging disaffection in the army (lines 40-41, 59-60, 63). In substance, comforting Orc is an active process of calling forth comrades for him. Orc, in turn, functions is two aspects here. He is Los and Enitharmon's individual child, whom they like other parents are ready to suffer and die for; and he is also a collective entity. As Los and Enitharmon are themselves collectivities, human populations engaged in art and labor, their son too is a collective being, both the embodiment of the warrior victims of history, and "a father to his brethren," the warriors drawn out of present-day battle (line 48). In Night VIII, indeed, Los recognizes this aspect of Orc unconsciously; though by then he regards Orc as only "human remains," Los refers to his own "multitudes" as "*children* of Care & Labour" (my emphasis). It is for the sake of their son, then, and the broader "multitudes" who are like him, that Los and Enitharmon undertake their sublime struggle:

> They rather chose to meet Eternal death than to destroy
> The offspring of their Care & Pity (lines 52-53)

Though Los and Enitharmon attain this capability, their doing so is not foreordained; here too Blake maintains the openendedness that we have come to see as a feature of *The Four Zoas*. The similarity of terms used for Orc/Luvah and for Los in Nights I and III, noted earlier, suggests the indeterminacy of

their roles. The couple's vindictive, destructive behavior in the first six nights does in fact change, but the redemptive act of sharing the fruit, though prefigured by their repentance for chaining Orc, is not knowable in advance. The act in which it issues, the building of Golgonooza, exemplifies this indeterminacy, for Golgonooza's earlier building occurred in a radically different context and with different meaning. Moreover, the two episodes are not presented as sequential — Golgonooza is built in Night V and built *all over again* in Night VIIA. As with the distinct forms assumed by Orc, the two building episodes are perhaps best viewed as alternative potentialities. Golgonooza is rightly seen as one of Blake's central symbols of the enterprise of prophetic art, and yet its emergence as such is highly contingent. Its final form is not predestined, but dependent on Los and Enitharmon's ability to choose "Eternal death" — the readiness to fight and suffer on earth — for the liberation of their son.

Orc, Satan, Rahab, the Lamb, and Jerusalem

The complex events of Night VIII present a sorting out of opposed groups of characters and symbols into two camps clustered around Los, Enitharmon, the Lamb, and Jerusalem, on one side, and Urizen, Vala, Satan, and Rahab, on the other. This sorting-out process also governs the structure of the Night, which alternates between text segments seen primarily from one or the other camp.[48] Orc's role is important to the processes in both text sequences, espe-

48. The first set of characters is seen approximately in lines 1-60, 182-246, 331-409, and 466-596, while the second group has the alternating text segments, according to the sequential line numbering, easier to follow in *E* than the extremely disordered page references. My divisions, of course, are not exact, since some of the shifts are spread over several lines; in some instances, too, viewpoints shift back and forth within one of these segments.

cially to the formation of the new entities that appear in this Night: the Lamb, Jerusalem, Satan, and Rahab.

Orc in his serpent form is visible in most of the Urizen-Vala sections, and is viewed from some of the Los-Enitharmon segments as well. He is "a Serpent wondrous among the Constellations of Urizen," providing the power for Vala to spread through the tree of mystery; envy "that Orc reignd over all" fuels Urizen's own transformation into a dragon; Vala-Rahab "commun[es] with Orc," weeps before him, and provides food for him from her "Cup / Of fornication" in the vision of John of Patmos that ends the Night; and he is felt as Urizen's ally and seen as serpent by Urthona, Ahania, and Enion.[49]

Orc has at least three meanings in these appearances. First, he is the French Revolution in its degenerated, Napoleonic phase. This reading of Orc, its application to the Napoleonic state apparatus rather than the French common people, and the implied corresponding view of Urizen as the English state, have been common since Erdman.[50] These identifications imply that the reptilizing imagery of Night VIII refers to the dehumanizing effects of interimperial-

49. See 101:8, 25 (repeated at 103:24), *E*373, 375; 111 [107]:19, *E*382; 115 [111]:11, 17, 7, *E*386; 111 [107]:34, 112 [108]:25, 114 [110]:24, *E*383-85. The cup and food at 115 [111]:7 indicate Orc's serpent form, not otherwise mentioned in this last appearance. Rahab is formed by the Synagogue of Satan's clothing of Vala (109 [105]:5-30, *E*378), an act paralleling the creation of Jerusalem through Enitharmon's weaving (see below). For her identification with the Whore of Revelation 17:4 and for general commentary see Damon, *Dictionary* 338-40; Bloom, *Apocalypse* 259-61; Frye 299-303. Her cup is derived from the cups of iron with which the "dark shadowy female" (Vala) fed Orc at 101:20-21, and in its present form from Revelation 17:4. As the action of the Synagogue constitutes Vala as Rahab, so her cup now becomes identical with the cup in Revelation.

50. For topical references supporting these identifications, some more convincing than others but persuasive in the aggregate, see *Prophet* 397 n. 16; 399-401; 418-19 n. and 516 (on the Sanhedrim of Satan mentioned several times in Night VIII).

ist war, and Erdman notes that Blake's use of this imagery simply literalizes metaphors already used by Hayley and others (*Prophet* 349 and n.). This imagery cannot be fully understood, however, if it is taken primarily as referring to imperialist rivalry *between* France and England. While Orc and Urizen are certainly rivals, nowhere after his formation in the two versions of Night VII is Orc as serpent shown in struggle against Urizen. On the contrary, the two are in league *together* against the Los-Enitharmon group: Urizen "Commun[es] with the Serpent of Orc in dark dissimulation / . . . / To undermine the World of Los & tear bright Enitharmon" (100:32-34, *E*374). Blake's reading of the Napoleonic wars, then, is not simply the common one that total war turns its practitioners into monsters. Though incorporating this view, Blake's poem presents the war as a horrible joint struggle of the English and French ruling classes against the common people of both countries. Whether or not one agrees with such a view, it is implied by Blake's imagery.

In an extension of this usage, Orc becomes part of the organization of the new figure, Satan. This complex figure merges Orc's serpent aspect with Urizen and with the dead under Vala's hegemony. Subsequently, the identification is made explicit by Los: "[W]hen Luvah in Orc became a Serpent he des[c]ended into / That State called Satan" (107 [115]:26-27, *E*380). However, the explanatory context for this much-noted line occurs earlier, when Urizen, "Communing with the Serpent of Orc" as noted above, sees

> the battle take a form
> Which he intended not a Shadowy hermaphrodite black & opake
> The Soldiers named it Satan (101:33-35, *E*374)[51]

51. The passage is part of a marginal addition without line-in; Erdman places it following the insertion of a portion of pages 100-101 marked for trans-

Though Orc is not mentioned in these lines, Satan's appearance is preceded by Urizen's communion with Orc, and succeeded by a battle sequence in which armies of "terrors" mutate repeatedly from human to bestial form and back. Hermaphroditic Satan, then, is constituted by the collaboration of Urizen-Orc and becomes the form of warfare waged under their fused leadership, in which their separate identities and those of their armies disappear and war consists of an indistinguishable swarm of men-beasts "rend[ing] one another" (line 47).

Satan, then, emerges into the narrative as a form for the armies of Urizen-Orc, whose "hermaphroditic" quality refers simultaneously to their alternating beast and human forms, to the perversion of male sexuality in war signified by the warriors' dragon shapes, and to the hiding of "male" sexualized aggression within the "female" "veil" of Vala's war and religious mystery. At the same time, Satan is constituted from the dead of Night VIIB, who form an "aggregate" called Satan when they burst from their tombs under Vala's control (87 [95]:14). In effect, then, actual armies of real men become the dead organized by Vala's power under Urizen-Orc's control. The aggregate nature of this entity — first as the dead, then as the "battle" (101:33) — is important in understanding its identity. On its return to the narrative in a later episode, Satan is identified as a social aggregate, "multitudes of tyrant Men in union blaspheer to this point (see *E*841). For the soldiers' role, see Rosso, 140. Ault's sketchy treatment (280) is part of a larger section arguing that the Lamb and Satan are "interconstitut[ed]" and "preconditions for each other's entrance into the narrative proper" (269-81, at 275). Standard commentaries on Blake's conception of the hermaphrodite and its connection with Satan (e.g. Damon, *Dictionary* 181-82; Percival 114-118, 120-21; Frye 135, 272, 301) seem to me not terribly useful, and I limit myself below to the question of why Satan is hermaphroditic in this context.

mous / Against the divine image. Congregated Assemblies of wicked men" (104:29-30, *E*378). The "divine image," in turn, is no abstraction; Blake's "Human Form Divine" *is* the human form, and hence Satan is the name of wicked assemblies who kill young men in war.

Politically, the battle passage outlines a response to the European war in progress as Blake wrote. The armies of "terrors" are first counterposed to Los's activity of "build[ing] the Walls of Golgonooza" (101:40, *E*374), but though they "humanize" under Los and Enitharmon's influence, it is only to oscillate between human and beast and ultimately to revert to reptile form. Enitharmon's "lulling" cadences (line 45), which elsewhere soothe "the weeping spectres of the dead" (113:12, *E*376), here only further the battle. It is possible to read this passage as thoroughly undermining a positive view of Enitharmon's activity. Alternatively, in historical context, the passage may suggest the impossibility of offering "critical support" (to use later political jargon) to the war, either from the English side as a defense against aggression or from the French side as an extension of republicanism. A reference to the "revolution of their day of battles" in this same passage (102:6, *E*374) widens the critique by suggestion that the French Revolution is part of the imperialist slaughter. It should be noted, however, that at this stage, Blake's pacifism applies to participation in imperialist war, and evidently not to the social rebellion of Night IX.

So far I have traced two new meanings for Orc in Night VIII: the collaborative warfare of Urizen-Orc against the British and French people, and the battle-torment itself. The "terrors" who participate in the battle passage, implicitly forms of Orc since they bear the name he has had since *America*, suggest a third extension of his meaning. If these soldiers are aspects of Orc, then ser-

pent-Orc must refer not simply to the ruling class of once-revolutionary France, but to the people maddened by war, intoxicated by Vala, and reptilized as killers for the ruling classes of both France and England. This idea, indeed, is supported by the opening presentation of Orc in Night VIII, in which serpent-Orc is seen devouring "In raging hunger . . . the pestilential food" kneaded "in Uveths feeding trough" and measured out by Vala (101:17-20, *E*373). This is evidently the food of the "Crust of bread" speech in Night VIIA (Uveth is one of Urizen's daughters), so that Orc here is in one aspect the poor who receive this bread. If in one sense the Urizen-Orc collaboration of Night VIII is between the French and English ruling classes in a conspiracy to destroy the "divine image" in war, in an additional sense that collaboration is between Urizen as the ruling classes of England *and* France and Orc as the common people of both countries who support imperialist slaughter. Blake here faces a political reality (of his time and our own) that any opponent of imperialist war is all too familiar with.[52]

Though the cancerous metastases of serpent-Orc are the most spectacular aspect of his development in Night VIII, Orc in human form plays no less important a part. But his role is relatively unmarked and subtle, and we shall have to approach it sideways. Orc is first mentioned in Night VIII in the form of the Lamb as seen by Urizen:

> When Urizen saw the Lamb of God clothed in Luvahs robes
> Perplexd & terrifid he Stood tho well he knew that Orc

52. In all these senses, Orc's role is more negative than Schorer allows in saying that serpent-Orc "destroys the false forms of order and breaks down external restraints" (291) — a relatively benign reading. Schorer's view of the metamorphosis as a critique of political republicanism and Godwinian anarchism, however, is valuable (292-93).

> Was Luvah but he now beheld a new Luvah. Or One
> Who assumd Luvahs form & stood before him opposite (101:1-4; *E*373)

A critical consensus has given the last line a surface reading, failing to analyze the weaving imagery to which I turn in a moment and reading the Lamb as the orthodox Jesus taking the form of Luvah, or passion. For Frye, Jesus-Luvah here is "the slain Lamb of God, the life of innocence sacrificed to experience"; for Morton Paley, Jesus "replaces Orc as the operative form of Luvah.... Christian brotherhood replaces revolutionary fraternity in Blake's thought as the agent of Love," and the change signifies Blake's turn "to an apocalyptist [John] who also saw history as outside human control" (*Symmetry* 288, *Energy* 154, 164). Hence, Blake makes a triple turn: from Orc to Jesus, from rebellion to passivity, from human activity to redemption from outside the human sphere.[53]

Although there is a grain of truth here — Blake does see the moment of redemption as beyond knowledge — this consensus misreads the Lamb in two major ways. First, it ignores the association of the robes with the redress of injustice rather than with passive suffering. In Revelation, the descent of Christ clothed with blood follows the prophecy of Babylon's destruction:

> Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils.... And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones ... and slaves, and souls of men.

53. For a similar view, see Deen 149; for a dissent, similar to my own view, Rosso, 138.

> . . . Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. (18:2, 11-13, 21)

In the following chapter the Word of God, or Christ as Lord, descends "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood" — Blake's robes of blood[54] — with a sword emerging from his mouth "that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (19:13, 15). The sword, of course, is the Word, but the implications of the smiting, the rod, fierceness and wrath, and the wine presses are coercive and probably violent; and the connection between the appearance of Christ and the destruction of Babylon "with violence" is inescapable. Indeed, an Old Testament source for the passage in Revelation emphasizes the element of retribution: "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people *there was* none with me: for I will treat them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments" (Isaiah 63:3). While the robes have often been associated with the blood of the crucifixion, in Revelation 19 and its precursor passage they are closely tied to the winepress and vengeance. The implied endorsement of retributive justice is one that will be presented directly — but also ambiguously — in Night IX.[55] Blake's image of the Lamb in Luvah's robes thus functions in two partly contradictory, yet intimately related, ways: as a sign of endurance and preservation in Night II, when Jesus puts on the robes "lest the state calld Luvah should cease" (33:14), and as an image of the fall of tyranny when the Lamb reappears.

54. This source of the image was apparently first identified by Paul Miner, " 'Divine Analogy' " 51n.

55. The meanings can never be closed, of course; see Ellul 108-109 and 194-97 for discussion of Rev. 19 and 18, respectively, that treat the violence as allegorical.

In a more fundamental way, the consensus that opposes Orc to Jesus must confront the point that Orc's "human remains" become one component of the Lamb and his robes — Urizen is *not* mistaken to identify Orc with this Luvah. At the same time, the view of the Lamb as representing a realm "outside human control" (Paley) must deal with the Lamb's constitution through human activity. To understand both points, we must look at the imagery of Enitharmon's weaving, introduced in Night VIIA as a way to comfort Orc "in the deeps." This weaving becomes, in Night VIII, part of the counter-movement to the advance of Rahab and Satan that prepares for the apocalypse of Night IX. This counter-movement allows the slaughtered myriads of human history to be reembodied in preparation for the final confrontation with their torturers.

The weaving begins when the dead are seen "descending / Unto Ulros night tempted by the Shadowy females sweet / Delusive cruelty," in a resumption of the movement initiated when they burst from their tombs in both versions of Night VII (99:19-21; 85:18; 87 [95]:11). The movement toward Ulro is diverted by Enitharmon:

> they descend away from the Daughters of Beulah
> And Enter Urizens temple Enitharmon pitying & her heart
> Gates broken down. they descend thro the Gate of Pity
> The broken heart Gate of Enitharmon She sighs them forth upon the wind
> Of Golgonooza Los stood recieving them
> . . . . . .
> From out the War of Urizen & Tharmas recieving them
> Into his hands. (99:21-25, 100:1-2; *E*372)

Enitharmon then erects the looms of Cathedron and

wove the Spectres
Bodies of vegetation Singing lulling Cadences to drive away
Despair from the poor wandering spectres
. . . . . .
Looking down the Daughters of Beulah saw
With joy the bright Light & in it a Human form
And knew he was the Saviour Even Jesus (100:3-5, 8-10; *E*372)

The passage describes the formation of bodies for the dead through Enitharmon's weaving; at its end, the Daughters look down and discern Jesus. The two acts appear to have nothing to do with each other; the dead have been given bodies, and Jesus has appeared in "Human form." Yet the appearance of Jesus in human form is the Incarnation, and, at the same time, the creation of bodily forms for disembodied spirits is also an incarnation. With this in mind we should understand that the Incarnation and the weaving of bodies for the dead are the same act; Enitharmon through her weaving has created Jesus in multiple, collective form. Hence, the Lamb that appears to Urizen on the following page *is* the product of Enitharmon's weaving, the dead with their woven bodies seen as one body, wearing the robes of blood — which, as we saw in Night I, are also the wounds of the victims of war, those same reembodied dead.[56] The weaving, then, gives bodily form to history's dead, who appear, both to the Daughters and then to Urizen, as a vision of Jesus or the Lamb.

A similar movement is observed when the weaving continues on pages

56. Blake's rearrangement of parts of pages 100-101 does not affect the relative placement of these passages.

103-104, as Enitharmon

> sighd forth on the wind the spectres
> And wove them bodies calling them her beloved sons & daughters
> . . . . . .
> Thus forming a Vast family wondrous in beauty & love
> And they appeard a Universal female form created
> From those who were dead in Ulro from the Spectres of the dead
> And Enitharmon namd the Female Jerusa[le]m the holy (103:33-34, 103:37-104:1; *E*376)

In addition to weaving the male Lamb, then, Enitharmon also weaves from the dead a collective female family, which becomes Blake's central symbol of human renovation, Jerusalem.

Three interim conclusions emerge from this consideration of the weaving. First, the Lamb who appears to Urizen clothed in Luvah's robes is the collective form of the bodies Enitharmon has woven to allow the dead to emerge from Ulro, escaping from Vala's spell.[57] However, as we know, these same dead form part of the aggregate "Satan," implicitly still under Vala's control. The appearance of the dead in two contradictory aspects can be taken either as representing alternative possibilities, or as enacting a real division in their numbers. Second, robes are woven garments, so that the robes themselves, whose historical meaning we know to be the blood shed in war and oppression, may emerge into narrative present time as another product of the weaving, though this is not

57. In an apparent second version of his formation, the Lamb is seen "in Jerusalem's veil" and "born of fair Jerusalem" (100:2, 104:34). Since Jerusalem herself is a product of Enitharmon's labor, however, the Lamb is a human creation in this account too.

specified — Enitharmon may weave the Lamb's robes as well as the Lamb himself/themselves. Finally, Jerusalem emerges into the narrative as yet another result of the weaving, that is, of human material labor. The weaving imagery, then, presents the divine not as a providential intervention from outside the sphere of human action, but as a product of human labor. Again, one need not necessarily agree with this view; but it is the implication of Blake's imagery.

The repetition of the action of "sigh[ing] forth" in these passages allows us to pinpoint Orc's place in the counter-movement against Satan and Rahab. Night VIII contains only two unmistakable references to Orc's human form; both occur during Los's confrontation with Vala-Rahab late in the Night. In the first, Los credits Enitharmon with creating, out of pity, a "Space closd with a tender moon" for Satan, ultimately located "beneath the fires of Orc" (107 [115]:15-16; *E*380).[58] This "Space" exists topologically beneath Orc's human form, designated by his "fires," which function to limit the "Space," as well as to permit its continued existence. In the continuation of this passage, Los first introduces the conception of "states," which will be further developed in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*:

> The State named Satan can never be redeemed in all Eternity
> But when Luvah in Orc became a Serpent he des[c]ended into
> That State calld Satan Enitharmon breathd forth on the Winds
> Of Golgonooza her well beloved knowing he was Orc's human remains
> She tenderly lovd him above all his brethren he grew up

58. It is later specified that "Rintrah & Palamabron Cut sheer off from Golgonooza / Enitharmons Moony space & in it Satan & his companions," who then rolled down into a snowy world, presumably beneath Orc's fires (lines 39-40).

In mothers tenderness (107 [115]:25-30; *E*380)

The distinction Los makes here between Orc as serpent and Orc's human remains extends the topological metaphor: the "State" into which Orc-Luvah as serpent "descends" is equivalent to the "Space" existing "beneath" the fires of human Orc. The further development of serpent-Orc as one component of Satan has already been noted; of concern here is the development of Orc's other portion. Los's statement that the "human remains" are "breathd forth on the Winds" links them with the spectres "breathd forth upon the wind" at the end of VIIA and "sighd forth on the wind" in both phases of Enitharmon's weaving in Night VIII (98 [90]:40; 99:24, 100:18, *E*372; 103:33, *E*376). The repetition indicates that Orc's remains are part of the spectres that Enitharmon incorporates into her weaving.[59] These forms, as collective entities, become the Lamb and Jerusalem. In other words, *Orc's human remains are one component of both the Lamb and Jerusalem.* Just as serpent-Orc becomes a component of the complex of forces that constitutes Satan and Rahab, so human-Orc figures in the grouping of Los, Enitharmon, the Lamb, and Jerusalem that opposes them.

Despite the importance of Orc's human form in the formation of these forces, however, what has taken place is an almost total fragmentation of what was once a unified symbol. Orc has not simply split into snake and boy. The boy has shattered in turn, appearing in his own right howling in the deeps (though not in Night VIII); as "human remains," apparently dead like the other spectres; and in this form as part of two entities, the Lamb and Jerusalem. This

59. Ault's treatment of this point (260) has informed my own. However, Ault considers the "human remains" as "a form of Satan" (*ibid.*), apparently reading line 27 as an elided relative clause: "That State calld Satan [which] Enitharmon breathd forth. . . ."

fragmentation will make itself felt in several ways in the poem's insurrectionary final Night.

The Unbinding of Wrath in Night IX

The transformations of Orc, Los, and Enitharmon in Nights VII and VIII prepare the ground for the apocalypse of Night IX — but not, as is usually assumed, through an eclipse of political revolution (Orc) in favor of a revolution of mentation or imagination. In Blake's narration of Night IX the destruction of Babylon, of oppressive social reality (not merely oppressive thought) is an integral part of the process of human reintegration.

In its structure, Night IX offers a successive unfolding of the same events in different versions. The first eighty-eight lines (117-119:23) are a prolepsis of the entire Night in general narrative, the next four pages (to 124:5) retell part of this narrative in the form of the awakening of the dead, and the following fourteen pages (to 138:15) retell most of the original material in its most elaborate mode, as the regeneration of the Zoas and the apocalyptic harvest cycle, before a brief endpiece (138:16-139:10) returns the poem to the present. In each of the three narrative sections, a key episode is an eruption of social violence in which the oppressors are hurled down and their victims exalted.

The first version of this social apocalypse occurs at the beginning of the Night, immediately following Los's rending of the sun and moon. The trumpet of judgment is heard and "The thrones of Kings are shaken . . . / The poor smite their opressors they awake up to the harvest / . . . / The opressed pursue like the wind there is no room for escape" (117:18-23). According to Harold Bloom, in this passage "the political vision of Blake reaches its wishful climax

and passes away, to be absorbed into the more strenuous themes of human integration" (*Apocalypse* 268). These words exemplify the dominant understanding of "Blake's apocalypse," in which social rebellion is transcended by a revolution of the spirit, but they are entirely inaccurate. The imagery of the passage, in fact, points to its reenactment at two later points in the poem. The reference to the harvest alludes to the final pages of the Night, while the specific imagery of kings, warriors, and smiting anticipates the second version of the "uprising."

This begins with a reworking of the shattering of the sun and moon. "He [Urizen] ceasd for rivn link from link the bursting Universe explodes / . . . rattling bones / To bones Join, shaking convulsd the shivering clay breathes" (122:26-28). In the succeeding lines tiger and lion, ox and ass, eagle and raven — embodiments of "furies" and "moping terrors" (lines 32-33) — witness what is described apocalyptically as the awakening of the dead, yet is also a portrayal of a social revolution. This episode revises the raising of the dead in Revelation 20:12-13 by waking them not to be judged by God, but themselves to judge their persecutors. To the terror of the oppressors, "every one of the dead appears as he had livd before" (122:41), the slave still marked by the scourge and the tyrant by the imprint of his crown; with all identities laid bare and no dissimulation possible, the oppressed "sieze the opressor howlings began / On the golden palace Songs & joy on the desart" (123:5-6). Blake marks the significance of these events with the clearest possible extratextual reference, to the struggle of God and Satan in *Paradise Lost* 6, as the planets and stars marvel at the "dreadful rout / As of a battle in the heavens" (lines 17-18). In a transcendent moment

> the innocent accused before the Judges
> Shines with immortal Glory trembling the Judge springs from his
> throne

Hiding his face in the dust beneath the prisoners feet & saying
Brother of Jesus what have I done intreat thy lord for me (lines 22-25)

To understand the full significance of this passage, we must recall the England we glimpsed through Urizen's "Crust of bread" speech, one that prided itself on the rule of law, and showed it by providing for hanging as punishment for stealing forty shillings; one, too, where commutations were eased when the accused could plead what Douglas Hay calls the "magic words" — "his parents are respectable persons," his brother is "a builder of character and eminence" (Hay 44). And we should remember the persecution of the jacobin Corresponding Societies and the Scottish treason trials that deported radicals like Joseph Gerrald, Thomas Muir, and T.F. Palmer to Australia — when Gerrald's judge, rejecting the argument that Jesus had been a reformer, sniggered, "Muckle he made o' that; *he* was hanget" (Erdman, *Prophet* 476n.; Thompson, *Making* 128).[60] Blake may indeed work the transportation of prisoners into his basic myth; Robert Hughes, the historian of the convict settlement, takes the "Horrible rock far in the South," on which the Eternal Man first stirs, as referring to Australia, and the gloss is plausible (119:26; Hughes 159). Beyond these specific associations, the judges belonged to and embodied the gentry of whom J.H. Plumb has observed that they were "as deeply entrenched in their neighbourhoods as the baronage of Henry III," and that their "power . . . was sanctioned by violence — riding out against their enemies, hamstringing their neighbour's [*sic*] dogs, beating their farmers' sons, or shooting down their riotous labourers" (21).[61] *These*

60. For details of the trials, see Thompson, *Making* 122-30; for the Corresponding Societies, Chap. 5 *passim*. For the deportees' histories in Australia, where Gerrald died of tuberculosis, see Hughes 177-81.

61. This description of the late seventeenth-century gentry remains apt for the later period.

are the people Blake imagines casting themselves in terror at the feet of the oppressed. In an extension of the episode, lined in from the margin, he gives the prisoner's response:

> you scourgd my father to death before my face
> While I stood bound with cords & heavy chains, Your hipocrisy
> Shall now avail you nought. So speaking he dashd him with his foot
> (lines 30-32)

The whole system of paternalist class justice is being "dashd" here, and the incident calls to mind a later promise made by notice during the "General Ludd" period: "We Will Nock doon the Prisions and the Judge we Will murde whan he is aslepe" (Thompson 714).[62]

Blake's imagery in these passages recalls the episodes involving Los, Enitharmon, and Orc in Night VII and the weaving of Night VIII. Night VIIA closed with Los and Enitharmon's work of fabricating "embodied semblances" for the dead; Night VIII continued this action by introducing the figures of Jerusalem and the Lamb, both products of the weaving. The awakening of the dead in Night IX presents this figurative revivifying of the dead as objective action. Their rebellion, with its images of retributive justice, is not the opposite of the imaginative reintegration in Night VIIA and the weaving in VIII, but their ful-

62. A dogmatically antipolitical Blake criticism has either ignored such passages or ludicrously misread them. H.M. Margoliouth, who chooses not to mention the uprising of the dead, comments on this page that "the Last Judgement means the recognition *and thereby* the destruction of error" (127; my emphasis). To Leopold Damrosch, the prisoner episode means that "Albion is, as a repentant Urizen calls him, the 'brother of Jesus' " (289n.); Damrosch does not mention the prisoner's response.

fillment. The references to hypocrisy recall key moments in Orc's temptation and the larger contexts of English history referred to there. The lions, tigers, and eagles remind us of Orc's prophetic first appearance in Night V, and retain their associations with fury and defiance, no longer linked to Orc. On a more fundamental level the revolutionary energy that disappeared from Orc when he felt himself "unbound from wrath" reappears in the heaven-shattering wrath of the victims of oppression.

The design of this page, one of the *Night Thoughts* engravings, complements the text. It shows an upward-soaring figure with a lyre, its bowlike posture recalling the similarly curved figure of "Rest before Labour" that precedes the poem's text and the springing Urthona image that concludes it. The figure's upward sweep visually reenacts the uprising in the text. Yet its right foot is manacled, and the attached chain merges into a thistle that winds round the lower-right corner of the text frame. Thus, the figure's upward flight must either break the chain or be halted, a possible allusion to the fact that the apocalypse sung in the text has not been achieved (and still has not at the poem's end; see below).[63]

The final enactment of the social apocalypse occurs in the episodes of the winnowing and the wine presses of Luvah. These pages form an analogue to the

63. This design has been seen as showing dispiritedness and exhaustion, in contrast to the optimistic text (Grant, "Visions in *Vala*" 194-95), or a "gesture of helplessness . . . absurdly inappropriate to the . . . text" (Magno and Erdman 91). Such comments seem to miss the exuberance and energy of the soaring figure, and not to take into account the openness of the design, which focuses on the moment *before* the chain becomes taut. Reinforcing the point by contrast, the companion *Night Thoughts* design, showing the "poet" figure chained, is used for page 91, the opening page of Night VIIB, which recounts one version of Orc's metamorphosis (see above).

earlier episodes, even though the events are significantly transformed. The sequence begins with Tharmas's winnowing and his cry to the "Kings & Counsellors & Giant Warriors" to "Go down into the depths go down & hide yourselves beneath" (134:5-8), lines that recall the shaking of the thrones and the fleeing of the warriors (117:18-20) as well as the judge's abasement (123:23-25). The action continues with the slaves' rejoicing and the song of the African Black (134:18-135:3), which parallel the "Songs & joy on the desart" (123:6). It ends with the pressing of the wine (135:35-137:4), which extends and transforms the smiting and pursuit of the oppressors, the rending of the warriors and tyrant, and the prisoner's dashing of the judge (117:19-23, 123:10-12, 30-32).

A notable feature of these episodes is that they transfer to other figures images of rebellion once associated with Orc. Orc as such, after his appearances in serpent form and as "human remains" in Night VIII, has been all but absent from Night IX. As his human remnant, he has appeared as the awakening dead (pages 122-23); as a serpent he has come on the scene only to be consumed in fire and reconstituted as Luvah/Vala through the intervention of the "Regenerate Man" (118:8-16, 126:1-6). Orc's immolation has a dual significance. As George Anthony Rosso notes, the flames of national and dynastic war burn out as humanity relearns cooperation (145). At the same time Orc's flames are a projection of the conflagration of the apocalyptic uprising, and this aspect is reflected in the return of images associated with Orc at his birth — comets, stars, pillars of fire, and long-beamed spears (recalling the "fiery beam of Fuzon" that was "a pillar of fire to Egypt" in *The Book of Ahania*). The animals that stand for Orc here, eagles, lions, and tigers, are also among those that feature in the uprising, tying the two episodes together (118:14; 122:32-33).

Orc thus reappears in his prophetic tonality, but only in the act of being consumed and transfigured. His reconstituted "Eternal" form, Luvah, is onstage throughout the harvest-vintage sequence, but in a subordinate and ambiguous role, notably in the wine presses episode discussed below. Simultaneously, however, tropes associated with Orc recur in relation to other events and characters. The image of conjoining bones, based in Ezekiel 37 and used in earlier works in relation to Orc, is transferred to the awakening dead (122:27-28; see *America* 6:3-5 and *The Song of Los* 7:31-34). In the harvest episode, the lines that climax the winnowing —

> Let the slave grinding at the mill run out onto the field
> Let him look up into the heavens & laugh in the bright air
> . . . . . .
> And let [the prisoner's] wife & children return from the opressors
> scourge
> They look behind at every step & believe it is a dream (134:18-24)

— are quoted verbatim from *America* (6:6-12), but transferred from Orc in that work to Tharmas (and placed in the broader context of the end of Mystery). Blake also alludes to Orc through the pastoral and sexual imagery of the creatures previously seen in his breast, who now dance at the pressing of the wine — the earthworm, beetle, emmet, mole, "the tender maggot emblem of Immortality," and others (136:28-39, at 32) — small creatures of night and concealment who might be thought of as the salt of the earth, or perhaps the wretched of the earth. Through such allusions Blake recalls the prophecies of social emancipation originally spoken by Orc, and those of sexual and mental emancipation that have filled the rest of his work, and reaffirms them, now "unbound" from Orc as Orc has come unbound from wrath.

Despite their almost unbearably moving imagery, these pages raise troubling questions, most plainly seen in the episode of the wine presses. This incident reenacts the apocalyptic rising of the dead from earlier in Night IX, but with significant differences. In an inversion of what might be expected as the natural sequence, the rejoicing of the freed slaves (p. 134) precedes the vintage, with its drawn-out crushing of the "Human Grapes" (136:21); the latter, never identified as kings, priests, etc., presumably consist of any and all "unregenerate" persons, and their torture is marked by suggestions of sadomasochistic sexuality:

> But in the Wine Presses the Human Grapes Sing not nor dance
> They howl & writhe in shoals of torment in fierce flames consuming
> In chains of iron & in dungeons circled with ceaseless fires
> In pits & dens & shades of death in shapes of torment & woe
> The Plates the Screws and Racks & Saws & cords & fires & floods
> The cruel joy of Luvahs daughters lacerating with knives
> And whip[s] their Victims & the deadly sports of Luvahs Sons (136:21-27)

The pressing of the vintage transforms the direct vengeance of the oppressed against their oppressors into a judgment from above by the godlike Luvah and his sons and daughters, a kind of celestial purge trial. Moreover, the description is immediately followed by the dance of the insects, who "Drink the howl & groan / [And] catch the Shrieks in cups of gold" (136:40-137:1), forcing the episodes to be read together.[64]

64. The cups of gold recur in *Jerusalem* and "The Mental Traveller" (line 12). The entire wine presses sequence is repeated and varied in *Milton*, 27:1-41.

The negative implications of this recasting of the earlier uprising are clear as soon as the imagery is isolated and noted,[65] and can be examined on several different levels. On the plane of realistic depiction, the cruel and undifferentiated slaughter portrays what does — or may — happen in a revolution. If, indeed, *The Four Zoas* shows a social and not just a psychic apocalypse, Blake's realism would be less if he showed it taking place *without* the occurrence of uncontrolled violence. On the symbolic level, the reappearance of the Zoas in their (apparently) original forms stands for humanity's recovery (*dis*covery?) of its unfallen faculties. In this sense, the trampling of the grapes by Luvah and his sons and daughters reenacts the biblical vintage (Revelation 14:20) as a purging of unregenerate humanity — not, however, by angels but by renewed, unfallen passion, a faculty of collective humanity or Albion. Finally, the drunken excesses are checked, with some difficulty, when "the Eternal Man darken[s] with Sorrow," bidding Tharmas and Urthona "rise" while "a wintry mantle / Coverd the Hills" (137:5-7). Though this suggests that Tharmas and Urthona will intervene to stop the slaughter, in fact the trampling of the grapes peters out in weariness and mutual harassment, as Tharmas sees that the sons and daughters of Luvah "began to torment one another and to tread / The weak," but does nothing (137:20-21). Despite the ambiguity of the outcome, the introduction of the Eternal Man in this passage signifies a critical attitude toward the cruelties that Blake has just presented with apparent approval.

These considerations notwithstanding, the wine presses episode reconceives the earlier uprising; what appeared then as a mass upheaval from below

65. See Ault 427-37 for an extended argument that the retributive and sadomasochistic undercurrents in these pages render the "apocalypse" delusive. While I do not finally accept Ault's view, it has forced me to rethink the implications of Blake's imagery, especially in the wine presses episode.

is now presented as a bloody judgment from above, without mercy or appeal. Aside from its immediate historical reference, to the Terror of 1793-1794, the episode presents as narrative action a conception of apocalypse as violent judgment from above that has long traditional roots. Besides the specific sources of the wine presses in Isaiah 63:3 and Revelation 14:20 and 19:15 (the "vesture of blood" passage), these include Matthew 13:37-43 — the casting of the wicked into furnaces with "wailing and gnashing of teeth" — and a long train of millenarian prophecy such as that of the fifteenth-century "Revolutionary of the Upper Rhine," whose "Soon we will drink blood for wine" anticipates Blake (Cohn 121).[66] This tradition can in turn be related to a characteristic of apocalyptic utterance that Jacques Derrida (taking the term from Kant) calls an "overlordly" tone. This tone is one that presents its truths on the authority of its contact with the divine, and hence spurns mundane verifiability and the interrogation of reason (6 and *passim*). While such a tone is, perhaps, present in various ways in Blake, what concerns me here is its expression in politics, i.e., the idea of revolutionary dictatorship that can be discerned in the imagery of the vintage. Philosophical disdain for justification translates into radical politics as revolutionary terror. This problem is, of course, not confined to Blake's time (and Derrida's presentation in terms of philosophy is present-minded indeed). The wine presses episode, then, isolates and emphasizes a repressive potential in apocalyptic thought. This potential is clearly visible in the passage from Isaiah that is one of its sources; in specifying that "I have trodden the winepress

66. See Cohn 117-24 for a detailed summary and for similar prophecies; for comparable language by seventeenth-century English millenarians see Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, *passim*.

alone; and of the people *there was* none with me" (63:3), the prophet endorses retribution *against* the people, a conception sharply at odds with the participatory, majoritarian quality of the uprising of the dead.

The political meaning of the wine presses episode emerges more clearly if the apocalypse of Night IX is related — as on some level it must be — to the main apocalyptic social movement of Blake's time, the French Revolution. In this context the wine press and the surrounding action immediately suggest both an allegorized description of the guillotine as a fusion of all historical methods of torture — "The Plates the Screws and Racks & Saws & cords & fires & floods" — and a political attack on its methods and goals: "they began to torment one another and to tread / The weak."[67] Even the insect dance has its place here, suggesting the assembling of the *menu peuple* to celebrate the executions. These readings suggest, in turn, a historical interpretation of the poem's ending.

As has often been noted, the close of the poem returns us to "Winter in the night of Time" (138:19), from which we wake to a morning that is at once actual and mythic, the "End of the Dream" that implies the need for the poem's readers to create that dream for themselves.[68] This view, while valid in its own terms, in effect assumes that Night IX sketches an unproblematic apocalyptic scenario that is to be applied to the situation created by the failure of the French Revolution. Blake's conclusion can instead be read as a statement on and critique of that failure. The darkening of the Eternal Man and the sudden

67. Nevertheless, the terror is not the only possible referent. In *Milton* the whole episode is repeated, but the wine press is identified as "War on Earth . . . the Printing-Press / Of Los" (27:8-9). This transfer from the harvest to the period of preapocalyptic suffering removes some of the ambiguity of the treatment in *The Four Zoas.*

68. See commentaries by Erdman, *Prophet* 357, and Rosso, 150-52.

advent of winter (137:5-6) imply a punishment for the "sports" of the wine press (line 3); it is unclear, and ultimately unimportant, whether the Eternal Man invokes the winter as punishment or whether he responds to a winter that is constituted by the sadomasochistic revels themselves. The placing of Luvah "for dung on the ground" (line 24) and the storing of the bread (137:17-18) suggest both a political judgment on Luvah, or France, and the idea that the experiences of the revolution will serve as a preparation for a more successful effort sometime in the future.

Many other moments in Night IX can be read in this light as well. As political allegory, the uprising of pages 122-23 suggests the popular revolts that began the revolution and drove it forward. The long dream sequence of Luvah and Vala (pages 126-131), with its evocation of recovered innocence in allusions to *Thel*, *America*, and other early works, can be seen as embodying the dreams of brotherhood and reconciliation of the early revolutionary period. Its ecstatic tones recall Wordsworth's description of the first anniversary festivals of July 1790, the "Dances of Liberty, and, in late hours / Of darkness, dances in the open air" during which the young poet found "benevolence and blessedness / Spread like a fragrance everywhere" (*Prelude* [1805-06], VI:381-83, 368-69).[69] In such a reading the Luvah-Vala interlude gives way chronologically to the Terror, and its identification as "dreams of Beulah" (126:6), as well as the backward look of the freed prisoners who "believe it is a dream" (134:24) echo ironically in the final "End of the Dream."

69. The dream recapitulates the sexual themes of earlier poems, especially *Thel*, in a mood of acceptance and fulfillment. Yet it ends in an ambiguous "Eternal Childhood" of "infant sorrow and joy alternate" (131:16-17). The symbolism of the episode and its parallels both to *Thel* and to Eve's awakening in *Paradise Lost* are explored in Andrew Lincoln's "Blake's Lower Paradise." My suggestion of a political context is meant to supplement Lincoln's use of tradi-

If neat and beguiling, such an allegorical interpretation is ultimately inadequate. The thematic and verbal echoes among the three apocalyptic episodes disrupt a sequential reading and force us to consider them as versions of one another. Even more, the music of liberation in Blake's closing pages is so powerful as to escape any purely historical interpretation, especially a negative one. It is perverse to think, for example, that Blake chose to introduce a freed African slave as a tribune of apocalypse (134:33-135:4)[70] merely to make the point that the French Revolution raised expectations that it didn't fulfill. Nevertheless, the historical reading just given was not a pointless exercise. First, the failure of the French Revolution must clearly be one of the multiple referents of Blake's conclusion — and it is one that has been overlooked both by dominant views, which have found Blake's criticism of France in a supposed renunciation of violence in Night VIIA, and by left-wing criticism, which has tended to resist the idea that Blake criticized Jacobinism. Second, specifying the historical criticism implied by the wine presses and the planting of Luvah, along with the contrary implications of other episodes, should force us to give up the idea that Night IX shows a single unambiguous path to apocalypse. Instead, it shows a series of divergent paths, some of which bring about failure and should *not* be followed.

The relationship *among* the different presentations of apocalyptic violence in Night IX therefore emerges as the key problem in interpreting the poem's

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tional categories of Blake criticism. It should be pointed out, though, that both in Lincoln's terms and my own the dream can also be a valid dream of futurity.

70. Blake has done this before. On the title-page of *America*, the space between "America" and "A Prophecy" is illuminated by several small figures, including a nonchalantly leaning youth who gestures toward the distance. In Copy A, at the Morgan Library, New York, he is colored dark gray with traces of green and red. (Noted, as "black," in *Blake Books* 98.)

meaning. Most critics have identified all the representations of apocalypse with one another, and in so doing they have collapsed together three separate problems: the nature of apocalypse as social or mental event, the relationship of violence to social regeneration, and the mass-based versus elite-based nature of the violence itself. Most views of the poem suppress the third of these problems, either slurring over the violent elements altogether or, on the contrary, lumping together mass and elite violence and taking "violence" (viewed positively or negatively) as the sign for apocalypse in the Night as a whole.

For example, among positive readings of Night IX, the recent account of George Anthony Rosso, while valuably historicizing Blake's arguments about natural religion, simply omits any reference to the episodes of vengeance, and fails to discuss the wine presses imagery. Though Rosso rightly identifies as themes of Night IX the imaginative recovery of community and the suppression of war through social cooperation, he misses the continuation of Orc's wrath on the level of collective action, one of the main features of the Night. Moreover, his insistence that "perspectives rather than human beings do battle" and that Blake "emphasizes the symbolic nature of his warfare" (144, 145) overlooks the way in which Blake's narrative depicts apocalypse through images of direct physical violence that merge insensibly into evocations of mental war, metaphorically enacting the purification that the fire image also suggests. (Erdman, in contrast, emphasizes the mass uprising but fails to note the implications of elite repression.[71]) Among critical readings, David Aers's confronts the episodes of retribution, notes the elitism and mass passivity built into the wine

71. *Prophet* 352-58; see esp. 357 on the wine presses, which seems to present the episode as "painful" but necessary, and fails to ask who the victims are or why Blake depicts a sexual delight in torture.

presses imagery, and points to an abstractness in terms like "the poor" and "the opressed" that weakens the attempt to portray collective action. Aers makes an important connection, too, between the silent acceptance of such moments by much criticism and the capacity of left-wing intellectuals to rationalize revolutionary violence on the assumption that they will be its practitioners rather than its victims. Yet Aers fails to substantiate his claims that such problems entirely vitiate Blake's imagery of cooperation, or that all the violence in Night IX is a mere repetition of Urizenic patterns. And he ultimately opts for a facile counterposition of Night VIIA to Night IX that fails to perceive the connections between the two (262-70 *passim*).

Finally, in the most sophisticated challenge to revolutionary readings of the poem, Donald Ault calls for a "subversive reading" of Night IX that pushes to the fore its "counter-apocalyptic resistances," by which Ault means discrepancies and intrusions that are all too easily slurred over in a desire for narrative closure (349). In urging this approach, Ault has two ends in mind. One is formal: to reveal "Blake's power to keep open radically conflicting options in the very Night that pretends to close off options with absolute finality" (*ibid.*). The other, intermeshed aim is substantive: to reveal the idea of apocalypse as the target of Blake's subversion by showing that the repeated episodes of retributive violence, with other aspects of the narrative, expose the hollowness of the narrator's apocalyptic rhetoric. Implicitly, however, this second aim itself closes off some of the options opened up by the first, and imposes Ault's own values on the text. Discussing the uprising of the dead, for example, Ault finds the entire episode to be marked by "motives of vengeance and retribution — a total absence of forgiveness"; the prisoner's response to the judge "perpetuates

victimization and vengeance" (356, 394).[72] The apparent expectation that the apocalypse should be marked by forgiveness is, however, Ault's own — perhaps abetted by Los's embrace of Urizen at the end of Night VIIA. From another viewpoint, the prisoner's response might be reassurance that this revolution will not be derailed by oppressors who maintain their positions through a hypocritical pretense of repentance. Lastly, Ault's treatment arbitrarily reads the retributive elements in Night IX as subverting or exposing the lyrical/prophetic context, rather than viewing them as functioning *along with* more straightforwardly positive elements to add complexity — perhaps a deliberate exposure of alternative possibilities — to the text. Ault's reading ultimately imposes a new closed system, now antiapocalyptic, on Blake's poem.

The very fact that different critics read Night IX in such drastically opposed ways points to Blake's incorporation of radically clashing perspectives and possible social realities into his text. This point may be underlined by returning for a moment to the insect dance. With Rose's "Blake's Human Insect" in mind we can note that most of the insects in the passage are ones that do *not* undergo metamorphosis from crawling to flying form, emblematic of human transformative possibilities. Rather, like the grasshopper, they are bound to earth and the seasonal cycle. To this extent the insect dance appears to comment ironically on the main action of the wine presses, suggesting that it shows a false dawn, a "liberation" trapped in recurring cycles of cruelty and violence. Yet, the dance also includes the seed, a symbol of transformation; the "wise Emmet" and "ground Spider with many Eyes," creatures evidently representing

72. Note that the first of these statements comes from the text proper and the second from the marginal gloss, a distinct textual domain in *Narrative Unbound* that may amplify or complicate the main text.

vision (yet they appear with the blind mole and earthworm); and the "maggot emblem of Immortality." The passage adds other associations as well. The "idle weeds / . . . / Naked in all their beauty" (136:37-39) recall Jesus' lily of the valley more beautiful than Solomon, a symbol of the humble who will be exalted; the emmet, superficially opposite to the weeds in its industry, has similar associations on the political level, having been used by Milton as a symbol of republicanism in *Paradise Lost* and (even more emphatically) *The Readie and Easie Way*.[73] The creatures who watch the trampling of the vintage, then, embody *both* genuinely transformational possibilities and their opposite.

What is true of the insect dance is true of the Night as a whole. Such closely juxtaposed phrases as the descriptions of the "distress / Of all the Nations of the Earth ground in the Mills of Urthona" and of the "Bread of Ages" placed "In golden & in silver baskets" (138:2-3, 17-18), which different critics cite separately as if each showed the *essence* of Blake's treatment,[74] can be viewed as simultaneous aspects of an enormously complex process, one whose possibilities are not determined in advance as political *doctrine* but are open as political *potentialities* that Blake makes it his business to examine. To understand this procedure, however, requires stepping beyond the words of the poem and placing it in its context as a work that seeks to come to grips with the world as it was and could be.

Blake's Crisis of Vision

The several problematic elements in the poem's climax can be related to the changing fortunes of Orc. By treating Orc's fundamental social and sexual

73. *Paradise Lost* VII:484-89; *Prose Works*, vol. 7, 427.
74. See Aers 266; Rosso 150.

aspects, under the name of Luvah, as a component of his overall zoas myth, Blake has freed himself to subject Orc's active oppositional role to critical examination. In the temptation-fall drama in Night VIIA (and in Night VIIB, with the differences I have indicated), Orc's rebellion is seen as incapable of maintaining its active opposition to Urizen and Vala — to state power, class oppression, and dynastic and imperialist war. This is at once a historical critique of the French Revolution and an analysis of the inadequacy of elemental social rebellion. But it is necessary to be clear about the focus of the critique: the loss of Orc's "wrath." Wrath does not mean violence *per se*, but oppositional capacity, the ability to fight oppression, to remain independent of the oppressor's institutional and mental lures, and to offer an alternative. In terms of the French Revolution, Blake's critique of Orc implies no sympathy for the nobles or king; Night IX shows kings fleeing in terror and Tharmas asking, "And who shall mourn for Mystery who never loosd her Captives" (134:17). Blake's treatment does imply, more than radical critics have acknowledged, an accusation that the Jacobins tricked and oppressed the common people (the "Crust of bread" speech) and terrorized ordinary people through prisons, torture, and the guillotine (the wine presses). But Blake's text treats these actions as a loss of capacity for opposition, and registers this loss in two ways: the collaboration of serpent-Orc with Urizen in war, and the helplessness of human Orc under the tree, in the lake of fire, or, in Night VIII, breathed forth with the other spectres of historic oppression. Both of these radical revisions of the Orc symbol apply as much to England as to France: serpent-Orc is Urizen's partner while human Orc is in the deeps without regard to country.

The result, in Blake's poetics, is the loss of Blake's emblem of revolutionary resistance. This change is not, however, a matter of a change in Blake's

views, a decision that revolutionary violence is counterproductive or morally wrong. The change is at once more limited, because Blake in *The Four Zoas* remains committed on some level to a violent social upheaval; and more profound, because through Orc's metamorphoses Blake responds to actual changes in the entities he has called "Orc" and begins to ask how society can be changed when these entities have altered so radically.

Blake evolves no single replacement for the Orc symbol. Instead, it is fragmented. Orc continues, despite his metamorphosis, as the "sweet boy" howling his defiance (Night VIIA). In another aspect, through Enitharmon's weaving of "counterparts" and making her breast a repose for the souls of the "piteous victims of battle" (98[90]:6-7), Orc's wrath enters into Los and Enitharmon in a broadly imaginative form that makes a covenant with the countless dead of human oppression. Luvah, Orc's form in Eternity, returns after serpent-Orc's immolation, but his role is relatively small, as well as ambiguous. The Lamb, another product of Enitharmon's weaving, embodies aspects of both Orc and Luvah, but it is not so much an actor in the poem's events as a way of naming a state of consciousness, an accession of awareness that helps combat Vala's influence. Along with this fragmentation of what was once a unified symbol, the processes that Orc represented reappear in distinct, and partly contradictory, actions in Night IX: the uprising, Tharmas's call to the slaves, and the trampling of the grapes.

The conception that Orc in his original form can never be fully subsumed into serpent-Orc allows a vision of emancipation to survive the gutting of the French Revolution — and not it alone. To be deliberately anachronistic, Blake's

presentation helps make clear what Hannah Arendt and other post-World War II political theorists failed to see: that underneath the serpent-Orc of Nazi and Stalinist totalitarianism (which they read as a "totalizing" society that made dissenting *thought* literally impossible) there persisted the human Orc of the oppressed people. At the same time, elements of Blake's scheme such as the persistence of contradictory impulses within Orc, or the contingent quality of Los's reformation, imply an indeterminacy in the real world, not just the poetic text. They suggest that salvation is not based on ingrained character or social position alone, but on *choices*, because moments of supreme tension force people to reveal their full potentialities, good or evil. In real human experience, prophets and visionaries compromise with power, others gain power and betray, while ordinary women and men rise to unpredictable heights — "Coming with vivid faces / From counter or desk among grey / Eighteenth-century houses." Though Blake well knows that the majority of Urizenic beings will never genuinely repent, the indeterminacy of even major occurrences in *The Four Zoas* implies an ultimately nondeterministic conception of human liberation.

Yet if these elements suggest an integrated vision of emancipation, the fragmentation of the Orc symbol, the dispersal of the energies that were Orc's, records the lack of a clear *agency* for human transformation, on the level of the poem's symbology and that of the social world in which it was written. This lack is felt in several ways. The first is the moments of nonintegration that mark the poem's concluding sections — places where Blake is unable to specify *how* changes that he knows must happen will occur. A pertinent example is Los's reconciliation with his Spectre in Night VIIA. The Spectre has warned Los that he must admit not only Enitharmon but the Spectre himself to his bosom, or be

shunted aside in the work of human reconstruction. Los's reply, "I feel I am not one of those / Who when convincd can still persist" (86:5-6), begins the reintegration of the several aspects of human imagination and labor that ends the Night. The moment is at once sublime and humanly true, and a sudden, unmotivated reversal. We know that, sometimes, people do change their natures profoundly; yet we are uneasy with Blake's readiness to present the change as, essentially, inexplicable. Similar moments include the division of Urizen and his subsequent reformation (Nights VIIA and IX), the purifying immolation of serpent-Orc (Night IX), and the cracking of the walls of the Universe, which I will discuss in a moment (Night IX). Such instances betoken unresolved tensions in Blake's presentation; lack of specification of the liberatory agency surfaces in narrative as arbitrary shift.

These narrative discontinuities are related to the second major problem of the poem's ending, its view of apocalypse. The gap left by the dispersal of Orc's characteristics affects, first of all, the imagery used to portray apocalypse. On the level of relatively direct allegory (that of the rising of the dead in Night IX) Blake's symbolism presents a convincing account of social rebellion. Yet on the more abstracted level of his large-scale myth, where his vision should be most persuasive, Blake moves between a symbolism of recovered humanity liberating itself, visible in the imagery of the slaves and the Eternal Man (who is all humans), and, on the other hand, an ambiguous symbolism of liberation from above, in the episode of the vintage.

The fragmentation of the Orc symbol also has implications for the human or divine nature of apocalypse itself. If, as M.H. Abrams has stressed, Romantic apocalypse attempts to naturalize what in biblical narrative is an abrupt inter-

vention of God from outside the fabric of history, Blake is the poet who least accepts such a distinction. As Blake repeatedly tells us, "Jesus" is merely another name for "One Man all the Universal family."[75] The apocalyptic disruption of history, then, must occur simultaneously as a divine intervention and a human upheaval, whose meanings are finally the same. Yet this identity is obscured in the final Nights by the dispersal of apocalyptic agency among different characters and entities. The event that sets off the first two episodes of apocalyptic upheaval in Night IX, the explosion of the universe, can serve as an example. This twice-repeated occurrence shows a complex web of causality that virtually defies analysis. In the first version, Los, with Jesus by his side, grasps the sun and moon *in error*, "Terrified at Non Existence / For such they [Los and Enitharmon] deemd the death of the body" (117:5-6); nevertheless, he tears these orbs from the sky. The key point here is that the universe is cracked by human agency; yet the way this happens and the reasons for Los's act remain obscure. In the second account, the Eternal Man has waked on his rock and called on Urizen to repent.[76] Urizen's penitence transforms him into a "radiant Youth" (121:32), yet without any immediate results; Urizen remains snared in old ways of perception and is asking a series of uncomprehending questions, reminiscent of the *Visions* — "What Chain encompasses in what Lock is the river of Light confind" — when "He ceasd for rivn link from link the bursting Universe explodes" (122:22, 26). The irrelevancy of Urizen's conversion is marked by hav-

75. Night I, 21:4-5; see also, e.g., Night VIII, 99:1-2, 113:31, and *Jerusalem* 34 [38]:17-20.

76. The Eternal Man is essentially the same figure who has functioned throughout the early Nights as Albion, often by substitution of this name for phrases such as "the Man," "the Eternal Man," etc.; see textual notes in *E* for 23:3, 41:2-3, 10, 13, 17, and elsewhere. The name Albion, apparently a late change, does not appear in *The Four Zoas* after Night IV.

ing the chain snap while he is still in a muddle about it. Blake certainly does not show apocalypse resulting from altered perceptions, as standard critical paradigms might suggest; he seems, indeed, to suggest that erroneous thought cannot be fully overcome *until* the universe somehow cracks. On closer examination, the key events in this episode seem to be actions of the dead and of Jerusalem. In the narrative, the explosion of the universe is followed by, and seems to cause, the rising of the dead, but it is possible that the emergence of the dead, an event pending since the ending(s) of Night VII, has caused the universe to burst. Simultaneously, however, the Eternal Man has told Urizen that Jerusalem is descending from heaven (122:18), and this event could also cause the Urizenic universe to burst. Finally, since both the dead and Jerusalem have been constituted by Enitharmon's weaving, the descent and the breaking forth of the dead may be the same event. This possibility, however, "weaves" together a bewildering number of meanings for apocalypse, ranging from a revolutionary uprising in which an awareness of the whole prior history of humanity is personified as the active participation of the dead, to a passive process of awaiting a heavenly agency of renewal.

Blake's fragmentation of the Orc symbol into multiple entities including aspects of the dead and Jerusalem has, then, introduced multiple meanings for apocalypse, some clearly human and some seemingly supernatural. In this light, Blake's difficulty in conceptualizing a mythic agency for this transformation, a replacement for Orc, signifies a sliding back of apocalypse toward the extranatural. Whether recognized by Blake or not, this is a retreat from the idea of apocalypse as a simultaneously human and divine process.

The ending of *The Four Zoas* registers these various problems in the idea of apocalypse, and, by its very arbitrariness and juxtapositions, seems to hold

them up for examination. Does the absence of a replacement for Orc question the idea of social revolution — or does it point to a real problem posed by the decline of the revolutionary wave of the 1790s? Does the wine presses episode tie the Terror to the idea of social upheaval and criticize both? Or does it do so and *justify* both — does it, like many later revolutionary views, respond to the ebb of popular energies by idealizing terror "in the interests of" the oppressed? Despite my own view of this episode as a criticism of the Jacobin Terror, it points to the truth that the "human insects" could take vicarious delight in the executions, and the episode itself can be read as justification of a painful but necessary process. Most fundamentally, Blake's characters and machinery do not rule out the perspective of revolution through minority coercion. Such perspectives tend to arise when mass radical movements are on the decline, as they were in Britain after the mid-1790s; in the wine presses episode Blake is certainly dramatizing and examining such a perspective and perhaps actually entertaining it as a live possibility. But, finally, it may be that Night IX juxtaposes the wine presses with earlier accounts of the same events in order to suggest limits and distinctions. In such a view, the episode stands out against the earlier uprising that it reenacts and revises, which implies a more collective, self-directed process, yet lacks a mythic figure to represent it.

The discontinuities in the latter sections of *The Four Zoas* have been seen as evidence that Blake's effort to show a social apocalypse led to a *cul de sac*. Northrop Frye, for example, argues that the lack of "any inner logic" connecting Night IX with the rest of the work means that Blake "still had not achieved a definitive vision" and thus, in his last works, "started again where he had really

left off, with the triumph of nature and reason" (308-309). Such a view, while not completely mistaken, overlooks two important considerations. The first, already discussed, is the continuity of the "redemptive" Los material in Night VIIA and the Lamb-Jerusalem plot in Night VIII with the apocalyptic imagery in Night IX. The second and more fundamental is the continuation of the problem of agency in Blake's later works. As I shall argue in the next chapters, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, particularly the latter, do resolve some of the uncertainties of *The Four Zoas*. *Jerusalem* invokes the justice of wrath only to reject it in favor of forgiveness. Further, the central image of the awakening of Albion resolves the ambiguities of the wine presses episode; apocalypse will occur through the acts of humanity *en masse*, not through dispensation from above. Yet, the Los symbol does not obviate the problem of agency. Los plays multiple roles as prophet, as the creative aspects of human labor, and as fighter against his Spectre and against selfhood — an endeavor that stands for similar struggles within collective humanity. Yet these activities do not answer the question of how the machines of Antichrist — in one manifestation, the English state and its armies and prisons — are to be confronted and defeated. In the climactic episodes in *Jerusalem*, we will see, Blake again mobilizes arbitrary narrative shifts and discontinuities to compensate for — but also to call attention to — uncertainty about just how change will occur.

This brief anticipation of my argument suggests that the narrative problems in *The Four Zoas* are not specific to an apocalypse of retribution as opposed to one of forgiveness, but are problems of envisioning the awakening of humanity (Albion) that is necessary for apocalypse on any terms. It implies, too, that these problems are not ones of achieving unity in a self-contained artistic

vision but those of prophecy, that is, uncovering the potential for regeneration hidden in the actual, real world of Blake's time. The problem I have been reading as one of "agency" is simultaneously one of the world outside the poem, and a poetic problem because the poem takes that world as its script.

Finally, the gaps and contradictions in Blake's presentation are gaps and contradictions in that world. Alongside the meaning of apocalypse as an "overlordly" dispensing of judgment, apocalypse has embodied the hopes of ordinary people, Blake's human insects, for a new life, a sweeping away of oppression; it has embodied, too, an attitude of turning away from worldly struggle, of endurance and waiting for deliverance from outside. The sorrow of the Eternal Man may seem to suggest one of these meanings over another. Yet the sorrow is mute; no apocalyptic ("unveiling") voice speaks to give the "true" meaning in "overlordly" fashion. The episode fades out indeterminately, and the dream of the poem ends. None of these meanings of apocalypse can be neatly disentangled from the others, because they are all present in fact, in the reality that Blake strives to encompass within *The Four Zoas*. As Blake's coming to terms with the changed reality of the early 1800s and the consequent need to reformulate his idea of revolution, *The Four Zoas* records the recession of the mass energies known as Orc, initiates a criticism of apocalyptic authoritarianism, continues to insist on the necessity of a re-formation of humanity on every level — social, sexual, mental — and struggles to conceive an agency to carry it out.

CHAPTER FIVE

Cities Are Men

Like *The Four Zoas*, Blake's two final long poems, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, outline a social apocalypse involving a judgment of oppressors by the people and the abolition of war and social privilege. Blake adds new elements to his social critique, especially in *Jerusalem*: for the first time, his symbolism encompasses the collective nature of modern production and fully incorporates a critique of private property. Reinforcing the social implications of his basic imagery, Blake's text also considers and rejects, or criticizes as inadequate, a series of internalizing conceptions, including some often assumed to form the core of Blakean and Romantic apocalypse. These include the sufficiency of a mental transformation of existence, the separation of the Romantic artist from the people, the superiority of imagination to labor, and the preference for abstention from political struggle — though Blake's ambivalence is greatest on this point.

At the same time that he maintains its social focus Blake thoroughly recasts the terms of his apocalyptic transformation. Most fundamentally the "wrath" that remained central to his idea of human regeneration in *The Four Zoas* becomes, in the late works, "mercy" or "forgiveness" (*Milton* 23:50; *Jerusalem* 52, prose). The shift is profound; it is difficult to imagine, for example, the Blake of *Europe* writing that Albion's fragmented members "have divided

themselves by Wrath. they must be united by / Pity:" (*Jerusalem* 7:57-58). Further, though deeply influenced by the context of interimperialist war, the ideas of mercy, forgiveness, and pity are not limited to the renunciation of international conquest, but apply as well to the social struggle at home. Nevertheless, the perspective Blake encapsulates in such terms is not socially passive; rather, it is pacifist and active, and indeed, it is one of pacifist radicalism. Moreover, when we examine Blake's texts closely, we discover that the conceptions of mercy and forgiveness apply not only, not even mainly, to kings and rulers, but primarily to the common people — they are the ones whose sins, of cruelty and social indifference, need forgiving. And, at the crucial climactic moments of *Milton* and *Jerusalem* that respectively foreshadow and depict apocalypse, the question of the nonviolent or violent nature of this upheaval is left open.

These continuities and shifts in Blake's last prophetic works are the subject of the next two chapters. Rather than examining *Milton* and *Jerusalem* in succession, I consider them together, both because their symbolic vocabularies and their treatments of salient themes overlap, and because the two poems reached their final states in nearly the same period, approximately 1818-21 for *Milton* and 1820 for both variant texts of *Jerusalem*.[1] This chapter studies the

1. Viscomi's proposed dating of *Milton* gives 1811 as the printing dates for copies A-C, with plates a, b, d, and f added to C before 1818 (with f subsequently removed), and c and e added later, around 1821; Viscomi dates Copy D, with all the extra plates, 1818. Viscomi proposes 1820 as the printing date for *Jerusalem* copies A, C, and D; 1821 for B and E; and 1827 for F. (See Viscomi chaps. 32, 34 *passim* and *Appendix*, 378-80). *Jerusalem*'s text does not change after the 1820-21 printings, which present the two variant orders for Chapter 2; copy F reproduces one of these orders, though there is now dispute as to which order Blake intended (see below, n. 5). Viscomi's further argument that *Milton* C and not D represents Blake's compositional final intention does not affect my own discussion.

My treatment assumes that *Jerusalem* and the extra plates of *Milton* can refer to events as late as 1811-1819. I make no presumptions about when the

basic symbolism of the two poems. Beginning with Blake's adoption of a religiously inflected vocabulary, it examines the meaning of his late religious symbolism — the basis for understanding his late thought as a whole — and then moves on to his social symbolism and the relation between religious and social symbolic vocabularies. I argue that the meanings of key terms of the religious vocabulary, such as Jesus, are human and collective, though fully religious at the same time. Further, these religious conceptions are closely related in signification to the crucial terms in Blake's later social symbolism, such as Britain's cities and counties and Los's furnaces. With this examination as a basis, the following chapter will analyze *Milton* and *Jerusalem*'s handling of Orc, Los, and apocalypse.

Blake's New Vocabulary

In *Milton* and especially in *Jerusalem*, Blake develops a vocabulary of symbol and metaphor that resolves the problem of the agency of change, posed in *The Four Zoas* by the eclipse of Orc as revolutionary tribune and the fragmentation of his narrative functions. Orc, it is true, plays a crucial, though subordinate, role in *Milton*, and is important by his quiescence in *Jerusalem*. But in these poems Blake relocates the agency of upheaval in collective humanity as a whole. The critical, interrelated terms for expressing this change in Blake's ideas are Jesus; Albion; the cities, counties, and topography of Britain; and the furnaces of affliction. Though some of these have appeared in *The Four Zoas*,

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texts were drafted or initially etched, matters still much in dispute. I do assume that events could have continued to influence the final text of a plate up to (or even after, for small changes) the time of etching, and the decision to include a plate thereafter. On the hypothetical dating of some individual plates, see notes below.

in the two late poems they form the fulcrum of a new Blakean symbolism distinct from, though incorporating, his earlier mythic machinery.

These terms, especially the overtly Christian ones, have also been the basis for a reading of late Blake in which social concerns are found to be attenuated or incidental. Hence, they are a touchstone of both my own and alternative approaches. According to a nearly consensual view, *Milton* and *Jerusalem* outline a predominantly sexual, psychic, or philosophic myth with only derivative social overtones, resolved (if at all) by a mental agon, an internal transformation:

> [*Jerusalem* consists of] two great intertwined myths: the sexual myth of humanity culminating in regeneration, the imaginative myth of the poet culminating in prophetic potency. (Paley, *City* 304)

> . . . the anterior myth is a *psychomachia* describing man's repression of his sexual passion and its destructive consequences. . . . The result of this in the external political world is war. (*City* 173)

> Blake's apocalypse, like John's, explodes the fallen universe and calls an end to corporeal creation, not with literal fire and war, but with an intellectual revolution that occurs, at any time, in the human mind. (Hoagwood 99)[2]

Even Thomas J. J. Altizer, whose *The New Apocalypse* offers the finest radical

2. See Chap. 1. Elsewhere, Hoagwood approvingly quotes Abrams's formulations, discussed in Chap. 4, on the "internalization" of apocalypse and its recasting as a "total revolution of consciousness" (Abrams 334; Hoagwood 57, 189-90).

theological reading of Blake's thought, presents the climactic moment of *Jerusalem* in a way devoid of social content:

> After Jesus has declared that man exists by the eternal death of God for man, Albion recoils in terror at the destiny of his "Friend Divine," and loses himself in contemplation of the faith and wonder of the divine mercy. Realizing that "Eternal Death" is abroad, Albion then calls upon his friends to awake from sleep, addressing his call to all his cities and countries.... Now we see that a fourfold vision occurs only through a cosmic reintegration of a fallen "Humanity Divine." (209)[3]

It is true that some of these terms admit more than one emphasis — what is "prophetic potency," and what might a call to all of Albion's cities and counties mean? And, on the other side, it is true that the social imagery I will be examining is intertwined or fused with imagery of sexual, psychic, perceptual, and indeed cosmological fragmentation: "And now the Starry Heavens are fled from the mighty limbs of Albion" (*Jerusalem* 75:27). Nevertheless, the thrust of readings such as these is to ignore or marginalize themes of social division and regeneration — Albion's "Man the enemy of man" (*Jerusalem* 4:26) is slurred over or made derivative of some other, more fundamental division.[4]

3. My ellipsis represents Altizer's quotation of 96:35-43; see Chap. 6 for my own discussion. "Countries" is Altizer's misprint for "Counties" (96:33).

4. Besides Paley's *The Continuing City*, which attempts a comprehensive treatment of the poem with the strongest emphasis on psychosexual elements, and Hoagwood's *Prophecy and the Philosophy of Mind*, which examines the uses of Berkeleyan epistemology in Blake and Shelley, W. J. T. Mitchell's *Blake's Composite Art* offers a major chapter on *Jerusalem*. Book-length studies include Minna Doskow's *William Blake's Jerusalem*, which examines the poem as a recursive thematic elaboration of religious, rationalistic, and affective errors and their correction (22), and Joanne Witke's *William Blake's Epic: Imagination Unbound*, which concentrates on philosophical themes. A marginalization of

If psychic, mythic, and religious interpretations remain dominant in approaching these poems, that is, paradoxically, partly the fault of the main political interpretation, that of David V. Erdman. Erdman bucked the psychic-mythic orthodoxy in Blake studies two generations ago, and unearthed rich veins of topical reference in the late works. Yet, perhaps defensively, Erdman limited his case. Among other points, he presented these works as politically directed against war and — in *Jerusalem* — against imperialist vengeance on defeated France. In this context, Erdman provided illuminating topical readings of the "friends of Albion" and Erin threads in *Jerusalem* (36-42/40-46; 11, 48-50, and elsewhere).[5] And he emphasized the social content of the poem's final "hymn to the spiritual regeneration of man and nature," though he regarded the

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social-political concerns is also found in older, standard treatments such as Frye's and Bloom's in *Blake's Apocalypse.*

5. In *Jerusalem*, my citations reflect the existence of two textual orders for Chapter 2. The major difference between them is that a four-page sequence, 43-46 in copies A, C, and F, comes earlier in D and E, as plates 29-32; another plate, 42, is repositioned in relation to surrounding plates and keeps the same number. Hence all the plates from 29 to 46, except 42, have different numbers in ACF and in DE. (The other copy known to have been printed by Blake, B, consists only of Chapter 1.) I cite the affected plates dually, e.g., 29/32 or 43/29; the first number refers to the order in *E*, which follows the ACF arrangement, while the second refers to the order in the Blake Trust-Princeton facsimile of Copy E, which shares this order with Copy D, and also to the order in Keynes's editions. However, when referring to one of these arrangements specifically, I place the number for the alternative arrangement in brackets, e.g., 36 [40]. Erdman and Paley regard the ACF order as representing Blake's final intentions (F was the last copy printed); Bentley prefers the DE order (*E*809; Erdman, "Suppressed and Altered Passages" 40-41; Paley, *Continuing City* 296n.; Bentley, *Blake Books* 234). Recently, Joseph Viscomi has reexamined the ordering of all copies, arguing *inter alia* that F was misnumbered by a hand other than Blake's, and hence that the ordering of D, E, and, putatively, F represents Blake's final intentions (339-40, 356-61, and chap. 34 *passim*). My readings are compatible with either ordering; see below on the thematic implications of the two arrangements.

poem's narrative conclusion as non-insurrectionary. Erdman, however, missed social issues besides those of war, political repression, and Irish oppression, and nowhere assessed the overall symbolism of *Milton* or *Jerusalem*, especially their heavily Christianized vocabulary.[6] These omissions have made it easy for other authors to incorporate Erdman's specific identifications within their own counterposed interpretations, in effect and often in fact as footnotes.[7]

Both the dominant "internalizing" readings of the late works, and Erdman's narrowly focused political account, make it difficult to understand the full scope of Blake's social concerns in his last long poems. In correcting their limited vision, the place to start is with the fundamental symbolism of these works, and especially its religiously based aspects. Nonpolitical on a first, superficial reading, Blake's late symbolism needs only to be approached with scrupulous attention to what it actually says — to its "Litteral expression," as Blake writes at a climactic moment in *Milton* (42:14) — to obtain the key to the socially radical content of these works.

In order to understand this symbolism, Blake's possible reasons for adopting it, and its relationship to his political concerns, need to be considered.

6. See *Prophet* 426-31, 462-87, especially 462 for "peace without vengeance," 475-84 for the "friends of Albion" and Erin, 484-87 for the conclusion. Among more recent works, Michael Ferber's *The Social Vision of William Blake* treats broad themes such as labor and brotherhood excellently across the spectrum of Blake's works, approaching the works, however, through noncontextual "doctrinal" quotation; E. P. Thompson's posthumous *Witness Against the Beast* gets to the core of the late works' religious vision in noting that "The essential utopian leap for Blake was to brotherhood, the return to universal man" (227), but as an isolated observation; the interpretive portion of the book does not discuss these works, nor, to my knowledge, has Thompson done so elsewhere, apart from brief quotations.

7. See, e.g., Paley, *City* 27-28, 77, 149n., 174n., 155 and n., 204-206 and nn., and elsewhere. Witke finds it unnecessary to comment on political themes because they have been "extensively explored" by Erdman (viii and n.).

Blake's later use of Christian vocabulary has often been traced to a renewal of religious faith or a conversion undergone between 1800 and 1804. Blake has sometimes been supposed to refer to this shift in views in a letter of 1804 to William Hayley that speaks of how "Suddenly, on the day after visiting the Truchsessian Gallery of pictures, I was again enlightened with the light I enjoyed in my youth," an experience that enabled Blake to master his "spectrous Fiend" and make him "my servant who domineered over me, he is even as a brother, who was my enemy" (Oct. 23, 1804; *E*756-57).[8] The letter, however, never mentions religion; all its specific references are to art technique. In an elegant reconstruction, Morton D. Paley has connected the letter to its immediate subject and proposed that it reaffirms Blake's preference for Roman and Florentine over Flemish and Venetian painting and his decision to rededicate himself to "a 'pure,' uncompromising style" ("Truchsessian" 177). Yet Blake's letter has a range of reference that goes beyond matters of style and artistic independence. If it does not record a religious renewal, nevertheless references to the "Fiend" as "the enemy of conjugal love . . . the Jupiter of the Greeks [*sic*], and an iron-hearted tyrant" give him sexual, religious, and political identities, and indeed show the dense fusion of reference characteristic of Blake's later poetry. The letter also broaches two actual themes of that poetry, the struggle against the Spectre and the substitution of brotherhood for enmity. The idea of

8. For the letter as a presumed conversion experience, see, e.g., Altizer 60, 64. Blackstone picks up on the fiend as "enemy of conjugal love" and reads the letter as marking the resolution of Blake's strained relations with Catherine (119-21). Bentley, while not referring specifically to the Truchsessian letter, asserts that in 1803-1805 "Blake was overwhelmed with a renewed vision, a renovated Christianity" (*Vala* 163). Margoliouth dates Blake's "conversion" earlier, between August 1799 and April 1800 (*William Blake* 124-25).

overcoming the "spectrous Fiend," then, is related to the new importance in Blake's late poetry of brotherhood, expressed through Jesus and other Christian emblems. Further, an echo of the letter's language in *A Descriptive Catalogue* (1809) links the Fiend to the Gods of Priam, who "ought to be the servants, and not the masters of men" (*E*536). This linkage points both to Blake's growing rejection of classicism in art and to his political turn toward pacifism as twin contexts for the Fiend. These points make it hard to restrict the letter's scope as Paley proposes.

To argue for the Truchsessian letter's broad scope, however, is not to read the shift in vocabulary that it exemplifies — a deeply-felt one in Blake's life — as a renunciation of political concerns. On the contrary, as we shall see, "brother" has deeply political significance in this symbolism, and the profound revulsion at enmity that can be read in the letter has complex, by no means apolitical, associations. If the political dimensions of this vocabulary are, for the moment, assumed, we can see two possible reasons for Blake's adopting it. One lies in an objective development I have referred to before, the eclipse of the radical movement of the 1790s. A consequence of this eclipse is that the milieu in which Blake could envision finding audiences for his overtly antinomian earlier poetry was no longer present. At the same time, religious communities gained, by default, greater importance as loci of dissent — Erdman has traced, for example, the importance (objectively and for Blake) of the antiwar sermons preached by Rev. Richard Warner of Bath in 1804 and 1808 (*Prophet* 476-78). One possible reason, then, for Blake's change in symbolic vocabulary is a desire to speak to dissenting religious traditions in a language meaningful to them, in effect engaging in a dialogue between their understanding of these terms and his own

socially radical understanding. The address "To the Christians" that begins Chapter 4 of *Jerusalem* shows just such an approach; starting with the orthodox-sounding statement, "We are told to abstain from fleshly desires that we may lose no time from the Work of the Lord," by the end of the first paragraph Blake has defined the work of the Lord as "the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination" (77, prose).[9] Blake's new language, then, has a partly dialogic purpose.

But to limit one's analysis of it to this point, presenting it as, in effect, an open-ended political bloc whereby different parties agree to give distinct meanings to common slogans, is to grasp only a part of its significance. Such central conceptions in Blake's late works as the humanity of Jesus are deeply rooted in a long antinomian tradition; they are not mere metaphorizations of social concerns. Blake incorporated this tradition but gave it his own inflection: his most important stress is not just on Jesus' immanence in humanity, but on his presence in *collective* humanity, in the human community or family acting jointly. This emphasis clearly has both religious and social significance. Given its religious basis, it is evidently more than a pedagogic translation of political concepts into common language; rather, it enabled Blake's poetry to *find* solutions to political problems — to reevaluate both his radical goals and the relation between these goals and the common life of the people, and to resolve the expressive and intellectual problems posed by the collapse of Orc.

Blake's Late Religious Symbolism

The key characteristic of all Blake's late symbolism is that all its main

9. The implied counterposition in such statements is not always understood; at least one account, missing the reservation implied by "We are told," quotes the first part of the paragraph as Blake's own view (Damrosch 214).

terms refer to this-worldly, collective, social, and human phenomena. The central emblem of this-worldly struggle in *Milton*, in fact the central action of the poem, is Milton's descent to "Eternal Death," the fall of his shadow "Precipitant loud thundering into the Sea of Time & Space" (14:14 and elsewhere; 15:46). In *Jerusalem*, the same emphasis is built into Los's activity in the furnaces of affliction, a site to which Albion too must descend before salvation is possible. That Milton's and Albion's actions are both descents is no accident. The trope of epic descent, classically an episode of preparation by the hero for a return to struggle in the upper world, is here varied by making our world into the underworld, or hell. Milton descends first to this hell, in fact to Ulro (20:41, 59-60), and its varying locales — the Vale of Felpham, the Brooks of Arnon — are the sites of his subsequent struggles.

An even more important, and little-noticed, reference underlines the centrality of combat on earth: in the descent of Ololon, matching that of Milton, it is impossible for Ololon to

> behold Golgonooza without passing the Polypus
> A wondrous journey not passable by Immortal feet, & none
> But the Divine Saviour can pass it without annihilation (35:19-21)

The key point in this passage is that to pass the Polypus — here essentially the chaos and horror of contemporary and historical existence[10] — is impossible for not for mortal but for *immortal* feet, as idea so counterintuitive that it is almost impossible to read correctly; and hence, that immortals cannot behold Golgo-

10. On the Polypus in general, see Damon, *Dictionary* 332-33. The meaning here is influenced by a passage on war and exploitive production immediately preceding.

nooza. To behold Golgonooza, then, requires a struggle on this earth, as well as the transcendence of self that is the regular meaning, in *Milton*, of "annihilation." A further implication is that the feet of the Divine Saviour must themselves be mortal, a point to which I shall return; and for them alone, for reasons that will become clear, is it possible to pass without annihilation.

The symbolic entities in Blake's late works are not only this-worldly, but — with a few exceptions, most obviously Milton and Blake himself — collective as well. *The Four Zoas* already made clear that the zoas, in part, are plural, composite entities (Chapter 4). Their nature as social collectivities again becomes clear in *Milton*, in the context of Ololon's descent. As one response to this moment, "all the Living Creatures of the Four Elements, wail'd." Implicitly, these are the zoas, elsewhere called living creatures; but they are immediately characterized as "in the aggregate named Satan / And Rahab," and, after a moment, as "the Gods of the Kingdoms of the Earth: . . . / . . . opposed in War / Not Mental, as the Wars of Eternity, but a Corporeal Strife" (31:17-25). This identification of the elements with the zoas is supported at several points in Blake (see Damon, *Dictionary* 117), but their further identification with the Kingdoms of the Earth links them, too, with the four beasts or kingdoms of Daniel 7, and their aggregate quality recalls the plural nature of Satan as "multitudes of tyrant Men . . . / . . . Congregated Assemblies of wicked men" in *The Four Zoas* VIII (Chapter 4).

Besides the zoas, the sons of Los are seen collectively in some contexts. In the survey of war, commerce, and art in Golgonooza that ends Book I of *Milton*, Theotormon and Sotha are said to number "seven million & seven thousand & seven hundred," while "eight millions & eight" sons of Ozoth stand "within the

Optic Nerve . . . fiery glowing" (28:22, 29). Ololon, too, the sixfold emanation of Milton, named for the river where they sojourn, is a collective entity: "For mighty were the multitudes of Ololon" (35:37). Though generally called "she" in Blake criticism, Ololon is consistently called "they" or "them" by Blake until these Ololon amalgamate in a preapocalyptic incarnation.[11] Finally, Albion himself, though usually called "he" in the narrative, is identified as a multiple being on his first appearance in *Jerusalem*, when addressed by Jesus:

> I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend;
> Within *your* bosom*s* I reside, and *you* reside in me: (4:18-19; my emphasis)

While it is not a new idea that Albion stands for the English people and humanity as a whole, the use of plural forms in this passage is not usually stressed. Blake's text does not, then, simply introduce Albion as a symbolic embodiment of a social entity; it treats Albion, within the narrative, as a plural community.

One unacknowledged implication of the collective character of Blake's symbolic entities is that all human transformations must themselves be collective and social. Blake's text will ultimately insist on this point even though, with equal firmness, it claims that imagination is the only reality, and even though this conception would seem to imply that apocalyptic change can be achieved within the individual mind:

11. See 36:13-17. One of the best treatments of Ololon is Mitchell, "Radical Comedy" 300-305. Mitchell stresses the initially plural nature of Ololon and marks it in his pronouns (300-301n.). For failures to observe the distinction, see Bloom's commentary, *E*918, 923-25; Damon, *Dictionary* 307-308; Frye, *Symmetry* 354-55 and elsewhere; Paley, *Energy* 247-48; Essick and Viscomi 157.

> For all are Men in Eternity. Rivers Mountains Cities Villages,
> All are Human & when you enter into their Bosoms you walk
> In Heavens & Earths; as in your own Bosom you bear your Heaven
> And Earth, & all you behold, though it appears Without it is Within
> In your Imagination of which this World of Mortality is but a Shadow.
> (*Jerusalem* 71:15-19)

I must postpone until later a fuller discussion of why this conception, in Blake's hands, must imply the opposite of an "internal" transformation, a "revolution of consciousness" or "apocalypse by imagination or cognition" (Abrams 334). For now it is enough to note, first, that the pronouns used in this passage, like those used for Albion, are plural; second, that precisely at such points of doctrinal exposition, where an explicit affirmation of transforming the world by "internal" means might be expected, Blake withholds it. Further, other passages suggest that the idea of an imaginative reality separate from the world of social oppression is itself an illusion:

> [Los] saw in Vala's hand the Druid Knife of Revenge & the Poison Cup
> Of jealousy, and thought it a Poetic Vision of the Atmospheres
> Till Canaan rolld apart from Albion across the Rhine: along the
> Danube (*Jerusalem* 39-41)[12]

The passage on imagination has a further implication — that all the elements of Blake's symbolic vocabulary stand for human actions. Along with the

12. The Rhine and Danube are regular tropes for war in *Jerusalem*; see Erdman, *Prophet* 468.

collective and this-worldly character of these entities, this idea is one of the keys to Blake's late symbolism. The remainder of this section will explore in some detail its application to Blake's religious symbolism, starting with the transcendent figure of salvation in Blake's late work, Jesus. I noted above the implication in *Milton* that the Divine Saviour is mortal, not immortal. This is literally true in Blake: Jesus or the Divine Saviour is equivalent to humanity unified through the overcoming of self. (The Saviour can pass the Polypus without annihilation, then, because the Saviour exists already as the result of self-annihilation.) Much the same is true of related entities such as the Divine Family, the Divine Vision, the Council of God, etc. In Chapter 2 of *Jerusalem*, several of these entities are characterized in a complex passage following Albion's turn away from the Divine Vision or Universal Love (29/33:1; 34/38:7):

> mild the Saviour follow'd him,
> Displaying the Eternal Vision! the Divine Similitude!
> In loves and tears of brothers, sisters, sons, fathers, and friends
> Which if Man ceases to behold, he ceases to exist:
>
> Saying. Albion! Our wars are wars of life, & wounds of love,
> With intellectual spears, & long winged arrows of thought:
> Mutual in one anothers love and wrath all renewing
> We live as One Man; for contracting our infinite senses
> We behold multitude; or expanding: we behold as one.
> As One Man all the Universal Family; and that One Man
> We call Jesus the Christ: and he in us, and we in him,
> Live in perfect harmony in Eden the land of life,

Giving, recieving, and forgiving each others trespasses.
He is the Good shepherd, he is the Lord and master:
He is the Shepherd of Albion, he is all in all,
In Eden: in the garden of God: and in heavenly Jerusalem.
If we have offended, forgive us, take not vengeance against us.

Thus speaking; the Divine Family follow Albion;
I see them in the Vision of God upon my pleasant valleys. (34/38:10-28)

Taken in its "Litteral expression," the core of this passage, the four lines beginning "We live," is saying nothing more — or less — than that Jesus is unified humanity. The Saviour who speaks here is a collectivity, "We," who "live as One Man," and who name this universal family "Jesus the Christ." The unification referred to here follows a process mentioned elsewhere in Blake, in which expanded perception views multitudes as single beings while contracted perception sees these single beings as disunified, "multitude."[13] Evidently, however, it is not enough for mentation to *view* the multitude as one; the "We" must actually "*live* as One Man" (my emphasis). When they do, the name given to the humanity appearing as universal family is "Jesus." Further, when one closely examines the sequence of substantives in the passage, one sees that the "Saviour" who follows Albion *is* the Divine Family (lines 10, 27); the Saviour is another term for this family. Additionally, the Saviour or Divine Family is seen in "loves and tears of brother, sisters, sons, fathers, and friends[,]" a "Vision" or "Divine

13. See, e.g., *The Four Zoas* VIII, 105 [113]:49-50, *E*380, where much the same is said about Los, and 109 [105]:16-17, *E*378, where it is said negatively of Rahab.

Similitude" which "if Man ceases to behold, he ceases to exist" (11-13). It is possible to interpret Blake as meaning that Jesus' love is *expressed* in the loves and tears of brothers, etc., but it should be noted that line 12 *defines* an extended family, and that Jesus is a family. It may be, then, that Jesus' love *is* those loves and tears; brothers and friends acting in this manner are what "We call Jesus the Christ." Arguably, indeed, the tears and loves of the brothers and friends address Albion in lines 14-26. Additionally, the list closely recalls those who weep for Albion in the poem's opening lines, Albion's "brethren . . . and thy fathers, and thy sons, / Thy nurses and thy mothers" and others, who in that context are simply the people of England. (See 34/38:11-13 and 4:11-12.) The family here, then, is Albion's family, the British people, who when unified "as One Man" are Jesus. These entities — the Saviour, the Divine Family, the tears and loves of Albion's brothers and friends, and "One Man all the Universal Family" — are so closely linked as to be nearly, or actually, identical.

That is not all. In its larger narrative context, this passage follows upon a debate among Eternal Ones on the errors of Albion and the possibility of "Divine Mercy / . . . in the body of Jesus" (32/36:50-56, at 54-55). At its conclusion, "One stood forth from the Divine Family" to speak; the speaker is then identified as Los: "So Los spoke: But when he saw blue death in Albions feet / Again he join'd the Divine Body, following merciful" (33/37:1, 10-11). Los, then, is part of the Divine Family or (when it is seen as one man) Divine Body that follows Albion. But we have already seen that the Saviour who follows Albion is also the Divine Family. Los, too, then, is part of Jesus. This is possible, of course, because Los in his highest moments of awareness (of which this is one) becomes one with humanity.

The identification of Jesus with universal humanity is a basic one in later

Blake. Sometimes it is stated directly, as when a speech attribution notes, "So spake the Divine Family as One Man even Jesus" (*Milton* 21:58) or when Albion perceives Jesus, on the climactic plate 96 of *Jerusalem*, and "Albion knew that it [Jesus] / Was the Lord the Universal Humanity" (96:4-5).[14] More frequently, as in the shifts from "Divine Family" to "Los" and then from "Saviour" to "brothers . . . and friends," and again to "Divine Family," the identification is accomplished through a series of syntactic substitutions that allow the Jesus symbol its full ordinary religious impact while redefining it through context. For example, the sequence involving the Lamb and Jerusalem on plates 60-62 of *Jerusalem* begins with the "Divine Vision" appearing to "Jerusalems Children" (60:5, 8); a song of war, poverty, and oppression follows:

> [. . .] Why wilt thou rend thyself apart, Jerusalem?
> And build this Babylon & sacrifice in secret Groves,
> . . . . . .
> Thy Villages die of the Famine and thy Cities
> Beg bread from house to house, lovely Jerusalem
> Why wilt thou deface thy beauty & the beauty of thy little-ones (22-23, 27-29)

Tacitly introduced as the words of the Divine Vision, the song is retrospectively identified as "the Song of the Lamb, sung by Slaves in evening time" (38). The Divine Vision, then, is renamed as the Lamb and its speech — subsequently

14. Other direct statements include, in *The Four Zoas*, the front matter (2; Chap. 4); 21:1-7 (a version of the *Jerusalem* 34/38 passage); 99:1-2: "Then All in Great Eternity Met in the Council of God / as One Man Even Jesus[.]" For the Council see below; see *Jerusalem* 55:1, 46, where a similar entity, "those who disregard all Mortal Things," are "One Family! One Man blessed for ever[.]" For the same idea in Blake's expository prose, see the *Descriptive Catalogue* (1809): "man or humanity, who is Jesus the Saviour" (p. 22; *E*536).

called "the Voice" and "the Divine Voice" (51, 65) — as the speech of slaves. If we are thinking conventionally, we will assume that Blake metaphorizes the song's social content by saying it is "sung by slaves," or exalts the slaves' song by comparing it to the voice of the Lamb. If we follow Blake more exactly, however, we realize that the voice of slaves singing of liberty *is*, literally, the Divine Voice; the Divine Voice is that shared human voice which sings of liberty. The speaker is subsequently identified as the "Divine Lamb," as "thou O Human Imagination, O Divine Body" (an identification to which I return below), as the "Divine Voice" who speaks the interpolated parable of Joseph and Mary, as Jesus within the parable, and finally as the "Lamb of God" and, again, the "Divine Vision."[15] All these entities, including the slaves of 60:38, are fundamentally the same.

Such substitutions, often before and after speeches, become a basic syntactic structure in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, as when the "Human Form" appearing in the sun becomes the "Human Family" (*Jerusalem* 43/29:4, 27). This substitutional syntax can operate between text and design, as in *Jerusalem* 31/35. Here the text states that "the Divine voice came from the Furnaces, as multitudes without / Number! the voices of the innumerable multitudes of Eternity. / And the appearance of a Man was seen in the Furnaces" (3-5). One naturally assumes that the voice is the man's, Jesus'. In the design, the "appearance of a Man" is indeed Jesus (with stigmata) soaring over the text area and bent downward toward the figures below it — a male with a female emerging from its flank. While the male's face is pressed to the ground, the female's is turned up and her mouth is open, with rays suggesting speech. Hers, then, is the Divine Voice of

15. See 60:50, 57, 65; 60:66-62:29, at 62:18; 62:30, 35.

the text, also identified as the voices of the multitudes of eternity.[16]

In its cumulative effect, this syntax makes the identification of God as humanity increasingly certain and allows increasingly bold readings. We realize, for example, that Jehovah, named by the narrator as giving the final speech of *Jerusalem, is* "the Living Creatures of the Earth" specified at its end as having made it (98:40, 54; the speech's content is discussed later). Eventually, the consistency with which this substitutional syntax identifies Jesus as man allows the substitutions to be made by inference when they are not explicit. When the narrator speaks of those who are "Ashamed to give Love openly to the piteous & merciful man," or when Los tells his sons that "We were plac'd here by the Universal Brotherhood & Mercy" (*Jerusalem* 67:19; *Milton* 23:50), the alert reader should realize that besides referring to Jesus by periphrasis, the narrator is referring to *any* piteous and merciful man, and Los to universal brotherhood and mercy.

The idea that Blake's identification of Jesus as unified humanity should be understood literally can be challenged from two standpoints. The first relies on a second set of references identifying Jesus, or God, with imagination. At the opening of the Bard's song in *Milton*, for example, the Bard refers to the slaying of Albion through envy of "the sports of Wisdom in the Human Imagination / Which is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus. blessed for ever"; the same words are used in *Jerusalem* to refer to abstract philosophy warring "against Imagina-

16. Both Paley and Erdman discuss this design as a creation scene, citing the reference to Adam as one of the "limits" (line 1), an idea later discussed with regard to the creation of Adam and Eve (42:29-35). Erdman further identifies the "creator-savior" as uttering the Divine Voice together with the female figure, identified as Eve. But Jesus cannot be seen to be speaking (Copy E; D, in *Illuminated Blake* facsimile). Paley's reading is too narrow; while Genesis 2 is certainly alluded to, Paley fails to mention the Divine Voice or the Furnaces. (*City* 104-107; *Illuminated Blake* 310.)

tion / (Which is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus. blessed for ever)." (3:3-4; 5:58-59). Nearly identical phrasing is found in Blake's *Laocoön* engraving and annotations to Berkeley, and the same conception is paraphrased elsewhere in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*.[17] A substantial body of criticism has seized on such statements as, in effect, Blake's doctrinal definition of Jesus. We read, for example, that "the identification of the indwelling human imagination with Jesus [is] a major theme throughout *Jerusalem*," and that "Jesus, for Blake . . . is an indwelling God whose form is the human imagination" (Paley, *City* 273-74; Doskow 29). Such formulations would be unobjectionable if they did not, often, ignore references to Jesus as collective humanity.[18] To some extent, Jesus as Imagination *is* an alternative to the conception of Jesus as universal humanity, and perhaps a later one (the *Laocoön* has been dated either to 1819-20 or to 1826).[19] Nevertheless, the opposition between the two ideas is more apparent than real, since "imagination" in Blake is never a simple faculty of cognition. The linkage

17. E.g., in the Bard's reference to "the Poetic Genius / Which is the eternal all-protecting Divine Humanity," which unites a term for imagination with the gloss I have been giving for Jesus (*Milton* 14:1-2). For the *Laocoön* see *E*272-73 and Essick and Viscomi 247, 269 (a different spatial arrangement in the transcription); for Berkeley annotations, *E*663. See also *Milton* 2:8, *Jerusalem* 5:20.

18. Neither Paley nor Doskow refers to this idea in their books on *Jerusalem* (or, in Paley's case, in *Energy and the Imagination*). Nor does Damrosch, though he does mention the identification of the Family Divine as "One Man even Jesus" in *Milton* 21:58 (289n.) In a distinct approach, Frye recognizes that Blake's Jesus is equivalent to a unified Man, but only in the sense that the apocalyptic vision is of the entire universe as a human body. Thus Frye can refer to "the unfallen world, or body of Jesus" (431; see also 251, 386). The idea of the unfallen universe as a human body is indeed prominent in Blake, but Jesus as universal man is not reducible to this concept.

19. The earlier date is found in *Blake Books* 268 and Viscomi 367; Essick and Viscomi offer the revised date based on bibliographic arguments (241-42).

between the two views of Jesus is found in the idea of expansion: "expanding [our infinite senses]: we behold as one." Imagination and expanded perception are practically synonymous in Blake. Hence, the imagination that can be called Jesus is expanded perception, the capacity that exists in every person to conceive an alternative, redeemed state of existence, incorporating the active unity of humanity. Indeed, the presence of this conception — with its political component, liberty — in the mind of an individual or group is what is often called the Divine Vision or Divine Voice, as in the song of slaves. In short, Jesus as imagination is, among other things, the ability to conceive Jesus as universal human family.

A second and more substantial objection to the conception I have been outlining is lodged by the most cogent interpreter of Blake from the standpoint of radical Christian theology, Thomas J. J. Altizer. Altizer recognizes that Blake's Jesus is conceived as the collectivity of unified humanity, but insists that, nevertheless, the latter is merely a manifestation of a transcendent Jesus:

> Is the Jesus who[m] Blake named as the "Universal Humanity" and the "Human Imagination" simply a symbol of humanity itself? Has Blake merely given a poetic and symbolic expression to an Enlightenment humanism in his vision of Jesus? Does the Jesus who dwells "in" us represent an essential core of human nature which transcends the frailties of weakness and vice? These questions can be answered in the affirmative only by denying the great body of Blake's vision: they altogether ignore the violence of Blake's opposition to the "Deism" of his day. . . . It is not . . . the common man who is the Saviour, but *only* Jesus; and only Jesus *is* God. Humanity is deified *in* Jesus, not Jesus in humanity. (145)

Exactly the distinction between human and transcendent Jesus that Altizer insists on, however, is one that Blake has denied since his early works, such as "The Divine Image."[20] The passage I have been examining makes a different, more radical, and perhaps contradictory claim: Jesus is divine, *and* Jesus is what exists, actually or potentially, as the unity of humanity. The power of Blake's conception, indeed, comes from the tension between these ideas.[21] His Jesus symbol joins the ideas of the human and suprahuman, suggesting the contradictory idea that humanity can be more than human — without suprahuman intervention, since the narrative juncture where such intervention should be suggested, Jesus' appearance to Albion, is one of the instances that identifies Jesus as "the Universal Humanity" (96:5). Further, Altizer's presentation of the opposing case as a kind of colorless humanism mistakes Blake's idea of the "Universal Family." For Blake the ability to perceive and act as "One Man" is difficult, indeed heroic, requiring the willingness to die for one's friends, as both Albion's descent and Los's struggle against his Spectre attest. Finally, the characterization of the opposing case as Deist mistakes an important element of Deism. One aspect of what Blake saw as the Deist concept of natural man — for example in Locke — is that humanity is conceived as individual in essence, with no natural unit larger than the family, and with larger combinations resulting entirely from rational calculus. It is just this atomistic conception which Blake *does* identify as "natural," and to which the notion of "contracted senses" points; the ideas of "expanded perception" and the divine (non-natural, i.e., conscious, imaginative) character of unified humanity struggle against these

20. See E. P. Thompson's treatment of this poem in *Witness* 146-61.
21. I am indebted to the similar point in Thompson, *Witness* 159.

conceptions.

This extended look at one term in Blake's late symbolism will allow us to draw several conclusions briefly. First, understanding the meaning of Jesus as unified humanity makes clear that the apocalypse toward which *Milton* and *Jerusalem* are developing can only be a collective one. It is not yet clear, however, whether it will take place in collective mental space or also in the physical world, or whether it will be nonviolent or violent. Second, the collective and human meaning of Jesus clarifies a series of Blake's secondary conceptions, presented in the text as providential in nature, as actually referring to human activity. Two may be mentioned here, the Seven Eyes of God and the Divine Family. The "eyes" are a development of the "windows" Eno opened into Eden and the "watch" kept over mortals by the Daughters of Beulah, in *The Four Zoas* (9:11, 16; Chap. 2 above). They have received varying emphases in Blake criticism. In one approach, they are providentially ordered manifestations of a saving divinity, God's "eyes" for viewing humanity and ultimately restoring it to God. In the second, they are forms of God as seen *by* humanity — the changing "eyes" with which humanity conceives of God. Most accounts before Frye, as well as Altizer's, have stressed the providential. Frye's conception of the eyes as seven historical "Orc cycles" of cultural birth, maturation, and decline, and his idea that "an Eye of God can only be the eye with which man [*sic*] sees God" (*Symmetry* 360), set the tone for most later treatments. On the surface, Frye's is a non-providential interpretation: he says explicitly that the eyes are merely human conceptions. Frye, however, retains a providential element at a deeper level, that of the seven historical cycles. The idea of history structured as recurrent cycles, each more advanced than the last (as the names of the eyes indi-

cate) contains both teleological and salvational overtones, though expressed (by Frye, if not Blake) in secular language. Most subsequent accounts have incorporated both elements of Frye's scheme in some way, viewing the eyes both as human conceptions of God and as ultimately providential cycles or stages of cultural development.[22]

The ambiguity comes, of course, from Blake. That the eyes are human conceptions reflecting periods in cultural history is implied by the semi-historicity of their names and their progression from idolatrous names such as Molech (Moloch) to Jesus, with a hidden eighth mentioned in one passage, apparently waiting the proper time (*Jerusalem* 55:33). Yet the eyes' provenance

22. Some typical earlier glosses include Damon's in *William Blake*: "seven States divinely instituted so that man [*sic*] should mechanically be brought back to communion with God" (284; compare *Dictionary* 134); and Percival's: "These seven figures represent . . . a sequence of error so ordered as to bring man back to the truth" (242-50, at 244). For Frye, see also 128-30, 401. Paley's formulation shows the influence of all three elements: the eyes are both "religious conceptions which may be held at any time," i.e., subjective human ideas of God, "and tutelary deities signifying the qualities of human consciousness during successive phases of historical development," i.e., markers of cultural epochs; but Paley also notes with approval Damon's definition of them as "divinely instituted," quoted above (Paley, *Energy* 135-38, at 136). Other treatments emphasize these elements in differing degrees — the eyes exemplify the "many imaginative versions of divine activity" or name "persons who symbolize eras" (Damrosch 255; Deen 150). Joseph Wicksteed takes a view which, though related to Frye's, is radically agnostic and human-centered, and close to my own: the eyes "are only aspects of the Divine as it is given to Man [*sic*] to see it. They are rather windows than strictly speaking 'Eyes': chinks through which *we* look, rather than organs through which the Divine Vision looks upon us" (84). Altizer's treatment (136-40, 150-54, 212) is more complex than I have room to discuss here, but on balance he endorses a providential origin for the eyes. Michael Ferber gives an excellent review of biblical, Miltonic, gnostic, cabalistic, and antinomian sources, noting both teleological and nonteleological conceptions (213-21). Rachel V. Billigheimer offers a thorough review of Blake's references and the critical literature through 1987, while adhering closely to Frye's basic conceptions.

firmly suggests a providential origin — they are sent by the "Divine Family" or "those in Eden" to "Guard," apparently, both Satan and humanity as a whole, though different passages have slightly different implications.[23] Clearly with this scheme Blake is working to express the idea that evil can exist apparently unchecked without society actually destroying itself; this idea suggests a conception of saving providence, and not to Blake alone, but the question is whether this providence names an unexplained human activity or a transcendent, guarding intervention.

We can now understand that, first, the "Divine Family" and "those in Eden" are human, those living in brotherhood as "One Man," and, second, that as God himself is human, the eyes can only be human as well. As the Divine Family/those in Eden represent the transcendent possibilities in humanity at any moment, so the eyes stand for conceptions of transcendence (God) that can lift humanity above its ordinary existence, and sometimes save it from brutality and murder. Yet, as Blake knew, most human conceptions of God have provided excuses for murder. Indeed, all of the first six eyes, as both Altizer and Michael Ferber have pointed out, are Satanic in Blake's terms (Altizer 138, Ferber 219). The second point about the Divine Family/those in Eden, then, is that since they are human, they can make mistakes, and apparently have made six, since the first six eyes all fail at their tasks. There is, then, nothing supernal about the eyes at all; they are human products; and yet they *are* the highest human conceptions possible at various different times, so that the salvational tone with which they are discussed is partly justified despite what we know about

23. *The Four Zoas* VIII, 107 [115]:14-17, 41-50, *E*380-81, and *Milton* 13:12-34 state that the eyes are appointed to guard Satan; *The Four Zoas* I, 21 [19]:6-15 (and 9:16, on Eno's "windows"), *Milton* 35:64-65, and *Jerusalem* 55:30-53 suggest a broader mission of guarding humanity.

Molech, historical Jehovah, and the other eyes.[24] The eyes are an *imperfect*, human attempt at salvation, positive and negative at once, and this point is emphasized in several ways. First, there is the eighth eye, who "came not" when named, but "hid in Albions Forests." The forests stand both for the heart, by a standard Petrarchan trope, and, socially, for Britain's actual forests, traditionally hiding places for outlaws and the poor. The need to hide strongly suggests that the naming of the eighth eye is erroneous or premature. One salient reference for such a conception would be the failed waking of Albion in the 1790s (see Chap. 6), and such a gloss would underscore the human identity of the "Eyes."[25]

Further, it should be noted that in *Jerusalem* — as opposed to *The Four Zoas* and *Milton* — the formation of the eyes *is not completed*. The narrative describes a battle raging in heaven and earth — a conflation of Milton's war in heaven and contemporary war in Europe — during which "those who disregard all Mortal Things" (55:1) consider their course of action. Initially, "far the greatest number were *about to* make a Separation" (my emphasis), and selected the eight. But "first" they took additional counsel, deciding instead to trust in "the Human Organs" and to "Labour well the Minute Particulars, attend to the

24. If there is a *telos* to their succession, Blake does not make it clear; Percival derives this idea from the image of the circle, but this image is attached to the churches and heavens, not the eyes, which are charged with remaining alert "Thro all the Twenty-seven Heavens," i.e., apparently, for the duration of their power (*Milton* 35:65). Moreover, as noted in an earlier chapter, Blake disrupts the teleology of the churches.

25. Matching the eighth eye, a vengeful, possessive entity, Albion's "Reactor," is also "Hidden in Albions Forests" in an earlier passage (43/29:13). Ferber equates the eighth eye with the reactor (217), considering both Satanic (217). In a broader way, Altizer argues that the eighth eye is Antichrist (151-54). Both views run counter to the parallelism between the eighth eye in *Jerusalem* and Milton's sleeping body as an "Eighth / Image Divine" walking with the Seven Angels of the Presence (*Milton* 15:5-6).

Little-ones: / And those who are in misery cannot remain so long" (55:30, 34, 36, 51-52). Within the plot, the passage refuses providential intervention; poetically, it turns from the salvific imagery of the "eyes" toward an imagery of fostering patient, essentially human labor. The imagery of the "eyes," so central to providential readings of Blake, enters *Jerusalem* only in this one instance, and then only in a passage that revamps and implicitly criticizes previous uses of it; after this, Blake never mentions the "eyes" again in any of his works.

Like the "eyes," the Divine Family (with its variants that appear elsewhere, such as the Council of God) are collective and human, but they play a more interventionary role. The way the Divine Family functions can be seen in *Milton*'s account of Ololon's descent:

> But all the Family Divine collected as Four Suns
> In the Four Points of heaven East, West & North & South
> Enlarging and enlarging till their Disks approachd each other
> And when they touch'd closed together Southward in One Sun
> Over Ololon: And as One Man, who weeps over his brother
> In a dark tomb, so all the Family Divine. wept over Ololon.
>
> Saying. Milton goes to Eternal Death! so saying, they groan'd in spirit
> And were troubled! and again the Divine Family groaned in spirit!
>
> And Ololon said, Let us descend also, and let us give
> Ourselves to death in Ulro among the Transgressors. (21:37-46)

The Family provides a vision of Milton's descent that evokes Ololon's responding decision to descend to Ulro. The Family is, or becomes, Jesus, as the tradi-

tional sun/son pun, the enlarging and merger of the disks, and its appearance as One Man indicate, and as a later line specifies (58). At the same time, this identification should not make us lose sight of the Family's essential humanity: it is a collectivity that *becomes* "as One Man" through the process of enlargement that we have seen elsewhere. It appears when needed by the narrative; hence, it personifies a human consciousness of the characters to whom it appears, in this case Ololon. Essentially, then, the Divine Family is a portion of human consciousness that is aware of human unity and the possibility of self-sacrifice through love, and can inspire this kind of action in others.

A similar though more complex process identifies the Council of God, essentially a form of the Divine Family appearing in *The Four Zoas*. After Los's creation of the material body in Night IV, the Council meets, "clothd in Luvahs robes of blood"; the Daughters of Beulah perceive the Divine Vision and implore intervention, and the Saviour (called "he") sets the "limits" of opacity and contraction. Yet while the Daughters address the Divine Vision as "Saviour," they also specify that he is "clothd in Luvahs garments"; the Saviour, then, *is* the Council of God, acting as one. (55:10-56:24) Further, the Saviour's acts are ascribed by Los to "The Finger of God" (56:25); unexceptionable though this appears, a similar passage in *Jerusalem* will indicate that the finger of God belongs to the Labourers in the Furnaces (12:5-20, discussed below). In cognate passages, the limits are created by the Saviour, the Divine Hand, and Los himself (*Milton* 25:35-39; *Jerusalem* 35:1, 73:27). These conflations are deeply legitimate, since human activity of the highest, most merciful kind is what Blake *means* by the Divine Hand or the Saviour. The persistence of brotherhood, the limitation of the effects of the fall, etc., are to be explained as the result of hu-

man glimpses of the possibility of unity and love; these glimpses are identified in the narrative as the actions of the Divine Family/Vision, the Council of God, etc.[26]

The Blakean entities analyzed so far revolve around central conceptions of human unity. Many of these generate opposed persons or actions centering on the idea of disunity and atomization. These include the separation of Albion from his members (and of the natural world and heavens from Albion); the persecution of Jerusalem; and more abstract conceptions such as the Selfhood, the Spectre(s), and the two just mentioned, contraction and opacity. Each could be discussed at length, partly summarizing and partly disputing an extensive literature. "Selfhood," for example, has protean meanings and applications: the "innate selfishness with which we are born"; a "state of animal self-absorption"; the separation from the Eternals involved in Urizen's creation, along with manifestations such as the political will-to-power; defensive and repressive instincts that thwart creativity and are the root causes of "Lockean epistemology, natural religion, state religion, restrictive morality, and war"; and many more,

26. There are fascinating parallels between these Blakean conceptions and those of Vico (whose works, we recall, Blake cannot have known). Vico premises that the social world is a human creation, but to explain its continuation in the face of antisocial actions he has recourse to the idea of "a mind often diverse, at times quite contrary and always superior to the particular ends men [*sic*] have proposed to themselves; which narrow ends, made means to serve wider ends, it has always employed to preserve the human race upon this earth." This "mind" variously appears as divine providence and as a kind of collective unconscious, as when Vico specifies in this same passage "That what did all this was mind, for men did it with intelligence." In one of its manifestations, divine providence ensures that, "[u]nable to attain all the utilities he wishes, [man] is constrained to seek those which are his due," essentially those compatible with the continued existence of society. These conceptions have much in common with the Blakean ideas of the eyes and the limits. (*Scienza Nuova* 1108, 341, qtd. Pompa 24, 25; cf. Pompa 51-61.)

some of which are no more than paraphrases of the term itself.[27] None of these meanings is wrong, but it may be more fruitful to characterize all these conceptions as having in common the substitution of narrower ends in place of human unity and the related concepts, such as brotherhood and family, that Blake uses for it. Selfhood then becomes not just selfishness, defensiveness, denial of imagination, etc., but, centrally, substitution of self for the universal brotherhood of humanity, in thought or action. (Los's Spectre in *Jerusalem* is, as we shall see, a narrative personification this idea.) In this way nationality — though a supersession of the individual self by membership in a collective — becomes as much an expression of selfhood as individual selfishness, since both are denials of universal humanity. "Contraction" and "opacity," in this context, become relatively simple ideas — respectively, the opposite of the expansion that allows humans to see themselves and to live as a "Universal Family," and the closing off of perception and experience that results from denying the claims of mutuality. Adam and Satan are the "limits" of these conditions (*The Four Zoas* IV, 56:19-21, and elsewhere) because, short of actual extinction, they represent the greatest possible atomization and absolute closure to others.

Selfhood, opacity, and contraction involve social and class relations as well as moral and perceptual aspects. In one passage that glosses its meaning, "opacity" becomes the hardening of the perceptions of the rich, as the "Sons of Ozoth within the Optic Nerve" give

> delights to the man unknown; artificial riches
> They give to scorn, & their posessors to trouble & sorrow & care,

27. See Damon, *Dictionary* 363; Frye, *Symmetry* 58; Paley, *Energy* 68-69, 85; Howard, *Milton* 13, 92.

> Shutting the sun. & moon. & stars. & trees. & clouds. & waters.
> And hills. out from the Optic Nerve & hardening it into a bone
> Opake. and like the black pebble on the enraged beach.
> While the poor indigent is like the diamond which tho cloth'd
> In rugged covering in the mine, is open all within
> And in his hallowd center holds the heavens of bright eternity (*Milton* 28:31-38)

In this reworking of Matthew 19:24, the souls of the rich have become impenetrable to light, and their opacity identifies them as close to Satan. "Opacity," then, is a class characteristic as well as a moral one.

Elsewhere, several passages involving human division or the limits refer, among other points, to the creation of private property. The most important of these, because of its position at the very start of the poem where the estranged condition of humanity is first defined, is Albion's reply to Jesus in *Jerusalem*:

> Phantom of the over heated brain! shadow of immortality!
> Seeking to keep my soul a victim to thy Love! which binds
> Man the enemy of man into deceitful friendships.
> . . . . . .
> My mountains are my own, and I will keep them to myself!
> The Malvern and the Cheviot, the Wolds Plinlimmon & Snowdon
> Are mine. here will I build my Laws of Moral Virtue!
> Humanity shall be no more: but war & princedom & victory! (4:24-26, 29-32)[28]

28. I omit the deleted line opening Albion's speech, restored in *E*, "[*Saying. We are not One: we are Many, thou most simulative*][,]" as I regard the deletion (in all copies) as an editorial revision by Blake; but the line supports my analysis, emphasizing Albion's refusal of collective identity and underlining

The central point of this passage is Albion's refusal of brotherhood and affirmation of a Hobbesian conception of natural man. One consequence is his/their claim to the mountains, hills, and uplands as his personal, family, or national property. Coming among allusions to human division, the inadequacy of rationalism, the oppression of moral law, and the origins of tyranny and war (lines 26, 29, 31, 32), Albion's claim identifies the creation of private property as a crucial aspect of the refusal of mutuality, as represented by the figure of Jesus and by Jesus' invocation of Albion's brethren, fathers, nurses, and sons. The last line echoes Enitharmon's prayer in *The Four Zoas* I (11:24), also a statement on the beginnings of war and tyranny, but Albion's statement goes farther by connecting tyranny to private property. (As Plinlimmon and Snowdon are in Wales and the Cheviot Hills lie along the Scottish-English border, the passage seems also to refer to England's conquest of these countries.) The passage further implies that the recovery of mutuality — the reestablishment of "Humanity" as active reality — must involve the abrogation of private appropriation. We can hear in this passage Blake's familiarity with one element of the "radical culture" of his time; the ownership of all land by the people and the equal division of rental profits were the key economic tenets of the "ultra-radical" Spenceans, expounded since the 1790s (Worrall, *Culture* 2).[29]

Similar points about private property are made in biblical contexts in two places in Chapter 3. In the first, a serial description of earthly evils includes the

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the private appropriation of the mountains, etc.

29. David Worrall points to earlier Spencean echoes in the harvest imagery of Night IX of *The Four Zoas*, which are especially striking if the Night was written, as Worrall assumes, in the wake of the food riots of September 1800. Blake, Worrall says, "puts together land and revolution in a manner common to Spencean radicalism" (*Culture* 46-47, at 47). Nevertheless, *Jerusalem* is the first Blake text to imply the abolition of private ownership.

point that the "Princes of the Dead enslave their Votaries / Teaching them . . . / To seize the Sons of Jerusalem & plant them in One Mans Loins / To make One Family of Contraries: that Joseph may be sold / Into Egypt" (55:12-16). In addition to Joseph's sale as a slave, this somewhat enigmatic imagery seems to refer to forcing the common people (Jerusalem's sons) to serve lords and kings, the votaries of the princes of the dead. Frye detects in "One Mans Loins" an allusion to the myth that the king is father of the people, and to his usurpation of an original eponymous father of the people in national myth (*Symmetry* 395).[30] The difficult phrase "To make One Family of Contraries" would then mean turning the people — in a free condition, freely contending "Contraries" — into the "Family" of one man. But in any case, the verb "plant" makes the domination of the people into an agricultural metaphor, a compacted reference to both political and economic overlordship that refers by metonymy to seizing the *land* of the sons of Jerusalem. Finally, in an application of biblical imagery to the "limits" idea, Adam as limit of contraction is identified as "Peleg & Joktan: & Esau & Jacob: & Saul & David" (73:28). Here, in addition to dynastic jealousy (Saul and David) and the dispossession of labor through fraud (Esau and Jacob), the idea of "contraction" refers through Peleg and Joktan to the

30. See *Symmetry* 381-88 for Frye's discussion of the full passage. Viewing Joseph's coat as a type of Adam and Eve's "coats of skins" (Gen. 3:21), which he calls "coats of skin," Frye sees Joseph as an embodiment of the fall and the fallen body. See Ferber 84-85 for a reading stressing the opposition between brotherhood and possessive sexuality. Besides the references I have noted, the passage also alludes to the veil of sexual mystery and to the serpent as nature and phallus. In narrative context, it is part of the debate in assembly among "those who disregard all Mortal Things," over how to respond to evil among the living ("the Dead" from their perspective) that leads to the episode of the "eyes," discussed above.

creation of private property: "For in his [Peleg's] days was the earth divided" (Gen. 10:25).[31]

Social Symbolism in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*

This discussion has brought me to the issue of the directly social symbolism in *Milton* and *Jerusalem.* Blake's treatment distinguishes several kinds of social division of "Man the enemy of man," though it regards them as interrelated. These include imperialist war, moral persecution, and poverty and class oppression. Equally important, it shows both the divisions and the countervailing healing processes through a complex matrix of symbols. Besides the mythic narratives of the division of Albion and Jerusalem and the usurpations of Albion's sons and daughters, these symbols include an array of geographical and industrial references that have an implied social and class content.

In addition to relatively explicit descriptive passages, Blake uses three clusters of imagery to refer to the wars of human history. One, dealing with Luvah, has been well explored by both Mark Schorer and David V. Erdman; it identifies Luvah with France and uses his associations with Jesus, already well established in *The Four Zoas*, to create a sustained polemic against England's victimization of its defeated enemy.[32] A second way of referring to war is as the "Gods of Priam." In its most general sense, this synecdochic reference to the Greek and Roman gods pertains both to the worship of divided human faculties and to seeing them as gods rather than as components of humanity:

31. Peleg may have a similar function in *Moby-Dick*, Chap. 16. For the significance of Esau, or Edom, in Blake's earlier myth, see Tannenbaum 125-32. The Jacob-Joseph lineage provides a link to the Joseph allusion at 55:16.

32. Among many references in *Jerusalem*, see 45/31:55-60, 47:4-18, and the long crucifixion sequence at 65:5-66:84, and discussions by Schorer, 326-27, and Erdman, *Prophet* 462-68.

> [T]he Greeks, and since them the Moderns, have neglected to subdue the Gods of Priam. These Gods are visions of the eternal attributes, or divine names, which, when erected into gods, become destructive to humanity. They ought to be the servants, and not the masters, of man, or of society.... [W]hen separated from man or humanity, who is Jesus the Saviour, the vine of eternity, they are thieves and rebels, they are destroyers. (*Descriptive Catalogue* 21-22, *E*536)

Even in this relatively abstract formulation, what stands out is Blake's emphases on society rather than the individual mind, on Jesus as humanity, and on the gods as present-day social idols. Though these underlying ideas remain important, Blake's poetic practice relates the gods primarily to two ideas: war, and its ideological justification by art and poetry. It is as "Slaves of the Sword" that he condemns the authors of the classics in the Preface to *Milton* (copies A and B). Milton's first words in the poem, "I go to Eternal Death! The Nations still / Follow after the detestable Gods of Priam" (14:14-15), use the gods to stand for the linked ideas of war and selfhood. Los's sons tie them to "Miltons Religion," and through it to the European wars of the post-Miltonic century. And the final speech of *Jerusalem* marks the gods' passing, along with the tree of Genesis and the Druid oak of slaughter (*Milton* 14:15, 22:39-45; *Jerusalem* 98:46-50). The oak, in turn, is the third general term Blake uses for war. The associations of Druidism and the oak with human sacrifice, and through the oak with the cross and the gallows (Tyburn's tree), are well established in Blake criticism, and Erdman has unearthed the use of "DRUID Songs" to signify martial glory in a

contemporary recruiting song, underlining the connection of this imagery with war (*Prophet* 397n.).[33] We should recognize all four linked ideas — the crucifixion, human sacrifice, capital punishment, and war — whenever the Druid or oak imagery appears.

An important extension of the oak image occurs through its association with English naval imperialism. It is as blood sacrifices "warshipped/ . . . in Arks of Oak," in a famous pun, that Albion's children are taken "into Chaldea across the bredths of Europe" to "die beneath the whips of the Captains!" (*Jerusalem* 21:44-45, 43, 42).[34] Thereafter, Blake returns to this idea with cumulative power: Albion's "Oak Groves" or "Forests of Oaks" extend "over the whole Earth," "overspread all the Earth," cover "the Earth from Pole to Pole," and are remembered in the poem's last speech as "The Oak Groves of Albion that coverd the whole Earth beneath his Spectre" (27, prose; 70:16, 89:23, 98:50). The macabre image of the forests metastasizing across the globe has a more polemical use, however, than simply to signify war. Its poetic antecedent is Pope's paean to the eastward extension of Britain's imperial power in "Windsor-Forest":

> Thy trees, fair Windsor! now shall leave thy woods,
> And half thy forests rush into my [Thames's] floods,
> Bear Britain's thunder, and her Cross display,
> To the bright regions of the rising day [. . .] (385-88)[35]

33. See also Frye, *Symmetry* 399-400 for a reading of the Druid sacrificial imagery that recognizes its connections to modern idol-worship and war.

34. References to Babylon and to mountains that "Demonstrate in Unbelief" (30, 35) underline the punning meaning of the arks as "vessels" of false religion.

35. The most specific reference would be to the naval backing for the East India Company, primarily active in India from 1623; for a similar treatment, see

Blake's lines, then, become a revision of Pope's and an attack on what Blake would have felt to be a Satanic artistic genre, the imperial-dynastic patriotic encomium. In much the same way, Blake's celebrated protest against impressment in the Luvah-crucifixion sequence of *Jerusalem* has secondary poetic references as well. One need only read Wordsworth's heroization of a rural recruiting drive —

> — Then, for the first time, here you might have seen
> The shepherd's grey to martial scarlet changed,
> . . . . . .
> young Oswald, like a chief
> And yet a modest comrade, led them forth
> From their shy solitude, to face the world,
> With a gay confidence and seemly pride [. . .] (*Excursion* VII:763-64, 772-75)

— to understand both the political and the poetic rage behind Blake's

> We were carried away in thousands from London; & in tens
> Of thousands from Westminster & Marybone in ships closd up:
> Chaind hand & foot, compelld to fight under the iron whips
> Of our captains; fearing our officers more than the enemy. (65:33-36)

Nearly every treatment of the poem, political and otherwise, has quoted these lines, but they have not been placed in their art-polemical context even — or perhaps especially — by those who believe Blake's essential concerns are artistic and

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Dryden's "Annus Mirabilis," 1213-16.

psychic. Whether or not Blake knew the specific lines of Pope and Wordsworth here cited, poetic glorifications of English sea power and yeoman patriotism were all around, and in such passages he took sides not only on war but also on the duties of poets.[36]

Important as condemnation of war and war poetry are, Blake recognizes the primacy of social oppression at home:

> The Wine-press on the Rhine groans loud, but all its central beams
> Act more terrific in the central Cities of the Nations
> Where Human Thought is crushd beneath the iron hand of Power.
>
> (*Milton* 25:3-5)

Blake marshals an array of characters and entities to embody the iron hand and resistance to it. Hand, himself, *primus inter pares* among Albion's estranged

36. Blake's known comments on Pope, not flattering, concern his translations. His annotations to *The Excursion* are to his own transcription of one prose paragraph and the verse passage from "the first book of The Recluse" in Wordsworth's preface, so it is doubtful that Blake ever read farther in the poem. (See "Blake's apology for his Catalogue" 9-10, on Pope, and his annotations to Wordsworth, *E*505 and 666-67.) Crabb Robinson's opinion was that Blake "but imperfectly knew" Wordsworth's works before the December 1825 dinner at which he voiced objections to the "Jehovah" passage from the *Excursion* preface — though Blake did know that much. Robinson subsequently lent Blake the *Excursion* and the two-volume 1815 *Poems*. (See *Blake Records* 311-12, 320-25, 541-46, and *Blake Records Supplement* 129.) Blake's treatment of impressment was not unique; see Barbauld's "Eighteen Hundred and Eleven," 23-26, for a similar view of recruitment. Wordsworth's own account ends ambiguously: Oswald, hot from a day's hunting, bathes in an icy stream and dies of convulsions (861-90). It is tempting to take this episode as mock-epic, a reading encouraged by echoes of Patroklos or Nisus-Euryalus (867-90) and by the Pastor's earlier deprecation of battle-poetry (363-66). But the heroization of Oswald and those like him as Napoleon's ultimate nemeses seems too genuine for such a view. (See 752-62, 804-16, 821-31, 850-58; and note the glorifying reference to war on the Rhine and Danube, 788-89, in contrast to Blake's uses of these rivers.) Wordsworth does not say what becomes of Oswald's companions.

sons, stands for many of its most brutal manifestations in *Jerusalem*. The figure of Jerusalem, as positive ideal, "IS NAMED LIBERTY / AMONG THE SONS OF ALBION" (26, in art; varied at 54:5); as victim of persecution, she personifies both poverty and suffering from moral-religious bigotry in contexts ranging from her mythologized relations with Albion and Vala to her descriptive account of herself as harlot and outcast "sold from street to street / [And] defaced with blows & with the dirt of the Prison" (62:4-5). Other references are more involved and allusive. Two of these in *Jerusalem*, involving the cities and counties of Britain and Los's furnaces, may suggest the complexity of others while showing Blake's way of dealing with social and class oppression and responses to it.

Jerusalem's geographical symbolism is intricate, involving a double linkage of Britain's counties with the tribes of Israel and with Albion's and Jerusalem's sons and daughters, and separate listings of the twenty-eight cathedral cities and the "thirty-two" nations and island groups of the earth.[37] Frye proposed that this symbolism had two functions — one analogical, involving a simple overlay of biblical and British names, and the other historical, associating the cities and counties with the chronicle history of Britain (*Symmetry* 372ff.). Erdman added contemporary references to antiwar agitation, the campaigns for Irish representation and Catholic emancipation, and the Scottish treason trials of 1793-94 (*Prophet* 475-84). Subsequent commentaries have mostly followed Frye's lead, providing striking elucidations of some geographic references in terms of leg-

37. See 16:27-58 for the counties and tribes; 72:1-27 for a separate listing involving Ireland only; 71:10-53 for the counties and sons and daughters; 34/38:54-54, 36/40:44-37:2, and 41/46:1-24 for the cities; 72:39-44 for the nations and islands. For the biblical sources see Num. 2:1-34 and Rev. 7:5-8 (Blake mixes elements of the two lists).

endary history. Less attention has been paid to contemporary references, and yet several may be inferred that add to the complexity of Blake's meaning.

On plate 67 of *Jerusalem*, for example, Blake describes the "Polypus of Generation [that] covered the Earth." Its head is in Verulam and its heart on Salisbury Plain, from which it sends fibers across Europe and Asia as far as Japan; its body winds through four cathedral cities before ending at Bristol (34-40). Verulam and Salisbury Plain are familiar in Blake criticism for their associations with Bacon and Stonehenge, functioning as emblems of rationalism and Druidism. And the Polypus as it appears here has been recognized as in part a "colonial organism" (Paley, *City* 214). Bristol has been treated only in the most general way, as a cathedral city and, conjecturally, as Chatterton in English letters (Damon, *Dictionary* 59, 71, 72). Yet cathedral cities were often commercial as well as religious centers. Bristol was a center of English wool imperialism from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries; Exeter and Chichester, also parts of the Polypus, were wool and trading centers too. In the eighteenth century Bristol (with Liverpool) was a focal point of the triangular trade of manufactures to Africa, slaves to the Americas, and rum, sugar, and tobacco to England. Wesley and the Quakers were active there, partly in opposition to the slave trade, and the decline of the trade helped account for the city's waning importance in the nineteenth century. These would be salient associations to a reader of Blake's time, at least to one with antislavery sympathies. If read with them in mind, the Polypus passage makes a compact statement about the relation of slavery to merchant imperialism: Verulam directs, and Bristol nourishes, the Druid heart whose tentacles cross the earth. It is important, in any case, to free our readings from embedded interpretive traditions associating the cities

only with religious or literary referents; in this case social-economic meanings fit the imperialist character of the Polypus much better.[38]

A larger pattern of geographic reference occurs in several places in *Jerusalem* in contexts of intense suffering. One comes early on, in an account of Los's furnaces. Amid images of Druid torture, the drilling of soldiers in wheatfields, and the curses of harlots,[39] London's river

> Feeds the drear Forge, trembling & shuddering along the Valleys
>
> Humber & Trent roll dreadful before the Seventh Furnace
> And Tweed & Tyne anxious give up their Souls for Albions sake
> Lincolnshire Derbyshire Nottinghamshire Leicestershire
> From Oxfordshire to Norfolk on the Lake of Udan Adan
> Labour within the Furnaces, walking among the Fires
> With Ladles huge & iron Pokers over the Island white.
>
> Scotland pours out his Sons to labour at the Furnaces
> Wales gives his Daughters to the Looms; (16:15-22)

The passage continues to the first account of how Los "fixd down" the counties, and the underlying furnace imagery will concern me below, but for the moment

38. It is possible that Bristol, located at the opposite end of the Polypus from Verulam, is meant to represent the anus. In some of Blake's uses, the polypus appears as undifferentiated mass; for its alternative form (as here) as tentacled hydra, see Kroeber 360 and n. For other passages referring to merchant imperialism, see, e.g., *The Four Zoas* II, 24:25-28 (discussed in Chapter 4) and *Milton* 35:7-17 ("Loud / Loud roll the Weights & Spindles over the whole Earth," etc.).

39. Based in part on *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* 5:14-15 and "London" 15-16.

I wish to look at Blake's use of geography. The locations given here seem at first to be a comprehensive catalogue: all Britain is tormented in, or before, the furnaces. Actually, the list is more specific, as becomes clear when some subsequent references are added. Later in Chapter 1, Blake offers a description of the "streets of Babylon" that merges into the account, already noted, of the transport of Albion's children across the sea to war. Among sufferings of other locales,[40] we are told that "Manchester & Liverpool are in tortures of Doubt & Despair" (21:30-36). And in Chapter 4, among the effects of the materialization of the Antichrist is that

> loud the Mersey
> And the Ribble. thunder into the Irish Sea, as the Twelve Sons
> Of Albion drank & imbibed the Life & eternal form of Luvah
> Cheshire & Lancashire & Westmoreland groan in anguish
> As they [Bowen and Conwenna] cut the fibres from the Rivers (90:15-19)

It is the contemporary references of these place-names that concern me. Why should Blake have singled out certain counties and rivers to place in or before the seventh, apparently most intense, furnace? Why should manufacturing and shipping cities be in tortures of doubt and despair? Why are northwestern counties and rivers mentioned as tortured by the Antichrist? Some of the answers doubtless concern the war and its aftermath: Wales and Scotland (and the

40. See Lindsay and Locherbie-Cameron (136) for the significance of one of these, Malden. The authors note that probably the Maldon in Essex (of "The Battle of Maldon") and not Malden in Surrey is meant. They also note, but dismiss, Damon's speculation that "Malden & Colchester Demonstrate," in this passage, alludes to "naval disturbances" in the two ports (*Dictionary* 260). If my argument below has merit, Damon's guess is not so easy to discount.

Tweed as its emblem) give up their youth to war (plate 16); the working-class youth of Manchester and Liverpool are shipped abroad to die (plate 21); they suffer, as well, in the aftermath of the peace that cannibalizes Luvah or France (plate 90; cutting the fibres refers to a continuing image of dismemberment that runs through the whole poem). We should also note what should be obvious, that the furnaces, labor with ladles and pokers, etc., are references to industrial work.

In addition, however, we should notice that these place-names roughly delineate three broad swaths of territory, in the West, North and Midlands, that were centers, variously, of Luddism in 1811-12, the parliamentary reform agitation of the next few years, and the efforts at both clandestine and mass organization in 1816-19. The four counties in the furnaces, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, and Lincolnshire, abut one another in the Midlands, with Oxfordshire and Norfolk to the south and east; the Trent flows through or past them to the Humber, passing the pottery district and the counties' chief towns; the Tweed and Tyne lie apart to the north, defining a region straddling the Scottish border. E. P. Thompson gives a vivid idea of the role of these districts in the popular agitation of 1810-20. Derbyshire and Leicestershire were the scene of Luddite frame-breaking in 1811-12, and Nottinghamshire (with West Riding) had the strongest secret Luddite organization in the Midlands. In Nottingham town, citizens staged a triumphal parade when Prime Minister Perceval was assassinated in 1812. The same three counties were the main supporters of an 1812 petition against abuses in the frame-knitting industry (ignored by parliament). In 1812 and 1813 Derby, Leicester, Nottingham, and other Leicestershire towns were among the places where Major Cartwright, patriarch of the

reform movement, spoke in organizing tours.[41] Nottingham, along with towns in Lancashire and elsewhere, was the site of rioting at the war's end. The three counties, along with Norwich, Lancashire in general, Birmingham, and sections of the West Riding, were the main centers of the reforming Hampden clubs in 1816-17, and the alleged sites of secret revolutionary committees, according to claims advanced by the government when it suspended *habeas corpus* in March 1817. Blake's rivers play a part in this pattern as well: on the Humber, Hull was the site of a reform club in 1818; on the Tyne, Newcastle was on Cartwright's itinerary, saw rioting at the close of the war, and was the scene of a protest of fifty to one hundred thousand persons after Peterloo in 1819. Only Lincolnshire, of the counties Blake places in the seventh furnace, was quiescent.

Finally, the key episode of rebellion and repression prior to Peterloo, the Pentridge Rising of June 1817, began with the assembling of its meager army of a few hundred at the foot of Derby Peak in Derbyshire and had Nottingham as its destination; its leader, Jeremiah Brandreth, was executed with three others and his head displayed to the crowd before Derby Castle. The resonance of this event may partly account for the mention of Derby Peak at two later points in *Jerusalem* (57:7, 64:35) and its depiction on plate 23 with Jerusalem collapsed on its slopes and the poor, or miners, crawling through its caverns below.[42]

41. On Cartwright (1740-1824), an active reformer since the 1770s, see his *Life and Correspondence*, edited by his niece Frances D. Cartwright; for the tours, vol. 2, 37-52, and Thompson, *Making* as cited below. For Cartwright's stature, see poems in his honor by Allen Davenport (1819) and Robert C. Fair (1818), Scrivener 240, 256-57.

42. See commentaries in Paley, *Jerusalem* 166, and *Illuminated Blake* 302. The Derbyshire mines are mentioned again just before Albion awakes (94:8). Pertinent here is whether any of the plates of *Jerusalem* can be dated specifically. The presumed *termini a quo* and *ad quem* for the poem are 1804, the date on the title page, and 1820, the date of the first printing sessions if Viscomi is correct. In 1807, George Cumberland noted that Blake had engraved

Among the third cluster of place-names — Manchester, Liverpool, and the western counties of Cheshire, Lancashire, and Westmoreland, with the rivers Ribble and Mersey — Liverpool was a center of the slave trade, while many Lancashire locales were involved in the reform agitation. Cartwright visited Manchester, Bolton, Stockport, and Preston in 1812-13; citizens rioted in Bury and Preston at the war's end and organized reform clubs in Bolton, Blackburn, Manchester, and other towns in 1816-17. And in Manchester, of course, troops charged the open-air mass meeting of some sixty thousand citizens on August 16, 1819, killing eleven and wounding four hundred. All these Lancashire locations lie between the Mersey on the south and the Ribble on the north.[43]

"60 Plates of a new Prophecy" (*Blake Records* 187). If the note does not take *Milton* and *Jerusalem* together, it means that sixty plates existed then, but some may not have been finally used. At least forty plates, then, would date from 1807-1820. Bentley lists thirty-seven plates for which he finds bibliographic evidence (distinct lettering, large numbers of errata, missing or inconsistent catchwords, etc.) of late or hasty composition (*Blake Books* 225, 228); the number coincides rather too nicely with Cumberland's reference. (One would not expect nearly all additional plates to show evidence of haste, but perhaps many were done in a rush near the end.) Of the plates referring to Derbyshire, Bentley includes 16, 64, and 94 (but not 23 or 57) among the thirty-seven; 21 and 90, which also figure in my discussion, are not included. Some of Bentley's arguments are questionable; e.g., variants in spelling place-names are always listed as errata. In sum, plate 16 may have been etched at any time between 1807 and 1820, *if* Bentley's evidence is accepted; otherwise, at any time from 1804-1820. Viscomi credits Cumberland's testimony about the sixty plates (with reservations about which works may have been involved) and believes that others were "written and rewritten no doubt as inspiration struck" between then and 1820, his date for the printing of the first copies (338-39, at 339). For the purposes of my argument, it is necessary only that some of these plates date after 1811 — though the later the better.

43. For the places mentioned in these paragraphs, see Thompson, *Making* 609-10 and n. (on Cartwright), 659-69 (on the Pentridge Rising), 681-91 (on Peterloo), and index entries for "riots," for the localities mentioned, and for the Hampden Clubs.

Blake's place-names, then, evoke areas of England that, in 1820-21, had enormous resonance in terms of the political and class struggles of the previous decade. I am not proposing that Blake's references allegorize all these events specifically. Blake may not have known of all these events or had them all in mind; some may postdate the etching of the plates cited. Nor do I wish to exclude other, traditional and mythic, references — for example, the "wonders" of Derby Peak in contemporary lore, the habitation of its caves by the poor in Blake's lifetime, and the sexual connotations of its twin peaks of Mam-Tor and Man-Win are additional contexts that complement the one I am stressing (see Worrall, "Derbyshire"). But in a general way, the names of the Midlands, northern, and western counties, came freighted with the events of a decade-long British calvary, of seemingly fruitless struggles by working people, political hopes dashed, and betrayed hopes for improvement after the war.[44] Within this context, certain events might stand out as salient. E. P. Thompson notes that "Within two days of Peterloo, all England knew of the event" (*Making* 687); Lancashire "groan[ing] in anguish" before the advancing Antichrist could hardly fail to call it to mind.

The full effect of these geographical images depends on association with the furnaces. The furnaces and the counties and cities are in fact closely tied together, and I shall now examine why. Los's furnaces, contrary to the way they are usually understood, are real material furnaces, standing by metonymy for

44. See "Distress of the Poor; A New Song," by G. Taylor, 1818: "The widows' [*sic*] salt tears often dropp'd for the dead, / May now flow afresh for the loss of her bread; / Her fatherless children are starving also, / Is this a fit recompence, tell me, or no!" (Scrivener 213). Blake seems to capture this mood in *Jerusalem* 63:6-35, where a reference to Napoleon's surrender is followed by a litany of *English* suffering.

material production in general; both their specific horrors and their regenerative role (and these are closely related) are bound up with their materiality. In the furnaces, Blake creates an embodiment of real labor processes and real laborers whom — in an act of faith — he sees as Albion's ultimate salvation. This conception draws the furnaces and their laborers together with two of the emblematic entities I have already mentioned, the counties and cities, and Jesus.

The furnaces are usually seen as a simple metaphor for the creative processes of imagination, though Frye, in a more complex treatment, regards them as symbols of the body, both natural and redeemed (253, 288, 300, 364).[45] Paley, it is true, notes valuably about Los that "the tenor must not obscure the importance of the vehicle. Los *is* a worker. Of all the major figures of the long poems of the Romantic period, Los is the only one who can call himself a 'labourer'. His incessant work . . . is symbolic, but it is also real metalworking, meticulously described." But Paley metaphorizes immediately: "The furnace is the energy source for . . . psychic transformation," etc. (*City* 237-38). The ideas of the furnaces as imagination and as the body need not be corrected; rather they must be amplified and materialized.

The first point to note is that both the furnaces, and Los's city of Golgonooza, in whose center they stand, are places of unspeakable torment:

> Los opend the Furnaces in fear. the Spectre saw to Babel & Shinar
> Across all Europe & Asia. he saw the tortures of the Victims.
>
> (*Jerusalem* 8:23-24)

45. For typical formulations as "imagination," see Paley, *Energy* 246, 255, 258; Deen 207-209; Doskow 95; Worrall, "Visionary History" 203. Damrosch identifies many of the negative aspects of the furnace-Golgonooza imagery; however, he considers Los to stand only for art and imagination, not for social productive labor (318-36 *passim*). The ultimate source for the furnaces appears

> He [Los] views the City of Golgonooza, & its smaller Cities:
> The Looms & Mills & Prisons & Work-houses of Og & Anak:
> The Amalekite: the Canaanite: the Moabite: the Egyptian:
> And all that has existed in the space of six thousand years:
> Permanent, & not lost not lost nor vanishd [. . .] (13:56-60)

Golgonooza is so frequently viewed as exclusively a "city of art," that this point is worth pausing over. In the general description of Golgonooza (12:45-13:55), the city proper is said to be surrounded by a region of "pain and misery and despair and ever brooding melancholy" (13:31). The continuation of the passage subjoins this region to Golgonooza as "its smaller Cities" (56); in lines 57-58 the looms, mills, prisons, and workhouses are part of this terrain, within Golgonooza's general domain, and perhaps within Golgonooza proper (the line is open to either interpretation). The reference is a crucially clarifying one, on which the interpretation of the entire poem turns. If the mills are unconnected with Golgonooza, then Golgonooza can be viewed purely as a work of imagination and one can maintain an ultimately dualistic view of imagination as counterposed to corporeal reality. If, on the other hand, "imagination" in Blake's sense is taken to include the creation of all material reality, the looms, mills, and prisons must also be part of it; they, too, must be Los's works. And, as the survey of Los's world proceeds, this turns out to be true. On the nest page the zoas in their "fallen" aspects — Orc as serpent, Urizen as dragon, Tharmas as "Vegetated Tongue" — with their female counterparts, throughout history, are named "the Buildings of Los! & . . . the Woofs of Enitharmon!" (14:15). But the buildings

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to be Ezek. 22:17-22, where they stand for the wrath of God.

of Los, as we have just seen, are those of Golgonooza. Los, or art and labor, has built the entirety of human culture, and its redemptive aspects must be found not in a separate "city of art," but in the city of *human* art and labor throughout the millennia of history — the "arts of man" in all their filth and anguish.[46]

Graphically, the incorporation of the mills and prisons within Golgonooza as a whole is emphasized by the arrangement of words and design on plate 13. The first line of Blake's page describes the gate of Golgonooza that faces Eden; as one descends the page the text images become more and more horrific, with the section on the mills and prisons as the lowest block of text. Within this text block, a regenerating movement starts — the apocalyptic recovery of time (59ff.; discussed below) — and continues on the next page. Corresponding to it, the design in the right margin shows a series of increasingly spiritual winged figures escaping up the page from a man at the bottom trying to capture them in his hat. Blake, then, frames the Gate of Eden and the mills and workhouses within a single page, as the top and bottom of a single reality; escape begins *from* the bottommost oppression and ascends alongside the same reality to the Gate of Eden.

To understand further why Golgonooza is the locus of historical affliction, it is necessary to look at the furnaces themselves. They are most extensively de-

46. Paley's account of Golgonooza quotes 13:56 and 59, implicitly placing the "smaller cities" as part of Golgonooza, but replaces lines 57-58, on the workhouses, etc., with ellipses (*City* 137); he does not refer to these lines anywhere in his study. Doskow assigns the looms, etc., to "Albion's children, [who] create all natural and man-made disasters," while Golgonooza, "the city of art, *rather than* prisons, mills, and workhouses," is the work of Los's children (56; my emphasis). There is no textual basis for this distinction, or for Doskow's reference to the zoas as "Albion's children" (*ibid.*).

scribed on plate 24 of *Milton*, when Los and his sons descend to Bowlahoola and Allamanda (line 44). There we are given two apparently contradictory identification for the furnaces and for Bowlahoola, the precinct of Golgonooza where they stand:

> Bowlahoola is namd Law. by mortals, Tharmas founded it
> Because of Satan, before Luban in the City of Golgonooza.
> But Golgonooza is namd Art & Manufacture by mortal men.
>
> In Bowlahoola Los's Anvils stand & his Furnaces rage
> Thundering the Hammers beat & the Bellows blow loud
> . . . . . .
> The Bellows are the Animal Lungs: the Hammers the Animal Heart
> The Furnaces the Stomach for digestion. terrible their fury
> Thousands & thousands labour. thousands play on instruments
> Stringed or fluted to ameliorate the sorrows of slavery
> Loud sport the dancers in the dance of death, rejoicing in carnage
> The hard dentant Hammers are lulld by the flutes lula lula
> The bellowing Furnaces blare by the long sounding clarion
> The double drum drowns howls & groans, the shrill fife. shrieks &
> cries: (24:48-52, 58-65)[47]

Later we are told that Bowlahoola is the stomach and, for good measure, that the surrounding region of Allamanda is Commerce (24:67; 27:42). Evidently, then, the furnaces and their surroundings are a human body, but they are also a city; law, commerce, and production define a city. Two points resolve the seem-

47. I omit *E*'s editorial apostrophes following "flutes" and "Furnaces." Part of this description is repeated on *Jerusalem* 53.

ing contradiction. First, in Eden — that is, in a state of human unity — the city would indeed be a single united body, and law and commerce would no longer exist. But, the description here is all too evidently not of Eden; it is, rather, one of slavery and war disguised by soothing arts. The Edenic city-body is reached through a descent onto the terrain of this-worldly struggle, where *im*mortals cannot pass, and in this world "Golgonooza is namd Art *& Manufacture* by mortal men" (my emphasis). In this city, the furnaces are still parts of a body, but the body is multiple. In Blake's usual tenor-vehicle inversion, the reader begins by understanding the lungs, etc., as tenor, the intended meaning of the furnace metaphor (Frye's discussion glosses this idea very well), and only gradually discovers that they are the vehicle, that the furnaces are real industries in which "thousands & thousands labour," and that the production of the furnaces is oppression and war.

Los's labor, then, is plural, that of "thousands & thousands"; as Los has said in *The Four Zoas*, "I divided / To multitude & my multitudes are children of Care & Labour" (105 [113]:50, *E*380; see Chapter 4). And his struggles take place in real, material places of production in the city of art and manufacture. Since art and manufacture have been controlled throughout history by oppressors and exploiters, it should now be clear why the furnaces and Golgonooza must be places of torment. There is, indeed, a regenerative struggle as well, to which I will turn next, but the division is not neat; the idea of Los struggling solely for redemption against opposed forces of negation is a myth of Blake criticism. As Los says to Enitharmon, "This sinful Nation Created in *our* Furnaces & Looms is Albion" (*Jerusalem* 92:6; my emphasis).[48]

48. There are too many other passages showing the horrific character of the furnaces to list them all; but see *Jerusalem* 73:1-52 for a particularly vivid example, showing the difficulty of turning the labor in them to redemptive pur-

The regenerative side of this creation must now be accounted for; but in a sense, this cannot be done — Blake's conception can be explained, but whether it will seem reasonable is up to the reader. I have already noted the appearance of the figure of Jesus within the furnaces (*Jerusalem* 31/35:5), and in a general way specified Jesus as human collectivity. It is now clear why he is seen in the furnaces — they are sites of collective human labor, which, when directed with heroic difficulty toward the redemption of humanity, is equivalent to Jesus. Further, within Blake's text those who labor in the furnaces, when dedicated to this endeavor, are Jesus or God in a literal sense, as can be seen when Los, inspired to renewed commitment by the advent of Erin, seeks to comfort his sons and daughters who labor in the furnaces:

> Yet why despair! I saw the finger of God go forth
> Upon my Furnaces, from within the Wheels of Albions Sons:
> . . . . . .
> God is within, & without! he is even in the depths of Hell!
>
> Such were the lamentations of the Labourers in the Furnaces!
>
> And they appeard within & without incircling on both sides
> The Starry Wheels of Albions Sons, with Spaces for Jerusalem:
> (*Jerusalem* 12:10-11, 15-18)

By a syntactic substitution of the kind that should now be familiar, God who is "within, & without!" becomes the laborers who appear "within & without," and God's finger coming from within the wheels becomes the laborers' action encircling the wheels with spaces for Jerusalem. The regenerative action of the

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poses.

laborers *is* the mercy of God; the laborers themselves, when inspired to self-sacrifice and devotion, are God. And the theological commonplace that God is in the depths of hell yields a second meaning: God, as redemptive labor and the unification of humanity, is in the hell of the furnaces.

Besides this one, we already know of another identity for the laborers in the furnaces:

> And Tweed & Tyne anxious give up their Souls for Albions sake
> Lincolnshire Derbyshire Nottinghamshire Leicestershire
> From Oxfordshire to Norfolk on the Lake of Udan Adan
> Labour within the Furnaces, walking among the Fires (16:17-20)

The sons and daughters of Los laboring in the furnaces are, then, the counties and rivers of Britain, by metonymy for their inhabitants, the slowly forming English working class. The "giv[ing] up their Souls" that first appeared as tortured suffering, perhaps in the war, now appears in a second sense as self-sacrifice for Albion's redemption. And this self-sacrifice has both a general meaning in Blake's doctrine and, perhaps, specific reference to real historical acts ranging from the clandestine organizing meetings of laborers, artisans, schoolmasters, etc., in the Midland counties, to the travels of the 73-year-old Major Cartwright.

The idea that the real working class can become Jesus can only be called a faith. Several things need to be said about it. First, the idea is not so strange: millions have had it, though they have not usually expressed its religious qualities so directly as Blake. Second, the furnace imagery should make it clear that Blake's conceptions were not fixed, as often thought, in precapitalist rela-

tions; the furnaces, which first appear in a serious way in *The Four Zoas* and become prominent in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, are an attempt to associate redemptive potential with modern processes of production. (Indeed, this would be true even if one conceived the furnaces only as a metaphor for imagination.) Third, while the idea that the furnaces' laborers can become "One Man all the Universal Family" has clear affinities with Marxism, it inflects this identification in two crucial ways. It does not derive the laborers' redemptive role from automatic processes growing from economic struggle, but rather from an ideal of unification to which Blake gives the name Jesus; and it stresses self-sacrifice as central to fulfilling this role.

Cities are Men

The identification of *each* of these major symbol-matrices — Jesus, the cities and counties, and the furnaces — with collective human life is driven home, and the three systems tied together, in the continuation of the episode of the Saviour/Divine Family with which I began my discussion. In this episode, it will be recalled, Jesus is both a collective human body and a family — in fact, Albion's family. It now becomes clear that he is also London.

> Thus speaking; the Divine Family follow Albion:
> I see them in the Vision of God upon my pleasant valleys.
>
> I behold London; a Human awful wonder of God!
> He says: Return, Albion, return! I give myself for thee:
> My Streets are my, Ideas of Imagination.
> Awake Albion, awake! and let us awake up together.

My Houses are Thoughts: My Inhabitants; Affections,
The children of my thoughts, walking within my blood-vessels,
Shut from my nervous form which sleeps upon the verge of Beulah
In dreams of darkness, while my vegetating blood in veiny pipes,
Rolls dreadful thro' the Furnaces of Los, and the Mills of Satan.
For Albions sake, and for Jerusalem thy Emanation
I give myself, and these my brethren give themselves for Albion.
. . . . . .
I see thee awful Parent Land in light, behold I see
Verulam! Canterbury! venerable parent of men,
Generous immortal Guardian golden clad! for Cities
Are Men, fathers of multitudes, and Rivers & Mount[a]ins
Are also Men; every thing is Human, mighty! sublime!
In every bosom a Universe expands, as wings
Let down at will around, and call'd the Universal Tent.
York, crown'd with loving kindness. Edinburgh, cloth'd
With fortitude as with a garment of immortal texture
Woven in looms of Eden, in spiritual deaths of mighty men
Who give themselves, in Golgotha, Victims to Justice; (34/38:27-39, 44-54)

Syntactic substitutions and thematic and textual echoes establish who London is. In the transition from the Divine Family sequence analyzed earlier, the narrator — here Blake in his own person[49] — first "see[s]" the Family and then "behold[s] London," both of whom are speaking. Moreover, London's speech is similar in

49. Paley briefly discusses the significance of Blake's direct speech in *Jerusalem*, listing this as one instance, in *City* 312-14.

theme, if not phrasing, to that of the Divine Family — both are messages of brotherhood; and the first words of the speech, "Return, Albion, return!" are those previously spoken by Jesus: "return Albion! return! (4:10 — another speech of brotherhood). Further, London's next words, "I give myself for thee," embody the central meaning of Jesus for Blake, and specifically presage the pledge Jesus will make to Albion, and that Albion will emulate, at the poem's end (96:14-35). London, then, is Jesus, or, more exactly, Jesus is London when its inhabitants are prepared to "give myself, and these my brethren give themselves for Albion" (line 39). This identification alters the reader's initial tendency to understand "My Houses are Thoughts: My Inhabitants; Affections," as a simple trope metaphorizing thoughts and affections as parts of a city. The thoughts and affections are within *Jesus'* blood vessels, and this in turn means, given Jesus' established meaning as human community, that they are *people* in the houses and streets of actual British cities.

As so often, Blake's figuration needs to be inverted from the commonplace to be understood. London is not used as a metaphor for thoughts and affections, but rather is personified as a composite entity — a "body" of people — whose houses and inhabitants are its thoughts and affections. Further, if the London who speaks here is the Jesus, Universal Family, Divine Family, or family of Albion who has spoken in the preceding sequence, then Jesus-London is identifying its precincts as the ideas, thoughts, affections of a potentially single being.[50]

50. London in this passage, and the similar "golden builders" passage (12:25-44), is conventionally treated as a metaphor for immaterial processes: Golgonooza "takes its bricks and mortar from London . . . but [is] a city of the imagination"; Blake "converts . . . places and objects to ideas" (Paley, *City* 136; Hoagwood 85).

It is in this sense that we should read the sublime statement beginning, "for Cities / Are Men." The cathedral cities, here introduced for the first time, emblematize Blake's concern with a spiritual reawakening of the British people, and look forward to the "friends of Albion" material that follows shortly. What is central, however, is that these cities are each collective entities. Blake is surveying his "Parent Land" and saying that its cities are, or can be, unified beings that incorporate within themselves the natural landscape and the entire universe. "In every bosom a Universe expands, as wings / Let down at will around, and call'd the Universal Tent" recognizes both the capacity of the individual to comprehend or deny his/her identity with the universe, and the potential for the cities, as large-scale conscious social beings, to *make* the whole universe human through social processes. Most of all, however, these words deal with the ability of the individual, by understanding his/her unity with the universe, to become part of the larger social identity known as York or Edinburgh. In turn, the cities' existence as collective beings is plural or composite, realized in acts of spiritual witness and shared suffering. This social London, formed of the self-sacrificing acts of *some* of its inhabitants — and potentially of all — exclaims, "I give myself, and these my brethren give themselves for Albion"; in a double meaning, "brethren" refers forward to the other cities, but also to the "brothers, sisters, sons, fathers, and friends" in the earlier lines of the sequence, the "inhabitants" London has just mentioned.

Moreover, they have already given themselves many times, as the final reference to the "spiritual deaths of mighty men / Who give themselves, in Golgotha, Victims to Justice" makes clear. If these lines allude through Edinburgh to the treason trials held there in 1793-94, as Erdman argues (*Prophet* 476 and

n.), then the struggle to realize the cities' human form incorporates the political struggle for liberty. By their language, moreover, these lines also refer to Jesus, the prisoner of *The Four Zoas* 123 (here reimagined as suffering without retaliation), and even the going of Milton to Eternal Death. All these partially embody the giving of London and its brethren for Albion, and all will be redeemed in that act. The lines, then, also incorporate both the injustices of history — the blood sacrifices of judicial murder that Blake includes in Golgotha through the unspoken tree image — and the voluntary active self-sacrifice for the larger community (Albion) necessary to end these crimes.[51] Further, they provide a context for the idea broached a little later that "There is in Albion a Gate" that "cannot be found / By Satans Watch-fiends tho' they search numbering every grain / Of sand on Earth every night" (34/38:55-35/39:2). The unfindable gate or door is used elsewhere to refer to the saving qualities of prophetic art and the redemptiveness of daily life; here, it takes on a broader meaning through the references to sacrificing for Albion. In a communal, social context, the "gate" would refer to those small acts of solidarity and mutual aid by which the members of London-Albion keep Satan outside their precincts and serve Jesus or humanity — acts ranging from the formation of cooperatives to the minute acts of neighbors donating food to jobless families, as shown later, for example, in *Mary Barton*.[52] It is out of such acts, we infer — and out of a redemptive vision

51. My ideas here have obvious reference to Blake's rejection of atonement, which he characterized to Crabb Robinson as "a horrible doctrine — If another man pay your debt I do not forgive it" (*Blake Records* 337). Self-sacrifice for Albion refers to the voluntary acceptance of suffering needed to watch over Albion and help him to awaken, not to discharging his sins through one's own pain.

52. See *Mary Barton*, Chap. 6. For the watch-fiends, see also *Milton* 23:39-44, 29:47-50, 35:42-47, and *Jerusalem* 37/41:15-22.

that was, after all, present in the Christianity of daily life — that Jerusalem is to be built from the bricks of the present London.

In this alternative London, described by Blake in his prelude to the "map" of Golgonooza, "The stones are pity, and the bricks, well wrought affections" (12:30), not in a kind of mental substitution of an interior city for an empirical one, but through the acts of solidarity and aid that potentially, and then actually, make a new city.[53] In "Cities / Are Men," then, Blake sums up the meaning of three key symbol systems of his late poems, Jesus, the furnaces, and the counties and cities. *All* these "Are Men." Rather than metaphoric names for art, imagination, or providential salvation, they are names for collective human entities, capable under certain circumstances of coming together in the united form, joined by loving self-sacrifice, that the Divine Family calls "Jesus the Christ."

53. Hence the later passage in which Golgonooza is called the "Spiritual Fourfold / London:" (53:18-19) refers to more than art or imagination. Rather, Golgonooza in its redemptive sense is a "spiritual" London because it is composed of the "spiritual deaths of mighty men," the sacrifices accepted by *some* for the benefit of humanity. These express both the potentiality of London as a whole, and an inner essence that can be thought of as London's underlying reality, a sublime image similar to the "spiritual forms" Blake frequently showed in pictorial art.

CHAPTER SIX

The Furnaces of Affliction

With this discussion of some of Blake's later governing symbols as background, we may examine the treatment of social renovation in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. This treatment turns on Blake's recasting of Orc, Los, and apocalypse. The two poems retain the figure of Orc, now in a subordinate position; though no longer an effective agent of liberation, he remains a phenomenon in the social world, examined in some detail in *Milton* and treated elliptically in *Jerusalem*. Los's central role in the two poems is multiform. He functions not merely as a figure for artistic vocation and prophetic imagination, but as a representation of human labor through history. Primarily in *Jerusalem*, he becomes an emblem of the problems of liberatory political leadership and is Blake's vehicle for a specifically political examination of the means and methods of social upheaval. And he plays a critical role in creating the conditions for the apocalyptic moment that concludes this poem. Finally, the two poems reevaluate apocalypse itself. The shifts in Blake's conception involve not so much the question of the violent or nonviolent character of the apocalyptic process (though they do involve this question) as the question of who carries out an apocalypse and how it occurs. Blake retains the social emphasis of *The Four Zoas*, but resolves that poem's tension between elite and mass action through the medium of the sym-

bolism traced in the preceding chapter.

Orc in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*

In vital respects the symbology of the cities, furnaces, and Jesus supersedes that of Orc in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*; the unification of humanity that the Jesus symbol connotes, and its relation to Albion's awakening, fulfill the same functions of awaking earth to apocalypse that Orc once had. Blake's new symbolic language does not, however, substitute itself neatly for that of Orc, and it leaves some questions unanswered. On the one hand, Orc's prophetic speech, the image of life stirring at "the voice of the child" (*Urizen* VII:5, 20:28), and Orc's fiery progress from America to Britain (*America* 13-15) provided imaginative answers to the questions of how apocalyptic consciousness can be attained and translated into action. Changes in Orc and his world eventually made these answers inadequate. Rather than substituting new ways of representing these processes, Blake's late symbolism tends to slide over some of them, leaving ambiguous how, and even whether, they will occur; he condenses and bypasses the aspects of apocalyptic action that the Orc symbol presented most explicitly. On the other hand, Orc himself retains a subordinate role in the late prophecies. In *Milton* his role is substantial, though not pivotal, and Blake presents alternative possibilities: Orc may take center stage again in his original form in an apocalyptic conflict whose outcome is left unclear, or he may be freed by Milton. In *Jerusalem*, Orc is quiescent, Blake reshapes the alternatives seen in *Milton* as debates of Los with himself, and the narrative registers the unanswered questions about how apocalypse occurs as silences or gaps in the text.

While commentaries have tended to assume that Orc's near-absence from *Jerusalem* reflects Blake's final judgment on his significance, recent bibliog-

raphic investigation suggests a more complex truth. If, as Joseph Viscomi's dating indicates, crucial material on Orc was added to *Milton* copies C and D between 1811 and 1818 (around the same time as late work on *Jerusalem*), and retained when C underwent further revision around 1821 (during the printing of *Jerusalem*), then *Milton*'s and *Jerusalem*'s treatments of Orc are simultaneous and equally authoritative.[1]

Orc appears in *Milton* centrally in a long exchange with the Shadowy Female (plate 18) and as the subject of a twice-mentioned prophecy that Milton will "set free / Orc from his Chain of Jealousy" (20:60-61; reworded at 23:36-38). Two important interpretations have been offered for this material, both focusing on the prophecy. Morton D. Paley considers it an artistic flaw in the poem, an unintegrated remnant of Blake's earlier symbolism. Paley contends that the prophecy "is neither fulfilled nor otherwise accounted for," categorizes *Milton*'s other references to Orc as "scattered and unorganized," and concludes that Orc's presence in the poem "is vestigial, left over from an earlier plan of composition," some of the plates presumably having been "etched before Blake decided that there was no place for Orc in this vision of regeneration" (*Energy* 249-51). The bibliographic record, however, shows that Blake added major material on Orc to *Milton* in its late stages, after the production of the two earliest copies.[2] Thematically, the material on Orc is not at all "scattered," but integral

1. Viscomi 327-28; see discussion below.

2. Orc is mentioned by name or epithets on ten plates: 3, 10, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 29, 31, and 40, in *E*'s numbering — plates b, c, d, 17, 18, 20, 22, 28, 31, and 42 in the standard bibliographic nomenclature (*Blake Books* 305-318). The lettered plates (together with a, e, and f, which do not refer to Orc) are not in copies AB but appear in C (a-e) and D (a-f). All bibliographic accounts, including Keynes and Wolf 103 (which predates Paley's study) agree that D cannot have been printed before 1815; Viscomi now proposes 1818, and argues that the lettered plates were added to C in two groups: b, a, f, and d before 1818 (f later extracted), and c and e about 1821 (327-328). Paley's argument, essentially that

to the poem's argument. Joseph Wittreich has addressed Paley's chief point by arguing that the prophecy of Orc's freeing *is* realized: Milton's strife with Orc and the other three zoas on the Brooks of Arnon, "In Self annihilation giving thy life to thy enemies" (40:8) fulfills it by restoring all the zoas "to their unfallen state," and is represented pictorially in full-page plate 18 [D]/15 [C] (*Angel* 245-47). If this argument is accepted, three aspects of the Orc material remain to be accounted for. Two, the seeming supersession of all the zoas in the poem's final pages and the final disposition of Orc's capacity for revolutionary violence, belong to the discussion of *Milton*'s view of apocalypse. The third, Orc's place in the larger dialectic movement of *Milton*, centers on plates 18-25.

These plates present alternative views of the content of apocalyptic change and the means of attaining it, through two parallel debates — one involving Orc and the Shadowy Female, the other Los and his sons. Both are centered on whether Orc's struggle can be subsumed in a larger apocalypse of "Mercy." The roles of Orc, Los and his sons, and Milton himself in this debate are all crucial to the poem's meaning.

On plate 18, Orc as struggling youth is seen in a debate with the Shadowy Female (essentially Vala), who vows to weave for herself garments "woven of sighs & heart broken lamentations," and to "put on the Human Form & take the Image of God" in false religion (18:6, 19). Orc's reply surprisingly begs Vala not to take human form; it becomes evident that this plea refers to the hu-

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the prophecy and other Orc references already etched at some hypothetical early date were retained because it was too difficult or expensive to change them, must contend with Blake's later introduction of new material about Orc. Plate d in particular (18 in *E*) is almost entirely concerned with Orc and the Shadowy Female; there is little reason to have included it except to add material about their relationship. The inference that Orc was integral to Blake's late conception is supported by Viscomi's hypothesis that Blake added plates to Copy C as late as 1821; had he wished, he could have removed plate d at this time.

man form *she* has described, a deceptively attractive one whose real purpose is shown in the designs for her garment: "There shall be the sick Father & his starving Family! there / The Prisoner in the stone Dungeon & the Slave at the Mill / I will have Writings written all over it in Human Words / . . . / I will have Kings inwoven upon it, & Councellors . . . / . . . / And the Pestilence shall be its fringe & the War its girdle" (10-12, 15, 17). Orc pleads with Vala instead to put on the "Female Form" as "in times of old," with a garment of "Pity and Compassion," also called "Jerusalem" (34-37).[3] In short, Orc pleads for avoidance of the world conflict that Vala's materialization as war and class oppression portends. With Vala's refusal, Orc

> Glowd on his rocky Couch against the darkness: loud thunders
> Told of the enormous conflict[.] Earthquake beneath: around;
> Rent the Immortal Females, limb from limb & joint from joint
> And moved the fast foundations of the Earth to wake the Dead (47-50)

— a passage that collapses together *The Four Zoas* VIIB (the earthquake and the rending of Vala[4]) and Night IX (the waking of the dead) into an anticipation of the end of time. This episode, Orc's only speaking appearance in *Milton*, presents apocalypse, prospectively, in a way consistent with earlier works — as a

3. In *The Four Zoas*, this garment was woven by Enitharmon from the spectres of the dead as comfort for Orc (Nights VIIA, VIII; see Chap. 4). There is, however, no comparable action involving Enitharmon in *Milton* or *Jerusalem*, and the dead are treated more negatively.

4. The plural "Females" conflate the Shadowy Female/Vala, whom Orc threatens to "rend" (18:33), with six female mountain regions that confront Milton (17:15-17; noted by Essick and Viscomi 148) — appropriate targets of earthquake. These correspond to Milton's wives and daughters, here including Rahab and Tirzah (17:1, 11), who send their own sons and daughters to tempt Milton (19:30-31). Hence the earthquake is an alternative scenario corresponding to Milton's failure to withstand the temptation (see discussion below).

rising of the dead. But there are two important differences. First, Vala is made responsible for its violence. Second, while Orc's rending of Vala does not generate his own serpent form, as in *The Four Zoas* VIIB, neither does the narrator specify another outcome; the apocalyptic moment is left uncompleted.

The full significance of the Orc-Vala debate becomes clear when it is related to its contexts both outside and inside *Milton.* As an added plate, 18 shifts the emphasis of the whole poem in subtle but important ways. First, it introduces the possibility of a violent apocalypse, and relates its violence to that of the contemporary world — the continuing ferocity of the European war (line 17), but even more the domestic clashes of the 1811-18 period, during which the plate seems to have been inserted into the poem. The "sick Father & his starving Family," the prisoner and slave, kings, counselors, and pestilence, acquire topical resonance in the context of rural poverty, Luddite machine-breaking, parliament's dismissal of relief for the weavers, arrests, police spying, and the suspension of *habeas corpus*, events that could easily be read as apocalyptic omens. In a second, broader way, the inserted plate lends weight and particularity to the ensuing debate of Los with Palamabron and Rintrah, and here the plate's political reference is not to 1811-18 alone, but to the entire period from 1770 to 1820 — as indeed the prisoner and slave, Blakean emblems repeated from *America* and *The Four Zoas* IX, attest.

This debate, part of the complex reworking of Blake's politics and religion carried through in this poem's discussion of Milton's historical role and reappearance, centers around the prophecy concerning Orc. Los has already recalled the prophecy, and "started at the thought" (20:61). The moment at which Los realizes that his son may be freed from the chain represents the clearing of *his own* fears of Orc's advent. Nevertheless the prophecy is the focus of the

ensuing debate and is modified in its course. Rintrah and Palamabron interpret Milton's coming and the freeing of Orc as the destructive unleashing of revolutionary war. Their argument centers on the idea that in unchaining Orc, Milton will "let loose Satan, Og, Sinon & Anak / Upon the body of Albion" (22:33-34).[5] They proceed to trace war, rationalism, and the perversion of religious vision to Miltonic roots: "Miltons religion is the cause! there is no end to destruction!" (39) Throughout the speech, while stressing doctrinal and sexual issues, their emphasis is on the connection of these issues to war: religious-sexual mystery is "the Virgin Harlot Mother of War," Swedenborg's loss of vision has "renew[ed] the Trojan Gods" (50, 53). As an alternative, they offer the self-sacrifice of Wesley and Whitefield, analogized to the two witnesses of Revelation, as "Men who devote / Their lifes whole comfort to intire scorn & injury & death" (23:1-2). They close by contrasting this spiritual witness to Orc's return: "Lo Orc arises on the Atlantic. . . . / . . . / . . . and the Covering Cherub advances from the East:" (6, 10); and they propose chaining Milton to prevent him from releasing Orc (23:17-18). Rintrah and Palamabron, then, treat Orc as a figure of war, as the consequence of Milton's errors, as opposite to Wesley and Whitefield, and as twin to the Covering Cherub or Antichrist.

Los's reply has three main purposes: to caution his sons against sectarian war; to correct their counterposition of Wesley and Whitefield to Orc and Milton; and to redefine the nature of his and their apocalyptic labor, of apocalypse itself, and of Orc's freeing. All these interrelated purposes turn around the figure of Orc, the object of the prophecy Los begins by summarizing.

5. Kenneth R. Johnston argues that Rintrah and Palamabron mistakenly attribute a negative role to *Blake*, who has appeared at Los's side (430). Most commentators have seen Milton as the object of their fears, as 23:13 seems to confirm. For Og, Sinon, etc., see Damon, *Dictionary* 27, 306, 372-73.

I recollect an old Prophecy in Eden recorded in gold; and oft
Sung to the harp: That Milton of the land of Albion.
Should up ascend forward from Felphams Vale & break the Chain
Of Jealousy from all its roots; be patient therefore O my Sons
. . . . . .
Remember how Calvin and Luther in fury premature
Sow'd War and stern division between Papists & Protestants
Let it be not so now! O go not forth in Martyrdoms & Wars
We were plac'd here by the Universal Brotherhood & Mercy
With powers fitted to circumscribe this dark Satanic death
And that the Seven Eyes of God may have space for Redemption
But how this is as yet we know not, and cannot know;
Till Albion is arisen; then patient wait a little while,
Six Thousand Years are passd away the end approaches fast; (23:35-38, 47-55

Though Los's warning against religious war refers by extension to the secular counterapocalyptic war between Britain and France, its primary reference *is* religious, and must be related to Rintrah and Palamabron's positive account of Wesley and Whitefield. Los's reply implicitly responds to the counterposition between Orc and Wesley/Whitefield's spiritual witness that Rintrah and Palamabron have assumed *in common with the tradition of apolitical Blake interpretation.*[6] Los does not, it is true, scorn Wesley and Whitefield, or challenge

6. While recognizing that they are wrong to oppose Milton's return, criticism has generally assumed, without close examination, that Rintrah and Palamabron's view of Wesley and Whitefield is Blake's. See, e.g., Howard, *Milton* 144-47 (see also 21, 235-36); Paley, *Energy* 146 and n.; Bloom, *Apocalypse* 369.

Rintrah and Palamabron's heroizing account of the two, which sounds a note of respect toward organized religion that is new in Blake. Historically, Methodism was characterized by qualities we can assume were attractive to Blake — enthusiasm, proselytism, and work among the common people. At the same time, it was bound theologically by ideas Blake considered utterly mistaken. Rintrah and Palamabron's statements therefore are an initial expression of the willingness in Blake's later thought to make common cause with currents that opposed injustice and espoused spirituality in their own ways, while patiently clarifying his differences with them. Despite these points, the sons' encomium is part of a speech that is mistaken in opposing Milton's coming and Orc's freeing, so that their view of Wesley/Whitefield is implicitly a limited one. It is limited, in fact, in exactly the way that Methodism was — in its opposition to freeing the passions. Rintrah and Palamabron's proposal to chain Milton and keep Orc bound represents an effort to deal with the dangers of unchecked sexual and social energies through psychic and class restraint. All of Blake's intricate exploration of the psychic, doctrinal, and social roots of war lead to the understanding that energies so restrained find expression in war, and this is the basis for Los's caution to his sons against supporting wars — a caution otherwise hard to understand, since they are the ones who have been denouncing war.

The limitedness of the sons' view shows, as well, in its biblical referents: the coming of the Two Witnesses is an apocalyptic sign or forerunner, but not the apocalypse itself. Los's response makes it clear that apocalypse cannot be achieved by substituting Wesley and Whitefield for Milton and Orc, but only by Milton's action in freeing Orc. The moment of apocalypse will come through trusting, not opposing, the unleashing of human potentiality signified by the

breaking of the chain, an act that will set Orc free; will simultaneously free him from his own jealousy and from that of Los and Urizen (who have bound, opposed, and tempted him in earlier prophecies); and finally — as we will see — will subsume Orc and the other transformed zoas into larger human collectivities.

These aspects of Los's reply involve, as well, a modification of the prophecy about Orc and a redefinition of apocalypse. Los's version of the prophecy does not mention Orc specifically and makes it clear that Milton will "break the Chain / . . . from all its roots[.]" Milton's action, then, will deal with the fundamental cause of jealousy and possession, that is, selfhood — in the broad sense discussed above. The resulting apocalyptic moment will occur *in history* and in the near future, but at a time that cannot be foretold or accelerated; hence the warning against "fury premature." Further, its occurrence will depend on the awakening of Albion. Los's speech recognizes an apocalyptic freeing of repressed energy and human potentiality, but links it to a new ethical sense — expressed here as snapping the chain of jealousy, and elsewhere, positively, as self-sacrifice and brotherhood — and to the agency of the aroused people as a whole.

As important as the content of the two debates — Orc's with Vala and Los's with his sons — are the *parameters* of the debates. With the shift of *Milton*'s terrain to the culture and politics of the last hundred years, Blake drops his emphasis, in *The Four Zoas*, on Orc's serpent metamorphosis and his collusion with dragon Urizen. By reintroducing Orc in his original form as shackled youth, accompanied by images from *America* 2 and 6, Blake focuses on the revolutionary processes of the entire period since 1770. And the debate is not a narrow one, over whether political revolution develops cyclically into state repression. It is between the unleashing of universal war — figured historically as the

Napoleonic wars and violent rebellion and repression at home, and anagogically as violent apocalypse — and the possibility of transcending war and freeing Orc through breaking the chain. The point at issue between Los and his sons is whether the destructiveness of unleashing Orc is so great that he and Milton must be restrained, as Palamabron and Rintrah urge, or whether Orc can be freed in a larger action that liberates human potentialities for positive solidarity and mutual aid, so that the destructiveness of the process is minimized. Plates 18 and 22-23 represent alternative possible outcomes to the situation created by the Shadowy Female's weaving of the robes of repression and war.[7]

Finally, a larger perspective is established by the narrator's presentation of *both* debates. Los's prophecy is contingent on his own labors and their successful outcome; the *possibility* of an apocalypse of mercy rather than destruction is established by Milton's descent and linkage with Los. Orc's rebellion, however, is not contingent — given the failure of his plea to Vala, it *must* occur, as the elemental imagery used for it shows, because it is Orc's only means of resistance to Vala's reign. Again Blake is struggling — against his interpreters — to communicate the deepseated nature of the social rebellion that began in America.

The contingent character of the prophecy of Orc's freeing is underlined by the temptation Milton faces upon his return to earth (plates 19-20), and this temptation gains added pointedness from its occurrence immediately after the inserted Orc/Vala scene, which in effect shows a world in which Milton has succumbed to the temptation. Upon entering Ulro — or our own world — on the

7. Erdman (*Prophet* 427) misunderstands these plates as alternative scenarios entertained by Blake, non-revolutionary (written during the war) and revolutionary (added after the peace). Rather, Blake presents a historical and conceptual alternative.

shores of biblical Arnon, Milton begins a struggle with Urizen, which will end only in the poem's final plates. In the course of this struggle, Rahab/Tirzah send their sons and daughters to tempt Milton

> Saying. Come thou to Ephraim! behold the Kings of Canaan!
> The beautiful Amalekites, behold the fires of youth
> Bound with the Chain of Jealousy by Los & Enitharmon;
> The banks of Cam: cold learnings streams: Londons dark-frowning
> towers;
> . . . . . .
> Come then to Ephraim & Manasseh O beloved-one!
> Come to my ivory palaces O beloved of thy mother!
> And let us bind thee in the bands of War & be thou King
> Of Canaan and reign in Hazor where the Twelve Tribes meet. (19:36-39, 20:3-6)

The long central portion of the speech, omitted here, is a roundup of the usual Blakean suspects — social injustice, natural religion, and the consolation of sexuality, all under the sign of Tirzah. These lines make the point that this world is the only reality there is. Of this world Milton is offered the rule, as Jesus was in the second temptation of *Paradise Regained* and as Orc was by Urizen in *The Four Zoas* VIIA.

Milton's temptation is, in fact, a version of Orc's in the earlier poem, and Milton's later words to Satan make clear the danger of acceding:

> Satan! my Spectre! I know my power thee to annihilate
> And be a greater in thy place, & be thy Tabernacle
> A covering for thee to do thy will, till one greater comes
> And smites me as I smote thee & becomes my covering. (38:29-32)

While these words are sometimes glossed as an expression of the "Orc cycle,"[8] the sons and daughters are offering Milton domination *over Orc* ("the fires of youth / Bound . . . by Los & Enitharmon").

This difference from the "Orc cycle" idea is not unimportant or casual. Blake's treatment in *Milton* goes beyond his earlier symbolism, which expressed the possibilities of betrayal in revolution through a split in Orc; their expression here in a temptation of Milton is a clarification of meaning. Orc in *Milton* appears as rebellious impulse; socially, as the rebel, the American colonists, the *menu peuple* and sans-culottes, the English common people. Milton is — *Milton*, hero, tribune, and prophet, one capable personally, socially, and historically of fulfilling the mission of ending selfhood in all its forms: self-righteousness, moral superiority, tyranny and class rule. But such a figure is also capable of betraying this mission and preserving selfhood instead. The sons and daughters are in effect offering *Milton*, not Orc, the chance to become Robespierre or Washington and to rule Orc, and it is an offer Milton is in a position to take. This gives his refusal, as later expressed to Satan, its moral grandeur — but also makes clear what is at stake for Orc and humanity. If Milton were to accede to the temptation, Orc would not be set free from the chain; Milton himself would enchain him. In view of the sons' and daughters' speech (and the temptation scene in *The Four Zoas*, whose class dynamics are similar), it should be clear that for Blake, the chaining of Orc is one meaning of what Milton did in history. That is, Milton's participation in Cromwell's government helped set in place a state that at crucial points — the Putney debates, the dispersal of the Diggers, and finally the Protectorate's collapse into the Restoration monarchy — kept Orc

8. E.g., as "another Orcan chain of domination" (Howard, *Milton* 249); see also Paley, *Energy* 246. Howard's later *Infernal Poetics*, however, rejects the presence of an "Orc cycle," at least in the Lambeth prophecies; see Chap. 2.

in chains. These historical precedents are what the sons and daughters refer to implicitly and what they offer Milton the chance to repeat. Were he to accept, the prophecy that forms the basis of Los's hope would be betrayed — by Milton, not Orc — and violent apocalypse would ensue.

Orc, then, is reintroduced into *Milton* in his initial, human form, and with the same function, as emblem of repressed and rebellious energy, political-social upheaval, and apocalypse figured as imminent social warfare on earth. His appearance on plate 18 in effect introduces a *Four Zoas*-like branching of the narrative, showing what will occur if Milton fails in his own mission. Yet, while this narrative "branch" is not presented positively, neither has it a trace of cyclicality or interiority. The debates between Orc and Vala, and then between Los and his sons, are about how, not whether, to struggle against earthly tyranny; and the very real danger of betraying apocalyptic hopes is placed, as it should be, on the shoulders of the prophet figure, Milton.

The relative prominence of Orc in *Milton* poses a problem for the interpretation of *Jerusalem*: why is he hardly mentioned there, and in particular, if *Milton* 18 alludes to repression and social oppression in the period after 1810, why is Orc not used in referring to similar conditions in *Jerusalem*? Blake's turn to the ideas of "mercy" or "forgiveness" cannot explain the change, since that turn was explored in *Milton*, with a violent apocalyptic struggle held up as an alternative scenario resulting from the failure of the first. Nor does there seem any reason for Blake to have changed his mind about the possibility of such an outbreak. The lateness of plate 18's inclusion in *Milton*, indeed, argues against the idea that similar material is left out of *Jerusalem* because Blake had meanwhile changed his mind about the issues. Orc's near-invisibility in *Jerusalem*

must, rather, stand *parallel* to his role in *Milton*, interpreting it, further exploring its import, and suggesting a meaning for it that is not well-encompassed by the simultaneous forms Blake has developed for Orc, as serpent and chained boy.

Orc appears only once in *Jerusalem*, when Los envisions the zoas at the beginning of history: "He views the Cherub at the Tree of Life, also the Serpent / Orc the first born coild in the South: the Dragon Urizen: / Tharmas the Vegetated Tongue even the Devouring Tongue:" (14:2-4).[9] As the reference to the cherub makes clear, the passage refers to all postlapsarian history; the sequence it begins culminates two pages later with the appearance of Britain's counties and rivers in the present-day furnaces, as discussed above. Orc, then, has been a serpent "coild in the South" all this time. Though this first reference might lead us to expect repeated appearances by serpent-Orc in the poem, they do not occur. Luvah appears repeatedly, but he is not linked with Orc, even though many of his roles (e.g., as France) take over those previously associated with Orc. Further, destructive acts that might seem appropriate for Orc as serpent are regularly assigned to other characters, such as Hand (for example, in the continuation of this passage, at 15:1). I wish to avoid a full discussion of Hand and Albion's other sons, but it should be noted that Hand appears, on plate 26, with his body licked by flames that take serpentine form around his outstretched arms.[10] This iconography recalls Orc's in *America* 10, as well as that in Blake's

9. The passage has received only cursory attention; see, e.g., Paley, *Energy* 257n., *Jerusalem* commentary 152; Bloom, *Apocalypse* 423; Doskow 56. Frye is speaking impressionistically when he says that "In *Jerusalem* the name 'Orc' hardly occurs at all, except in passages explaining his identity with Luvah" (*Symmetry* 234); the implicit identification here (as the third of the "fallen" zoas) is the only such passage.

10. For some discussions, see Mitchell, *Composite Art* 181-82n., 202-203; Paley, *City* 117-18 (in cross-reference to plate 76), *Jerusalem* commentary 170 (in cross-reference to *Song of Los* 7:28); Doskow 33 (viewing Hand as "Judaism in its fallen role"); Witke 68 (identifying Hand as Newton); Warner *Language*

several views of Satan smiting Job. These similarities do not allow us to conflate Hand with Orc or Satan, but the pose has the effect of recalling Orc while transferring his negative functions to a new figure. Orc, then, is absent from the action of *Jerusalem*, even in contexts that might seem to fit his negative roles.

With Orc's absence in mind, we should notice two more points about the passage that does refer to him. First, the serpent form here — in the context of the garden and the tree — recalls *both* Orc's serpent appearances in *The Four Zoas* and his manifestation as liberatory serpent "wreath'd round the accursed tree" in the Gnostic-influenced imagery of *America* 8:1. The association with Urizen as dragon and Tharmas as vegetated tongue, however — degenerated forms of these characters — makes the negative meanings dominant. In the last scene of *Jerusalem* the serpent will reappear and humanize, suggesting Orc's redemption (98:44). The redemption is marked visually by the benign "happy snake" form at the top of plate 98; it has been anticipated by the appearance of this snake design (in differing tonalities) at intervals throughout the poem. Nevertheless, the possibility of a redeemed serpent is only a visual hint throughout most of *Jerusalem*.[11] The second point to notice about Orc on plate 14 is that he is "coild," that is, free to move and yet inactive, in a state of only potential motion. Neither his binding nor his breaking free occurs in *Jerusalem*. Un-

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105 (the pose representing "creative or demonic energy"); Rose, "Hand" 49-50. Rose's article and Curran, "Gnostic Hyle" are essential studies of Hand and Hyle respectively, countering the reductive view of these characters in terms of Blake's resentments of the Hunts and Hayley. Both, however, read Hand and Hyle less politically than I would.

11. See plates 9, 39/44, and 72, and commentaries on all four designs by Paley (*Jerusalem* 143, 201, 150, 295) and Erdman (*Illuminated Blake* 288, 318, 351, 377).

less plate 14 retroactively rewrites all Blake's previous presentations of Orc, it is telling us that as Los incorporates all past history into his present vision (13:59-60), Orc appears coiled in time's morning because now, in the present world, he exists as potential, as a snake who *may* be about to uncoil. In this case, the two roles associated with his serpent form are potentialities, and the poem will explore their meaning or meanings.

This exploration occurs on plate 45/31. The plate is part of a sequence of four, of central importance in *Jerusalem*, that focus on Albion's decline and prophesied recovery, an account of the primal Albion-Luvah conflict,[12] and the choice between vengeance and forgiveness. The portion that is of concern here begins with Los's plea for the Saviour to appear in response to oppression:

> The Twenty-eight Cities of Albion stretch their hands to thee:
> Because of the Opressors of Albion in every City & Village:
> They mock at the Labourers limbs! they mock at his starvd Children.
> They buy his Daughters that they may have power to sell his Sons:
> They compell the Poor to live upon a crust of bread by soft mild arts:
> They reduce the Man to want: then give with pomp & ceremony.
>
> (44/30:26:31)

The last two lines repeat Urizen's temptation of Orc in *The Four Zoas* (79:9, 16). This reference and the rest of Los's speech sketch a world of oppression

12. Paley calls this and related accounts the "anterior myth" of the poem (*City* 172-78, at 172). As with the Luvah myths of *The Four Zoas*, this one (which almost exactly repeats *The Four Zoas* III, 41) seems to show Luvah's aggression, and yet contains contrary threads making clear his victimization; see Chap. 4. The myth functions here on several levels to give accounts of the religious projection of the human as god, the origins of social domination, the transformation of suppressed sexuality into guilt, and the conflict between England and France.

without resistance, in which Orc's temptation and degradation have removed him as a force for positive transformation. Los's journey through London's streets, on the next plate, responds to this context by searching out the forms available for Albion's renewal. This episode deepens the analysis of what the temptation in *The Four Zoas* meant, translates it into new imaginative terms, and uses these terms to draw new political and moral conclusions.

The crucial sequence begins when "Los took his globe of fire to search the interiors of Albions / Bosom, in all the terrors of friendship, . . . / . . . to search the tempters out" (45/31:3-5). He is, then, seeking to discover those responsible for oppression and its perpetuation by deception and self-deception — what appeared in *The Four Zoas* as the contents of Urizen's book of brass. The search is fruitless:

> walking among
> Albions rocks & precipices! caves of solitude & dark despair,
> [Los] saw every Minute Particular of Albion degraded & murderd
> But saw not by whom; they were hidden within in the minute particu-
> lars
> Of which they had possessd themselves; and there they take up
> The articulations of a mans soul, and laughing throw it down
> Into the frame, then knock it out upon the plank, & souls are bak'd
> In bricks to build the pyramids of Heber & Terah. But Los
> Searchd in vain: closd from the minutia he walkd, difficult.
> . . . . . .
> enquiring in vain
> Of stones and rocks he took his way, for human form was none: (5-13,

26-27)[13]

I have already noted one central idea in this passage, the radical and bitter conception of self-oppression implied in the point that the murderers have invaded and now hide themselves in the interiors of human souls (see Chapter 2). Two further ideas need now to be examined. The first is Blake's conceptualization of dominated labor as a materialization of social and spiritual oppression; the usurped and controlled souls, invaded by their enemies, are solidified (forced by their possessors to solidify themselves) into the bricks of historical civilization. This idea is very close to Marx's conception of the transformation of living labor into dead labor materialized as capital, and the domination of this dead labor over living labor.[14] The second point is the conclusion of the search, "human form was none." Since Orc's residual form is as human youth, the narrator's words mean, among other things, that Orc is not to be found. Blake's terms express a more complex point, though, than simply referring to Orc would do. His meaning, clearly, is not that people undergoing oppression are absent, or even that rebellion is impossible; *Milton* 18 indicates that it *is* possible. Rather, "human form" here means forms untainted by the invasion of their interiors by the murderers. This situation means, first of all, that an Orc even in human form is not ready to carry out a clearly liberating rebellion; second, that a rebellion is incapable of clearly distinguishing between murderers and victims — despite the gates that the watch-fiends cannot find, too many have accepted the tortures. Such appears to have been Blake's perspective, whether or not one

13. For the geography of Los's exploration, see Erdman, "Lambeth" 189-91.

14. See *Capital* I, chaps. 8; 10, sec. 1; 25, sec. 4. Morris Eaves also detects a reference to Blake's art theory ("Machine" 202).

believes it accurate in the Britain of 1815-1820.

Los's response is a reevaluation of the idea of apocalyptic rebellion, one implied in *Milton* but presented here in specific terms. Such a reconception could conceivably argue that no rebellion is possible by the souls Los has described or that rebellion as such must be renounced. Los instead redefines the goals of social action as "pity" rather than "vengeance." Moreover, in forswearing vengeance, he is not primarily embracing pity toward the oppressors, but toward the oppressed.

> if I could find these Criminals
> I could not dare to take vengeance; for all things are so constructed
> And builded by the Divine hand, that the sinner shall always escape
> And he who takes vengeance alone is the criminal of Providence;
> If I should dare to lay my finger on a grain of sand
> In way of vengeance; I punish the already punishd; O whom
> Should I pity if I pity not the sinner who is gone astray!
> O Albion, if thou takest vengeance; if thou revengest thy wrongs
> Thou art for ever lost! (29-37)

The thought of this passage, though ultimately simple, is by no means easy to grasp, for discussions of rebellion and revolution have long been dominated by a polarity between moderate methods, compromise, and forgiveness of the exploiters or rulers, on the one hand, and extreme means, intransigence, and vengeance toward the rulers, on the other. Blake's thought here breaks with this polarity. Los's point is not that the "Criminals" deserve mercy, but that they are bound to escape and that the people themselves deserve mercy. He

argues that an effort at vengeance against those who "degraded & murderd" Albion's minute particulars would take in everyone *except* the real murderers, and that the politics of vengeance end by punishing the oppressed, "the already punishd." Hence Albion should pity his own "minute particulars." Such an argument perhaps responds equally to the antipopular actions of the French "Republic of Virtue," now far in the past; to the question of punishing those responsible for a twenty-year war supported by much of the population; and, in a visionary way, to the politics of the twentieth century, that is, to a totalitarian potential within much modern revolutionary thought, anticipated by the "overlordly" aspect of apocalyptic thinking. In sum, Los's reconsideration, though nonviolent in intention, is not primarily concerned with the wrongness of violence or even the wrongness of punishing oppressors, but with the potentially antipopular character of a politics of punishment.

Even more, the reconsideration is concerned with the narrowness of a movement closed to "sinners." In moving from the idea of punishment to that of pity or forgiveness, Los also moves from the idea of a narrow movement of the elect toward that of a movement defined in the broadest possible social terms. The conception of forgiveness becomes, in social terms, a way to reconcile the goal of social reformation with the reality of daily compromises, small-scale betrayals, demoralization, ambition at one's neighbors' expense, etc., that occur in oppressive society. Blake states in religious terms in the preface to Chapter 1, "The Spirit of Jesus is continual forgiveness of Sin: he who waits to be righteous before he enters into the Saviours kingdom, the Divine Body, will never enter there" (3, prose). In social terms, too, those who demand that Albion be righteous before he can enter the kingdom will never help him to enter.

"Forgiveness," both here and elsewhere in *Jerusalem* — whether Los or Albion is to practice it — primarily means forgiveness of Albion himself.[15]

Blake's treatment in *Jerusalem*, then, places the coiled Orc at the tree of life to signal his absence as active principle in the ensuing poem. This absence, in turn, reflects the lack of a transcendent and positive impulse to rebellion. Put another way, it reflects the fact that the symbolism of Orc, even divided into serpent and human form, is not adequate to conceptualize the parasitism of the murderers in the interiors of the murdered. Nevertheless, *Jerusalem* 45/31 coexists in a dialogic relation with the material on Orc in *Milton.* The latter uses earthquake and resurrection images from Blake's earlier works to present Orc's resistance, in the absence of a larger transcendent goal personified in Milton, as a violent apocalyptic outbreak of uncertain result. *Jerusalem* comments on the inner meaning of such an outbreak — that the Orc who would carry it out is himself infected by the oppressors' aims and goals, and that it would mean taking vengeance on Albion's "minute particulars." Hence, both *Jerusalem* and *Milton* 23 try to conceptualize an apocalypse of "mercy" or "pity," though their frames of reference are different. But *Milton* 18 is present to insist that the alternative to such an apocalypse is not quiescence, but elemental rebellion.[16]

15. Erdman views this passage as a warning against England's (Albion's) imposing a "conqueror's peace" on France (*Prophet* 470). It is true that at several points Albion's treatment of Luvah (France) is made the touchstone of his apostasy; and the following plate, 46/32, is largely concerned with Luvah. But the broad social oppression detailed on both 44/30 and 45/31 give the term "Criminals" a more general social meaning than Erdman allows.

16. The differing positions of the four pages including 45/31 in the two arrangements of Chapter 2 has a relatively slight effect on the overall meaning. The pages' position in ACF — almost at the end of Chapter 2, following the "friends" episode and just before final plates 47-48 — in effect presents Los's fruitless search through London as the result of this episode, and makes his conclusions about vengeance on 45/31 follow on his effort at coercive politics in the episode, as discussed below. This placement also gives Los's conclusion a

Los's Politics

The positive side of Blake's shift away from Orc is the working out of a more mutual and participatory idea of apocalypse than the Orc symbol explicitly provides. This idea is expressed through the religious and social symbols examined earlier, and, additionally, through Blake's increasingly complex treatment of Los. In *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, much more than before, Los becomes the emblem of mutual social activities. At the same time, in *Jerusalem* Los undergoes a series of crises that present more distinctly political problems and their solutions. These crises lead to a more long-term, mutual, and mass conception of change, with a strong emphasis on the moral preparation of the people. The crises, which center around struggles against Los's Spectre, need to be considered both for the doctrinal pronouncements they contain and as a dramatic sequence that makes Albion's awakening possible.

Viewing Los as an emblem of social activity, especially mutual social activity, implies that his efforts to bring apocalypse must also be mutual and social, and they are so presented in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. Yet Los himself is partly responsible for the common critical view that he is primarily an imaginative principle, a mental function that incorporates external time and space within itself and so controls them. Los states:

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climactic impact that the alternative arrangement does not have. The pages' position in DE — at the start of the chapter, just after initial plate 28 — seems to show the search as the motivation for seeking the aid of the "friends." This makes sense in itself, since Los has found no will to revolt in London; but the coercive attempt seems to flout Los's political conclusions in 45/31, discussed below. The DE arrangement also causes some secondary narrative confusions; see Paley, *City* 295-303.

> I am that Shadowy Prophet who Six Thousand Years ago
> Fell from my station in the Eternal bosom. Six Thousand Years
> Are finishd. I return! both Time & Space obey my will.
> I in Six Thousand Years walk up & down: for not one Moment
> Of Time is lost [. . .] (*Milton* 22:15-19)

Read in isolation, this passage suggests a mentalized conception of Los's functions, influentially argued by W. J. T. Mitchell: "Los is not a prophet of the millen[n]ium awaiting the end of [the] 'Six Thousand Years.' . . . Rather, he is concerned with redeeming all the 'nows' of human time" (*Composite Art* 168).[17] Paradoxically, however, time and space do *not* obey Los's will, for he tells his sons, in a passage examined above, that they were placed on earth "With powers fitted to circumscribe this dark Satanic death / . . . / But how this is as yet we know not, and we cannot know; / Till Albion is arisen" (23:51, 53-54). The historicity of Los's claims means that he is not master of time in the purely memorializing sense commonly understood; Los and his sons are engaged in a collective labor *in* time, not a labor of pure imagination. Los's words to Palamabron and Rintrah present apocalypse as an event that must occur in time, though it ends time as we know it. And it is an event that cannot be realized by Los and his sons alone, but only by Albion, humanity as a whole. The further statement, "how this is as yet we know not, and we cannot know[,]" is of great importance, because it means that the prophets must work without foreknowledge or assurance of success, and so without the arrogance and dogmatism such

17. Mitchell's comment is on the cognate passage in *Jerusalem*, 75:7-8. Los's claim is also made in substantially the same terms by the narrator in *Jerusalem* 13:59-60, as examined below.

assurance brings. This admission of a lack of knowledge of the timing or means of apocalypse is a step away from the claims of apocalyptic discourse to superior knowledge, a key aspect of the "overlordly" character of this discourse.

If not in an internalized sense, Los and his sons nevertheless *are* masters of time in two social, collective ways. First, prophecy holds all past time present in the mind to be redeemed *by* apocalyptic regeneration; the function of prophecy is to make this time available to *us*, in the present. By retaining past time, Los's prophetic remembrance contributes to Albion's awakening and his consciousness of his tasks.[18] It is in this sense that Los says that even the "Workhouses of Og & Anak" are "Permanent, & not lost not lost nor vanishd" (*Jerusalem* 13:57, 60); if they could vanish, past oppression could never be redeemed. In exactly this sense, Walter Benjamin, one of the few Marxist writers to incorporate an apocalyptic conception of time into his sense of history, states that "nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history," and that "only for a redeemed mankind [*sic*] has the past become citable in all its moments. Each moment it has lived becomes a *citation à l'ordre du jour* — and that day is Judgment Day" (254).[19] And in this role, as guardian

18. Edward J. Rose notes the correspondence of Blake's conception to that of *Kairos*, defined by Paul Tillich as "fulfilled time — the time in which the appearance of Christ was possible" and "the moment of history in which the preparatory period of history comes to an end because that for which it was preparation has become the historical reality" (Tillich, "Kairos," in *A Handbook of Christian Theology*, Cleveland, 1965, qtd. in Rose, "Pilgrim" 83, 84). This generally excellent discussion dehistoricizes Tillich, however, by redefining "historical reality" as "the *perception* gained through 'Kairos'-oriented action or experience" (84; my emphasis).

19. Jerome J. McGann misses the *active* sense of recovery in calling Los's words "a wilful distortion of the truth in an effort to supply what is ultimately a Christian consolation for the losses we suffer and endure" (*Towards a Literature of Knowledge* 34). McGann cites the version of Los's statement in *Milton* (20:18-20, copy C; 22:18-20 in *E*), as quoted above.

of apocalyptic time, Los works *with* his sons in an enterprise that must be, despite dissensions, collaborative: "*We* were placed here," he reminds them, and he tells Blake that past things "vanish not from me *& mine*" (*Milton* 23:50, 22:23; my emphasis).

In a second sense, Los's sons actually *create* time: "others of the Sons of Los build Moments & Minutes & Hours / And Days & Months & Years & Ages & Periods" (*Milton* 28:44-45). But in this sense, too, Los and his sons cannot make of time whatever they wish; they are embodiments of social processes that have created historical time, rather than autonomous agents of mental process. This passage is part of a sequence, detailing Los's furnaces and the environs of Bowlahoola, that describes the creation of human reality, including commerce, classes, war, sexuality, and perception, by imaginative faculties conceived as millions of people. (Theotormon and Sotha, it will be recalled, number "seven million & seven thousand & seven hundred" [28:22].) The imagination that has created these aspects of reality is human social imagination; its products are real ones, in the social world, which can also be changed by similar processes of social — but not individual — imagination. It is for this reason that the labors of Los and his sons must await the awakening of Albion.

One implication of the plural character of Los, his sons and daughters, and their labors is that when Los speaks to them or, more generally, to the apocalyptic laborers, he is speaking to real working people, as becomes clear in *Milton* 25:

> And Los stood & cried to the Labourers of the Vintage in voice of awe.

Fellow Labourers! The Great Vintage & Harvest is now upon Earth
The whole extent of the Globe is explored: Every scatterd Atom
Of Human Intellect now is flocking to the sound of the Trumpet
All the Wisdom which was hidden in caves & dens, from ancient
Time; is now sought out from Animal & Vegetable & Mineral
The Awakener is come. outstretched over Europe! the Vision of God is
fulfilled
The Ancient Man upon the Rock of Albion Awakes,
He listens to the sounds of War astonishd & ashamed;
He sees his Children mock at Faith and deny Providence
Therefore you must bind the Sheaves not by Nations or Families
You shall bind them in Three Classes; according to their Classes
So shall you bind them. Separating What has been Mixed
Since Men began to be Wove into Nations by Rahab & Tirzah
Since Albions Death & Satans Cutting-off from our awful Fields;
When under pretence to benevolence the Elect Subdud All
From the Foundations of the World. (16-32)

So entrenched are metaphoric readings of Blake that we miss the obvious: this speech to the apocalyptic laborers is also a trade union speech. It opens with a form of address used in many such speeches, views nineteenth-century exploration and science as signs of the maturing of a popular awakening, and broaches a class analysis of society.[20] (More specifically, it argues against nationalist and dynastic conceptions as contributing causes of war.) I court a charge of simplifi-

20. For the development of the language of class in the later eighteenth century, particularly the emergence of the idea of a "laboring" class, see Corfield *passim*.

cation because I think criticism has been guilty of this vice in ignoring such ways of reading Blake. Each of these elements of contemporary social discourse is replicated in a second apocalyptic sense, but these leave the first senses intact. Blake's "classes," for example, are mental or spiritual categories that crosscut social class lines. But only a reductionist approach fails to see that they are also related to social classes and are superimposed on a social class structure more often than they violate it: "artificial riches / They give to scorn, & their possessors to trouble & sorrow & care" (*Milton* 28:31-32). Los, then, at the same time addresses workers in spiritual vineyards, and makes clear that real workers in the nineteenth century can undo the subjection of "All" by the Elect.[21]

Los's sons' creation, and his fellow laborers' maturing of the vintage, then, are both imaginative, and also material, social processes; the terms Blake uses carry this double meaning within them. In either case, however, they are *plural* processes, to be realized by communities rather than by individual imagination.

The negative sides of Los's activities, and the corrective processes that offset them, are likewise traceable to the collective nature of his labors. Los, we know, is the prophet who "Six Thousand Years ago / Fell from my station." As such he bears central responsibility for earthly evils; and this responsibility is not merely passive but active — he has helped bring the evils about. In the version of this speech in *The Four Zoas*, he makes this clear by adding, "I also have pierced the Lamb of God" (105 [113]:52, *E*380); Los's responsibility for the rule of Satan is likewise a major point of the Bard's Song in *Milton* (7:4-13). A similar point is made in *Jerusalem*: when the Spectre, as noted earlier, looks

21. The classes are detailed in the continuation of this passage, 25:32-41, and more briefly at 7:1-3. Their application to individuals is qualified by the doctrine of states, here expressed at 32:10-29.

into the furnaces and sees "to Babel & Shinar / Across all Europe & Asia," he also sees "that Los was *the sole, uncontrolld Lord of the Furnaces.*" Los, then, must be responsible for the acts of Hand and Albion's other sons, who "labour mightily / In the wars of *Babel & Shinar.*" (8:23-24, 26, 41-42; my emphasis.) Ultimately, then, all historical processes, both destructive and regenerative — the creation of moral law, sexual division, and war, and the struggles against them — are products of the furnaces, and so of Los's labors. Such a conclusion should not surprise us once we stop thinking of Los simply as "imagination" or "prophecy," and begin thinking of him and his children as human labor in history.

Simultaneously, Los's labors *are* redemptive, but in a mixed, contradictory way: in the continuation of this passage, he struggles against Hand, working "to form the spiritual sword" against the sword of war, and yet he produces suffering: "I behold the soft affections / Condense beneath my hammer into forms of cruelty / But still I labour in hope, tho' still my tears flow down" (9:18, 26-28).[22] In its most immediate historical context, the passage recognizes that the laborers and artisans who struggled against "Hand" in the movement of the 1790s also, necessarily, produced the ships and weapons of war, and in general the wealth and power, of Britain's rulers. More generally, the passage acknowledges that labor and imagination have created *all* human culture, necessarily an oppressive culture, and yet are the only forces that can struggle to transform that culture. In such passages, Blake moves beyond the treatment of Los in his earlier works, which I have characterized as showing a collusive rivalry with Urizen. (See Chap. 3.) In *Milton* and particularly in *Jerusalem*, Urizen all but dis-

22. Bloom explains this passage for us: "the themes of apocalyptic poetry are fearful" (*Apocalypse* 415). Paley quotes 9:17-20, on the spiritual sword, but does not refer to these lines (*City* 237). Deen does recognize that real cruelty is involved here, though he softens the lines' impact (208).

appears and his negative aspects are subsumed within Los and his children. The fundamental point remains that human imagination and labor have created the structures of psychic and social oppression within which we live, but the emphasis is far more on the activities of Los and his children, in all their complexity and contradictory character, as the sum and substance of human social life.

The collaborative quality of labor in the furnaces means that the redemptive actions that take place in them are also collaborative. This is so in a relatively trivial sense that, nevertheless, has not been sufficiently recognized: Los has collaborators who are essential to his labors and must not be lumped under his name as if they merely metaphorized his labors. And it is true in a more profound sense: Los is prey to repeated errors, such as his awarding the horses of Palamabron to Satan and his initial effort to block Milton's return, in *Milton*, and his attempt to save Albion against his will, in *Jerusalem* (*Milton* 7:10, 17:35-36; *Jerusalem* 39/44:2-3). He corrects these errors sometimes through his own bitter experience and sometimes through the collaboration of the larger community — as in the *Jerusalem* episode, discussed below. That collaborative labor contributes to Los's own salvation, as well, appears in one of the main redemptive actions in *Jerusalem*, the emergence of Erin. In the continuation of the passage on the furnaces that I have been examining, "The Spaces of Erin [are] perfected in the furnaces / Of affliction" as the first fruit of the Spectre's forced labor for Los (9:34-35). Historically, as Erdman has shown, this event corresponds to the reemergence of the Irish emancipation movement in 1810-12, after its crushing in 1798 and 1803 (*Prophet* 481-84). Here, too, Los's labor is contradictory. The Spaces are perfected in the furnaces *of affliction*, and the affliction must refer in part to the terrible slaughters and deportations of 1798-

1803. Los as English labor and imagination, then, striving to forge the spiritual sword but creating "forms of cruelty," is partly to blame for the afflictions suffered by the Irish fighters and peasants; and yet these have tempered Erin.

In turn, this tempering helps in the emancipation of *Los*. After Los's labors have brought forth his sons and daughters and Erin from the furnaces,

> all wept with joy together!
> They feard they never more should see their Father, who
> Was built in from Eternity, in the Cliffs of Albion.
>
> But when the joy of meeting was exhausted in loving embrace;
> Again they lament. O what shall we do for lovely Jerusalem?
> To protect the Emanations of Albions mighty ones from cruelty?
> (11:13-18)

While Los has brought Erin from the furnaces, her emergence in turn saves Los from petrifaction, enclosure in the cliffs of Albion. The redemptive actions, then, are mutual; Erin can be saved only by Los, but Los is saved partly by Erin. Further, those saved recognize that they must continue a *joint* labor: "what shall *we* do for lovely Jerusalem?" (my emphasis).

Los's labors for humanity, then, are collaborative. It is true that Blake frequently lets Los represent all the laborers by synecdoche and that, in a more sinister way, Los himself frequently uses the language of domination to describe the labors (e.g., *Jerusalem* 17:35-41). But in their positive senses, Los and his sons and daughters form a cluster of figures, a redemptive community headed by Los and joined by Erin, and struggling jointly against the works of Hand. Be-

cause such communities embody, in a small way, the unity of humanity, they are also portions of the Divine Family; that is why these characters, appearing in the continuation of this passage as the "Labourers in the Furnaces," are also seen to be God, as noted earlier (11:10-20).

The crises that Los undergoes in the course of *Jerusalem* are all related to the unity between his fate and Albion's. They are a series of confrontations with individual or elitist conceptions of Los's role — as poet-prophet, but also as a figure for human social labor. Simultaneously, the crises embody considerations of a series of political dilemmas growing out of the failure of the revolutionary efforts of the 1790s; they reflect on problems posed by Jacobin doctrine, by the English reform movement of the time, and, in part, by its intellectual history, traced back to Blake's continual point of reference, Milton.

The crises form an ideological sequence that starts with Los's temptation by his Spectre to give up his commitment to Albion; continues through considerations of revolutionary violence and dictatorship, and of non-resistance to authority; and concludes, in a final confrontation with the Spectre, in a renunciation of abstraction that fuses Blake's concerns in religion, philosophy, art, and politics. The sequential quality of these crises partly calls in question the conception that *Jerusalem* is an entirely synchronous poem. As argued by W. J. T. Mitchell, this now-common view sees *Jerusalem* not as "an odyssey [or] a series of labors," but "an encyclopedic vision"; this quality is shown partly by the fact that Los, "threatened by his own Spectre and Emanation" in the first few pages, is "in exactly the same position" just before the apocalyptic ending — he "has not increased his mastery over the rebellious tendencies in his own soul" because this process can only be a continuous struggle (*Composite Art* 170-71).[23]

23. For similar viewpoints, see Paley, *City* 278-314 *passim*; Curran, "Struc-

Yet, while the large-scale structure of *Jerusalem* remains non-linear — with such events as Albion's dying words and Luvah's crucifixion repeated in different chapters — some events occur in sequences that are not recursive, and are intellectually meaningful. If Los confronts his Spectre and his own conceptions over a series of related but distinct issues, whose resolutions lead from one to the next, then his situation at the poem's end is not "exactly the same" as at the start, though indeed the struggle against selfhood is continuous. If additionally, the conclusion of these crises can be shown to condition Albion's awakening, then the poem's final apocalyptic moment is reconnected to the work's central portions, from which it was detached by the views of Mitchell, Paley, and others that it is an essentially unmotivated event.[24]

Los's initial crisis (6:1-11:6) occurs when the Spectre urges him to abandon Albion. This temptation has several aspects, not all immediately obvious. On one level it is poetic, a confrontation over the artist's responsibilities and the dedication to public and prophetic, rather than private, merely decorative, or official art. The character of both *Milton* and *Jerusalem* as embodiments of Blake's own artistic crisis has been much discussed, and on this point, it need only be added that the temptation of success and triviality has a political dimension — it is in part an invitation to produce those artistic betrayals of Albion

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tures" *passim*. Mitchell, while denying progression, proposes a structure based on generic divisions corresponding to the work's chapters; Curran proposes several distinct structures superimposed on one another, all nonprogressive; Paley sees the poem as fully synchronous, essentially without structure. All except some portion of the opening and closing pages, which show a more definite progression — though they define these bracketing sections variously. For a relatively recent counterstatement, see Witke 35 and *passim*; for earlier views, see citations by Mitchell (170-72nn.), Paley (278-83), and Witke (35n.).

24. See *Composite Art* 171; *City* 230-32, 289-90, 295, and elsewhere; Curran, "Structures" 340-41.

which *Jerusalem* answers *inter alia*. On a second level, that of Los's identity as labor, the confrontation represents a choice between individualism or narrow craft interest, on the one hand, and maintaining the solidarity of labor and its responsibility for the liberties of the nation, on the other. Los's choice, that is, reflects historic choices actually faced in the 1810s and 1820s by the emerging labor movement. Finally, in the aspect I wish to explore in detail, the crisis is political, over whether to maintain or abandon a dedication to social transformation.

In this sequence, as elsewhere, the Spectre is identified in various ways: he is Los's "Pride & Self-Righteousness," offering "temptations of doubt & despair," and also "the Reasoning Power / An Abstract objecting [i.e., objectifying] power" (8:30, 10:33, 10:13-14).[25] More important than the Spectre's general nature is the way all these qualities — pride and self-righteousness, doubt and despair, and abstract reasoning — work to undermine a commitment to human transformation. We may link Los's situation to the specific political situation in England in 1810-20, with the popular radicalism of the 1790s well in the past, much of the public backing the war, and the reform agitation appearing to make no headway; or we may link it to the broader situation of the prophet in a time of backsliding — the situation of Milton in 1660, for example, to which Blake will

25. Aside from those I shall examine, major episodes involving Los's Spectre in *Jerusalem* occur on plates 17, 44/30, and 83; Albion's Spectre appears on 29/33, 53-54, 64-65; a passage on 32/36-33/37 involves Albion's Spectre/spectral sons (i.e., Hand, etc.) in potential opposition to Los's Spectre; Luvah is Albion's Spectre on 60. The most frequently used descriptive term for the Spectre in all its forms is "Rational Power," or synonyms of this idea (e.g., 36:23, 54:7, 64:5, 74:10, and in *Milton*, 40:34), but as this power, for Blake, is everything opposed to faith and prophecy, the roles of the Spectre in different situations must be addressed specifically. On Los as Urthona's Spectre, see Paley, *City* 273 and n.

turn elsewhere. In such a situation, the "Reasoning Power" prompts acceptance of "how the world works," since it is divided from a positive imagination tied by memory and inspiration to past struggles and a belief in future transformation. In the Spectre's voice we may hear the mingled strains of revolutionary arrogance — the rebel's sense of being superior to those he or she means to serve — and despair and cynicism over the people's "ingratitude." And we understand that the voice is Los's, Los's own counsel of arrogance and despair "bitterly cursing him for his friendship / To Albion, suggesting murderous thoughts against Albion" and insinuating that Albion "drinks thee up like water! like wine he pours thee / Into his tuns" (6:6-7, 7:11-12).

Even more, we hear the belief that the ruling reality is the only one possible:

> His spectre driv'n by the Starry Wheels of Albions sons, black and
> Opake divided from his back; he labours and he mourns!
> For as his Emanation divided, his Spectre also divided
> In terror of those starry wheels (6:1-4)

The fusion of the stars and wheels — the stars of the natural universe, the wheels of their courses but also of mills and oppression — is a frequent trope in Blake. But it is particularly brilliant here because it suggests how conceptions of nature and reality play a crucial role in perpetuating oppression. In this situation the need is to subordinate rationality to positive imagination, specifically an imagination that believes in the possibility of transformation. Los's furious commands to the Spectre to obey his behests (e.g., 8:10-15) are aimed at forcing doubt, self-regard, and rationality to obey an unprovable belief that "the time

will arrive, / When all Albions injuries shall cease, and when we shall / Embrace him tenfold bright, rising from his tomb in immortality." (7:54-56)

The specific form this belief takes, however, still needs to be specified. The Spectre's direct charge against Los is not that he believes in Albion's power to rise again; it is that he *forgives* Albion. The Spectre tells Los that the spectres of Albion's sons "mock" him, that Los's palaces lie in ruins "because of deceit and friendship" (for Albion), that Hand, Hyle, and Coban cover the biblical east "in a woven mantle of pestilence & war"; and he challenges:

> This has divided thee in sunder: and wilt thou still forgive? (7:15-20, 27)

While the Spectre cites the acts of Albion's sons, his indictment of them motivates a larger attack on forgiveness toward Albion himself. The sons correspond in part to the English ruling class, the authorities that act during Albion's sleep and are directly responsible for war and oppression. Neither the Spectre's blandishments nor Blake's real indictment, however, can be neatly restricted to the governing classes. The sons' rule includes religious, sexual, and artistic, as well as political aspects;[26] and the elaboration of parallel roles for Albion's daughters enlarges upon the psychic underpinnings of oppression. Finally, the filial relation of the sons and daughters to Albion makes clear that the ruling class cannot be thought of as fully alien to the oppressed; here as elsewhere in his late work, Blake is concerned with the fact that the people are not held down through force alone but partly accept the legitimacy of their situation.

26. Additionally, in a suggestive if not fully convincing analysis, Joanna Witke identifies the sons with specific figures in British philosophy (59-76 and elsewhere).

Nevertheless, if Albion is not fully separated from his sons and daughters, he clearly has a special function as the mistaken people as a whole. The Spectre's criticism is aimed at Los's devotion to Albion in this sense, as recognized by Los's reply:

> I act not for myself: for Albions sake
> I now am what I am: a horror and an astonishment (8:17-18)

Los's belief is not that the people are or will become perfect; we will see later that Blake repudiates this idea. Rather, Los's idea is similar to the doctrine of states as Erin applies it to Luvah: "Satan is the State of Death, & not a Human existence: / But Luvah is named Satan, because he has enterd that State. / A World where Man is by Nature the enemy of Man" (49:67-69). As Erin enunciates it, the doctrine has three aspects. First, Satan is a *social* conception, a situation of social war — atomization, class and international struggle, and the struggle of all against all within competitive society. Second, Erin's distinction is not merely between states and individuals, as in earlier formulations of the principle (e.g., *Milton* 32:10-38); it also distinguishes states from collective entities, such as Luvah (here probably as France) or Albion. Most important for my purposes, forgiveness does not involve accepting the *acts* of Albion's sons: it is necessary to "remove from Albion these terrible Surfaces" (49:76). The surfaces allude to the opaque rocks and grains into which Los cannot see (plate 45/31) and to the "Cities & Villages of Albion [that become] Rock & Sand / Unhumanized" (63:18). That is, they are people, indifferent to one another, and communities that have solidified into structures of institutions rather than direct human relations. The surfaces are the excrescences that block these

relations — in one sense institutions, in another oppressive classes, in a third false doctrines. This emphasis on removing the surfaces from Albion preserves the radicalism of what might otherwise be a doctrine of social conciliation.

Hence, forgiveness is a complex act of settling accounts with oppression while forgiving the humanity that allowed it. When the Daughters of Beulah respond to Erin, in the closing lines of Chapter 2, that "to let the Sun go down / In a remembrance of the Sin: is a Woe & a Horror!" (50:27-28), the remembrance they condemn is that of *Albion's* sin; Albion, the common people, must be taken exactly as they are if they are to awaken to resurrection. It is in this sense that the Spectre challenges, and Los affirms, forgiveness of Albion.

Intellectually, Los's choice to remain faithful to Albion leads to a second set of choices, posed on 45/31, which enlarge the meanings already discussed for this crucial plate. In part these concern retributive justice, as seen above, but an additional issue is implied in Los's function as prophet. In this role, he is not simply a carrier of historic memory and imaginative possibility; he is also a public tribune and leader, like Milton. The prophet-tribune in a time of inaction and internalized oppression, like that portrayed on this plate, faces the political question of whether a radical minority may exercise power for the intended benefit of the unenlightened people. The example of Milton is pertinent here, for Milton historically addressed this question in the closing months of the Commonwealth.

It will be remembered that the attitude to revolutionary dictatorship — the French terror in particular — was a concern of the wine presses episode in *The Four Zoas.* Such matters may seem remote from the English scene. But they are implied in the popular demoralization Blake depicts. Moreover, some

events in the two decades after the 1790s did raise issues of conspiracy, minority action, and a current within overall radical opinion favorable to what today would be called the *coup d'état* and minority rule. These events include the execution of Col. Edward Despard in 1803, on charges of plotting the death of the king; the assassination of Perceval in 1812; the government charges of seditious conspiracy in 1816-17; the activities of Spencean revolutionary groups, whose agrarian-radical program was to be "implemented by a revolutionary uprising or *coup d'état*" (Worrall, *Culture* 2); and, postdating the assumed completion of *Jerusalem*, the Cato Street Conspiracy of 1820, a largely Spencean undertaking based on the intention of proclaiming a provisional government after assassinating the cabinet.[27]

The intertwined issues of conspiracy, violence, retribution, and dictatorship are not easily untangled, and are not clearly separated on plate 45/31. The specific issue of dictatorship is raised by allusion, however, in lines 26-27: "enquiring in vain / Of stones and rocks he took his way, for human form was none[.]" The stones and rocks are those of Albion's "terrible surfaces," as mentioned above, but they are also those of Milton's peroration in the *Readie and Easie Way*: "Thus much I should perhaps have said though I were sure I should have spoken only to trees and stones; and had none to cry to, but with the Prophet, *O earth, earth, earth!* to tell the very soil it self, what her perverse inhabitants are deaf to" (462-63). Blake's quotation movingly invokes Milton's

27. For Cato Street, see Thompson, *Making* 700-709; Worrall, *Culture* 187-200; McCalman 137-39; Hone 303-307, 347-51. As all these writers note, nearly all that we know of this action comes from government spies, who also played a key role in fomenting it; but the main outlines of the story are well established. Worrall notes the "clear lack of popular support" for the action (191).

sense of isolation, but it pointedly revises his solution. Milton's proposal for a perpetual parliament to substitute for "a misguided and abus'd multitude" (463) is exactly what Los rejects through his decision in favor of forgiveness, with its implication of trust in an imperfect, sinning Albion.[28] The contrast is underlined by a second echo. Los's perception of the minute particulars, "the jewels of Albion, running down / The kennels of the streets & lanes as if they were abhorrd" (17-18) recalls Milton's hope for an enlightened minority to exhort the people "to keep their due channell" (463), but rejects its political content; Blake's language presents the "due channell[s]" of enlightened authoritarianism as the gutters (kennels) of oppression. Milton's pamphlet, it should be noted, was understood in Blake's lifetime as a republican manifesto, having been republished in 1791 during the French Revolution controversy and advertised as "a complete answer to Mr. Burke" (Pendleton 74, 92).[29] Blake's criticism of Milton was also a judgment on the radicalism of the 1790s and later.

The wrongness of radical coercion is stressed, as well, in the "friends of Albion" episode. While Erdman has viewed these pages as referring to antiwar agitation, one sequence within them has a far broader meaning. Following the assembly of the "friends" or cathedral cities at Los's call (36/40), the cities plead for God's intervention (38/43:11). Los in fury demands that instead they

28. The dictatorial implications of Milton's peroration are a good deal stronger in the first edn. (written when he had more hope that the proposal could be effected), which reads, " . . . to tell the verie soil itself, what God hath determined" (388). The allusion is to Jer. 22:24-30, in which God decrees that the exiled king Coniah shall never return; Coniah is explicitly mentioned in the first edn. The revision in the second edn., which I quote, accepts the probability of Charles's return. It should be noted that Milton softens the program of a perpetual parliament with several compromise proposals, e.g., periodic indirect elections or the direct election of a third of the members every few years (438, 461).

29. I am indebted to Janice H. Peritz for this reference.

rely on "ourselves in whom God dwells / . . . to save the falling Man" (13-14). After a powerful indictment by Los of several Blakean targets, at Los's instigation

> They [the friends] Albion surround *with kindest violence* to bear him back
> *Against his will* thro Los's Gate *to Eden*: (39/44:2-3; my emphasis)[30]

The scope of this effort goes beyond ending the war. It is an effort to restore Eden — to institute an apocalyptic overturn or, in secular terms, a social revolution — by benevolent coercion against the will of the people. The outcome is disastrous: Albion resists and the universe becomes dark (5-17), leading to a doctrinal renunciation of such efforts, at least *pro tempore*: "The Will must not be bended but in the day of Divine / Power" (18-19). In retrospect, the attempt seems an error by Los, one of many through which he proceeds the hard way toward greater understanding. This episode, then, complements Los's inquiry of the "stones and rocks" and his revision of Milton's stance on plate 45/31.[31] In both cases, Blake's text considers and rejects exercising power against the popular will — Milton's initial response to the weakening of support for the revolu-

30. "They" has no definite reference. It seems to repeat "They" in 38/43:1, which itself lacks a clear referent. 38/43:1 probably refers to all twenty-eight cities (mentioned at 37/41:23), but perhaps to the four chief cities, and conceivably to the four zoas (mentioned at 37/41:26). In copies D and E, plate 42 comes between [37] 41 and [38] 43; the twenty-four lesser cities, mentioned at 42:48, 65, provide an alternative, slightly less logical antecedent for "They" at [38] 43:1. (In A, C, and F, 42 comes at the end of the "friends" sequence, after 41 [46]; its number is the same in both arrangements.)

31. The "friends" episode precedes the sequence that includes 45/31 in copies ACF, and follows it, after intervening material, in DE; see note on that plate, above.

tionary cause, and a feature of much modern revolutionary thought. And, in both cases, Blake's text rejects this course not because a revolutionary dictatorship would punish the oppressors, but for the socially more radical reason that it would punish the oppressed.

"*I can at will expatiate in the Gardens of bliss*; / But pangs of love draw me down to my loins . . . / . . . O Albion! my brother! / Corruptibility appears upon thy limbs, and never more / Can I arise and leave thy side[.]" Blake's text does not reject only Milton's initial response to revolutionary failure. It rejects his second as well — for what are these words of Los but a response to Michael's promise to Adam of "A paradise within thee, happier far"? (*Jerusalem* 82:82-83:2, my emphasis; *Paradise Lost*, XII:587.) While Milton's thought in this passage is complex, Blake's words respond to its central problem, an interior conception of redemption that denies ties of brotherhood or, at best, subsumes them under the catchall heading of "Love, / By name to come call'd Charity" (583-84). Blake's response, an oblique one, seizes the qualification in Milton's text and uses it to deny the conclusion: an inner garden is attainable, but the call of love leads away from it toward brotherhood. This realization is perhaps the core of Blake's conception of social radicalism. In the real historical world, underneath the calculus of mutual self-interest, it is perhaps the real core of working-class solidarity.

But this third of Los's lessons is the subject of a complex drama. As Los's decision to dedicate himself to Albion's awakening generated the further question of whether this work would be coercive, so the decision that it will not leads on to new choices. Los must now decide whether to continue active resistance to the ruling power or to abandon it for a kind of spiritual opposition; he must

decide, too, whether such opposition will be itself active and public or a kind of "internal emigration," a dedication to the self-sufficient world of art. Los's choice has elements of all these options and creates contradictions of its own. It is given in a continuation of the "Gardens of bliss" passage. After a catalogue of social and sexual repressions, Los goes on:

> Let Cambel and her Sisters sit within the Mundane Shell:
> Forming the fluctuating Globe according to their will.
> . . . . . .
> [. . .] so these Females shall fold & unfold
> According to their will the outside surface of the Earth
> An outside shadowy Surface superadded to the real Surface
> Which is unchangeable for ever & ever Amen: so be it! (83:33-34, 45-48)

This is a declaration of absolute non-resistance to secular authority: the "outside surface of the Earth" must mean the whole world of material social life, and the sisters are to form it "according to their will." Los is not, as a "stage" theory of revolution might have it, ceding the struggle for social equality to the future and concentrating upon defense of democratic rights; he is ceding secular power unconditionally. Apparently, too, Los opts for cultivating an "unchangeable" inner spiritual-aesthetic realm separable from the "outside shadowy Surface."[32]

32. Los's viewpoint corresponds to several of Blake's own remarks during his later years, such as his comment to Crabb Robinson in 1825 that Jesus "should not have attacked the government[;] he had no business with such matters" (*Blake Records* 311), and the exclamation in the so-called "Public Address" (1809-10), "I am really sorry to see my Countrymen trouble themselves about politics. If Men were Wise the Most arbitrary Princes could not hurt them If they are not Wise the Freest Government is compelld to be a Tyranny" (*E*580). I shall argue, however, that Blake's treatment in *Jerusalem* is more am-

Los's declaration follows a complex episode involving Albion's daughters Gwendolen and Cambel, the "emanations" of Hyle and Hand, respectively (hence his reference to Cambel). Beginning with Gwendolen's hiding of a "Falshood" in her left hand and her attempt to materialize Hyle as an infant under her own power, the episode continues through the failure of this effort to a moment of apparent repentance, when first Cambel and then Gwendolen are drawn into Los's furnaces in "tears & pain" to "give their souls away" (82:76-79).[33] Los, "comforted at his Furnaces" (line 80), offers his speech in response. Hence, the whole episode, including Los's speech, would seem to embody the idea that non-resistance and spiritual witness can soften or win over the forces of tyranny. Los's speech has a seemingly positive result: "Swift turn the silver spindles, & the golden weights play soft / And lulling harmonies beneath the Looms" (83:69-70). The Looms are those of the Daughters of Beulah, and appear as a counterbalance to those of Vala/Rahab, whose spindles have spun war and oppression (64:32-33, 80:32). Such a reading requires, perhaps, only that we ignore the usual meaning of "soft and lulling" as "deceptive" in Blake's vocabulary.

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biguous than a simple rejection of worldly politics. It should be note too that this document, though regularly cited in Blake studies as if it were in fact a "Public Address," is a series of draft notes never issued or copied — in form, a set of loosely integrated, out-of-order paragraphs on many separate *Notebook* pages. (The title, drawn from a sentence in one of the fragments, was supplied by Gilchrist in 1863.) The brief comments on politics are not related to other material on their page and only slightly related to the discussion two pages later where Keynes and Erdman insert them (see *Notebook* 18-20 and transcripts; *E*580; Keynes 598-600). They may, in fact, be simply an *aperçu* jotted in available white space.

33. Paley, "Woman" 288-90, first proposed that this passage parodies the supposed virgin pregnancy of Joanna Southcott; see Frye, *Symmetry* 402 for a more generalized reading.

But any simple reading of Los's words is undermined and finally destroyed by Blake's text. Los's speech continues in words that assume no softening of tyranny or of moral opposition:

> The land is markd for desolation & unless we plant
> The seeds of Cities & of Villages in the Human bosom
> Albion must be a rock of blood: mark ye the points.
> Where Cities shall remain & where Villages[;] for the rest!
> It must lie in confusion till Albions time of awaking.
> . . . . . .
> The night falls thick: I go upon my watch: be attentive:
> The Sons of Albion go forth; I follow from my Furnaces:
> That they return no more: that a place be prepared upon Euphrates
> Listen to your Watchmans voice: sleep not before the Furnaces
> Eternal Death stands at the door. O God pity our labours. (54-58, 61-65)

If an attitude of non-resistance to authority, these words express also a spiritual militancy that aims to counter Cambel's work and prepare for a future waking by actively planting "the seeds of Cities & of Villages," that is, of unified collectivities of people.

At the same time, the premise of Los's abdication to Cambel in the secular world — a distinction between an untouchable inner realm and Cambel's sway over the "outside surface" — is ultimately untenable. Los recognizes that Cambel's realm

> Sometimes . . . shall assimilate with mighty Golgonooza:

Touching its summits: & sometimes divided roll apart (43-44)

Golgonooza is not immune to Cambel's touch; Los's relinquishment of secular struggle contains its own contradiction, and ends in a partial abandonment of its own premises. Rather than the perspectives of building a stable inner realm, slowly converting society to more humane attitudes, or immediately converting Cambel and her sisters by example or pleas, Blake's text indicates a trading of space for time in a desperately unequal struggle to prepare some counterweight to impending "desolation."

The narrative aftermath of Los's speech corroborates and extends this analysis. In one of those startling reversals Blake handles so brilliantly, the seeming repentance of Albion's daughters is revealed as deceptive, as they pray to Los for power to "subdue" the "terrors" of Hand, and then

> unit[e] into One
> With Rahab as she turnd the iron Spindle of destruction.
> Terrified at the Sons of Albion they took the Falshood which
> Gwendolen hid in her left hand. it grew &, grew [. . .] (84:29-33)

The daughters have asked Los for power *for themselves.* Their prayer, though phrased in terms borrowed from his own speech ("The night falls thick," line 20), replicates Gwendolen's effort to dominate Hyle, and continues the action of giving form to the "Falshood," as if the intervening episode had not happened. Indeed, Los himself has already acceded to their request in his own speech, as his payment, in effect, for the time needed to plant the "seeds"; his acquiescence to Cambel and her sisters forming the globe "according to their will" refers to the same action as their prayer to him for power.[34]

As the sequence continues, the daughters develop the falsehood into a space called "Canaan" — i.e, the "fallen" world of history — into which Los enters with Reuben and gives "a Time & Revolution to the Space Six Thousand Years" (85:6).[35] Los's act of non-resistance is now revealed to have a double time-frame: it occurs both in the poem's present time and retroactively in the time of human history; the ensuing pages (86-88), including material on the origins of sexual division and on modern imperialism, make this double perspective clear. Los's cession of mundane power to Cambel and the other daughters of Albion, then, is seen to be similar to the acts by which, in *Urizen* and the *Book of Los*, he gave form to Urizen and, in *The Four Zoas* and *Milton*, "Six Thousand Years ago / Fell from my station" (*Milton* 22:15; cf. *The Four Zoas* 105 [113]:48, *E*380). Each of these episodes involves the creation of the world of human history and oppression.

It is true that Gwendolen's "Falshood is prophetic" (*Jerusalem* 82:20); the ultimately creative content of human art and labor, in spite of their leasing-out

34. Most commentary has treated the daughters' plea to Los as genuine repentance; see Curran, "Structures" 335, 337-38, 343, and Witke, who recognizes the delusiveness of Cambel and Gwendolen's repentance on plate 82 but reads the unification with Rahab on 84 as a redemptive advance "toward exposing the false foundations of art" (189-92, at 192). Paley reverses the insight, taking the two daughters' repentance on 82 as good coin but emphasizing the hypocrisy of that on 84 (*City* 229, 223-24).

35. On Canaan, see *Milton* 9:30-10:10; *Jerusalem* 63:39-64:5; Damon, *Dictionary* 67; Bloom, *Apocalypse* 470. Biblical Canaan was, of course, the promised land, but Blake's uses are typically ironic. Reuben is the topic of a subplot in which Los restricts his perceptions and attempts to send him across the Jordan to Canaan, whose inhabitants, including Hand and the rest of Albion's sons, "became what they beheld" (i.e., became like Reuben); see 30/34:36-32/36:20. Hence Los's leading Reuben into Canaan in the present passage confirms the establishment of the "fallen" world. For the complex geographical references involving Reuben, see Damon, *Dictionary* 347-48.

to tyranny and war, makes possible a redemption that can occur only within history ("A wondrous journey not passable by Immortal feet"). Los's entry into the space of history therefore makes possible his own labors, which, in the poem's present time-frame, are expressed in his watch-song and its *blazon* of Jerusalem (84:14-86:32). These heroic efforts, however, in no way prevent the daughters' action from achieving its own results: the reemergence of the zoas in negative forms, the materialization of Vala/Rahab's cup of abominations and its acceptance by Jerusalem in a suicidal gesture, the consolidation of the Antichrist, and the celebration of its glory in a counter-*blazon* matching that of Jerusalem point for point (88:53-89:51).[36] Los's renunciation of opposition, then, in both present-time and historical-time perspectives, has the highly contradictory result of providing time for his own planting of the "seeds" while providing space *and* time for the development of earthly tyranny and its consolidation as Antichrist.[37]

36. Strangely, the commentaries of Frye, Bloom (in *Apocalypse* and his commentary to *E*), Paley, Witke, and Doskow fail to notice that the two hymns answer each other or that their genre is the *blazon.* (Doskow does recognize that the Covering Cherub's parts form a negative counterpart of Jerusalem's [154].) Since Rahab has already been identified at the end of Chapter 3 (75:18-20), in almost the same terms used in Chapter 4 (89:52-53), what has really happened in Chapter 4 is that this entity has been consolidated and revealed as the Covering Cherub or Antichrist. For the cup of abominations, see Rev. 17:4 and discussion in Chap. 4.

37. The overall situation described on these pages is known in Blake interpretation as the "consolidation [or "clarification"] of error," i.e., the necessity for error to manifest itself fully-formed before it can be overcome. But the term as usually used has a comforting, and false, abstractness; what is "consolidated" is the tortures of millions of people. The providentiality and teleology associated with it, i.e., the notion that these tortures are divinely appointed and foredestined to end well, seem to contradict Blake's late conceptions, such as the pronouncement at the assembly of eternals earlier in the poem, "it is better to prevent misery, than to release from misery" (55:49).

To understand the complexity of Blake's viewpoints on the efficacy of non-resistance and nonviolence, it is useful to compare Los's speech with the texts most similar to it in mood — the prefatory poem for Chapter 3, "I saw a Monk of Charlemagne," the *Notebook* draft from which Blake took the poem, and the independent lyric based on the same draft, "The Grey Monk." The Chapter 3 poem affirms spiritual resistance in terms close to those of Los's speech; at the same time, it takes an equivocal stand on whether non-resistance can win over the tyrants:

> For a Tear is an Intellectual thing;
> And a Sigh is the Sword of an Angel King
> And the bitter groan of a Martyrs woe
> Is an Arrow from the Almighties Bow! (52:25-28; see "Grey Monk" 28-32, *E*489-90; *Notebook* stanza *n*)

The *Notebook* draft contains stanzas more explicitly pacifist and morally suasive than any in *Jerusalem*, epitomized by such pronouncements as:

> Untill the Tyrant himself relent
> The Tyrant who first the black bow bent
> Slaughter shall heap the bloody plain
> Resistance & war is the Tyrants gain (*E*811; *Notebook* 8)

The *Notebook* draft has four stanzas of this character — this one and those beginning, "But vain the sword," "The hand of vengeance," and "But the Tear of Love" (*Notebook* stanzas *l*, *j*, *k*, and *m*). Of the four, the first and last were never transcribed; the middle two became part of "The Grey Monk," the fair-

copy selection and revision of nine stanzas from the draft that Blake made as part of the so-called "Pickering Manuscript," apparently between 1802 and 1807. But these stanzas too were passed over when Blake selected five unused stanzas from the *Notebook* draft, plus two also used in "The Grey Monk" ("The blood ran red" and "For a Tear") to form "I saw a Monk" in *Jerusalem.*

There is a kind of political progression in these editorial decisions. The two stanzas that were never transcribed contain the most overt statements that submission will cause the tyrant to "relent." Those used for "The Grey Monk" omit such statements but retain a condemnation of vengeance (and an explicitly cyclic view of revolution: "The iron hand crushd the Tyrants head / And became a Tyrant in his stead"). Finally, the stanzas selected for *Jerusalem* leave out these ideas as well. They emphasize the clash between faith and rationalism as the philosophic root of war, and the "Tear" stanza is distinctly more limited in its claims than those not used; endorsing the tear and sigh as manifestations of the divine, it makes no predictions about their effectiveness in action. Apparently, Blake first took a position that a purely moral appeal could convert the tyrants, then backed away from it (in two stages?) to a final stance that affirms the tear and sigh on ethical grounds alone, leaving open the question of how change will occur.[38]

38. See *Notebook* 8 and transcript. Stanzas *d-k* and *n*, in Erdman and Moore's labelling, become "The Grey Monk," while *a-d*, *p*, *s*, and *n* (also numbered by Blake from 1-7) become "I saw a Monk"; *d* and *n* are thus used twice. (There are minor changes in wording and "accidentals" throughout.) A line from the end of stanza *d* to "Untill" in *l* would seem to show that the latter was originally considered as following *d* (it is next after *d* when *e-k*, used in "The Grey Monk," are skipped). Stanza *p* was used instead, however. Stanzas *p-t* clearly came later than the rest: they are added after unrelated material or in margins and, according to Erdman and Moore's notes, in different inks. It is possible that *p*, "When Satan first the black bow bent," marked as 5 and so used in "I saw a Monk," was written to replace *l*, "Untill the Tyrant," since the black

A further tension remains, however, between "I saw a Monk" and the account of Los's decision and its consequences. Though the narrative does not directly contradict the perspective of the lyric, its grimness clashes with the lyric's emblematic hope for sigh and tear. Once more, we shall have to drop the demand for linear consistency in Blake; the best way to view these two texts is as dialectic. "I saw a Monk," that is, stands as a statement of what *should* be, addressed — as Chapter 3 is headed — "To the Deists"; it appeals to them to change their conceptions. The narrative episode, in contrast, is best seen as a dramatic enactment of what is, or is likely.

Los's final crisis, in his last conflict with the Spectre, may be dealt with more briefly. The identification of it as a crisis in *political* thought is admittedly inferential, since its immediate terms are sexual and religious. The confrontation is led up to through a series of paragraphs, following the identification of Antichrist, that focus first on sexual division and then on social oppression; these passages include, among others, the references to Lancashire's "anguish" and to the Mersey and Ribble discussed earlier (90:15-20). Los responds to this survey of oppressed existence with two speeches that condemn different kinds of

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bow appears in both — recast in *p* as Satan's rather than the tyrant's. As compared with *l*, *p* emphasizes the reality of oppression rather than the moral conversion of the tyrant, and puts oppression into the epochal context of Satan's murder of Jesus. There is no way of knowing exactly when the *Notebook* stanzas were written or which of the two poems based on them was extracted first. But Blake's final approval of "I saw a Monk," if not the selection of the stanzas or the etching of the plate, must belong to the period when *Jerusalem* took final form, probably much later than the creation of the Pickering Manuscript. On the dates of the latter, see *E*859, *Blake Books* 341-42, and *Blake Records Supplement* xlvi, which hazards 1807 or later as the transcription date. The *Notebook* poem is printed in Keynes (418-20), where it can easily be compared with its offshoots; Erdman prints the omitted stanzas and fragments in the textual notes to *Jerusalem* (*E*811), making the comparisons more difficult.

abstraction. The first concerns sexual division and gender definitions; it condemns individuals' "appropriat[ion]" of "Universal Characteristics" or "Attributes" (90:29, 32). These, inferentially, are the faculties or "eternal attributes" falsely worshipped as the "Gods of Priam" and elsewhere identified with the zoas (see *Descriptive Catalogue*, *E*536, discussed earlier). But they apparently include gender characteristics as well (30). The appropriation of such attributes leads to the creation of sexes. These, paradoxically, are hermaphroditic, seemingly because individuals truly contain all the universal attributes, and so, when sexually divided, must be either female-within-male or male-within-female. Beyond this specific discussion, the speech implies a more general criticism of abstraction, in the sense of the identification of individuals with particular abstract attributes rather than as particulars containing all the universal attributes.

This concern connects the speech with the religious topic of Los's second speech, which follows a condemnation of deism (90:65-66). Here the target is the worship of an abstract god utilized as a mask by the "Giants of Albion" (i.e., Hand and the rest), who are erecting Druid triliths "plotting to devour Albion & Los the friend of Albion" (90:58-63). Blake's thought, in brief, is that worship of abstractions leads to disregard of real individuals, and so to envy and calumny, "which is murder & cruelty" (11). Instead,

> He who would see the Divinity must see him in his Children
> One first, in friendship & love; then a Divine Family, & in the midst
> Jesus will appear; so he who wishes to see a Vision; a perfect Whole
> Must see it in its Minute Particulars;
> . . . . . .
> But General Forms have their vitality in Particulars: & every

Particular is a Man; a Divine Member of the Divine Jesus. (18-21, 29-30)

The elements of this passage are familiar to us: the presence of the divine in individuals and in those united into a "Divine Family," and the identity of Jesus with such a human unity. The continuity of belief with such early works as "The Divine Image" is also striking: God can be seen *only* in the children of God, and first of all in the love for individuals. The political meaning emerges in the sentence, "he who wishes to see a Vision; a perfect Whole / Must see it in its Minute Particulars[.]" "Vision" and "Minute Particulars" are terms commonly associated with Blake's artistic doctrine, and yet the chief concerns of this sequence of pages are sexual, religious, and social. Arguably, Blake uses artistic doctrine here as a metaphor for social-political content. In social terms, we know that the Minute Particulars are Albion's — individual men, women, and children whom Los sees "degraded & murderd" in London (45/31:7). The end of the present passage insists that "every / Particular is a Man." Hence, Los is, among other meanings, appealing to the Spectre to see *people* as particulars, not as abstractions. In turn, the "Vision" is of "a perfect Whole," and this phrase should recall one of the epigraphs to *The Four Zoas*: "a Perfect Unity / Cannot Exist. but from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden / The Universal Man" (3:3-6; see Chap. 4). In short, the "Vision" is, in part, social — a vision of universal brotherhood, society as a perfect whole; but this vision must be seen "in its Minute Particulars."

The passage's political meaning now emerges with full force. Los is saying that a vision of human unity cannot be attained through abstractions but only through particulars. No vision of a new society, that is, can be built on abstract

ideas about "man" or "the citizen" but only on actual people as they are; the thought continues, and extends, the earlier emphasis on not demanding perfection before entering the kingdom of heaven. Blake's political targets here would seem to be French Jacobinism, with its rhetoric about virtue and the obligations of citizens; Rousseau's speculative account of human nature and society; and perhaps Godwin's rationalist libertarianism. These doctrines are not named — though Rousseau is denounced plentifully elsewhere — but they are all related to deism, which is the passage's explicit focus. Blake does, in fact, allude to these targets in a speech making almost the same point as this one, spoken by the "Living Creatures," or "those who disregard all Mortal Things," early in Chapter 3: "He who would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars / General Good is the plea of the scoundrel hypocrite & flatterer:" (55:60-61). Here, the echoes of Rousseauan General Will (and, probably, Benthamite felicific calculus) are palpable. Politically, this statement could perhaps be taken as a plea for "good works" rather than political or class action; but, more profoundly, it is a plea for immersion in the real life of the people as against abstract schematizing.

This view of Los's speech as concerned with political abstraction is underlined by its narrative context. The passage, as just noted, is directed against oppressors cloaked in deism; Los orders the Spectre to deliver his message, the speech he has been making, to these "Fiends of Righteousness" (91:4). But while he is still addressing the Spectre, he uses this same phrase, in the singular, as a locative: "O Fiend of Righteousness" (22). While the term may be part of the speech Los wishes the Spectre to deliver to one of the fiends, the syntactic shift suggests that the Spectre is amalgamating with the fiends. The terms in

which Los denounces the fiends, too, apply equally to the Spectre: he too "talk[s] of benevolence & virtue" and believes in analysis rather than faith and in "aggregate[s]" rather than particulars (91:24, 27). The terms originally directed against deism therefore take on a second meaning as characteristics of Los's Spectre.

The Spectre's response to Los confirms his collusion with the "fiends." The Spectre does not answer in words, but builds "stupendous Works," including "pillars" and "pyramids" (32, 40, 43) — shapes of abstraction, but also those of Roman and dynastic state architecture. And he

> form[s] Leviathan
> And Behemoth: the War by Sea enormous & the War
> By Land astounding: (38-40)

We know from Blake's other works who guides Leviathan and Behemoth; among his other activities, Los's Spectre is forming Nelson and Pitt, or the entities that they guide. While the idea that abstraction contributes to war is not a new one in Blake, the idea that Los's Spectre does so deserves more thought. A spectre, we know, is in general the rational faculty; here, however, Blake is not concerned with spectres in general but with *Los's* Spectre, and this can only mean a rationalistic degeneration of the prophetic faculty. Blake's overall argument about skepticism and rationality is that they lead to worship of the gods "Of the Heathen, The God of This World," the "Druid Dragon," etc., and hence to war and oppression (93:21-25). By showing Los's Spectre, or rationally deformed prophetic consciousness, constructing the monuments of abstract reason and the beasts of war, Blake makes both this general point and a more specific one. He suggests that left-wing forms of rationalism, in losing

sight of individuals and the common life — the Minute Particulars — contribute to the abstractions that perpetuate slaughter and tyranny, and hence collude with the Druid sons of Albion. Similarly, through their worship of power (the Spectre's pyramids), statist versions of left-wing thought block the cooperative rule of humanity (Jesus) and empower Nelson and Pitt. In historical context, examples of such thought would include Rousseauan doctrine, Jacobinism, etc.

This last conflict with the Spectre ends as Los, with one hammer-stroke, "In unpitying ruin driv[es] down the pyramids of pride" and "send[s] forth the Spectre all his pyramids were grains / Of sand & his pillars: dust on the flys wing" (91:43, 47-48). What are destroyed here are not the actual pillars and pyramids of class civilization; as an "internal" reading of Blake would suggest (in this instance correctly), they are the mental structures of pride, etc. At the same time, they — and the Spectre — are the *readiness* to create Egyptian pillars, Roman pillars, and the wars of Nelson and Pitt. Hence, their destruction makes the dénouement of the poem possible.

The series of lessons that Los learns, of which this is the last, contradict two points assumed in much Blake interpretation. The first is the heroizing one that Los's role in *Jerusalem* is simply to labor patiently and creatively until Albion wakes. Closely tied to this conception is the idea that Los's creative labors begin once he has compelled the Spectre to labor at his bidding (plates 6-11). Taking the latter point first, this action appears retrospectively as, at best, an expedient; the Spectre remains basically treacherous and must be broken with definitively before apocalypse can occur.[39] In turn, each of Los's lessons in

39. It is worth asking whether this action can be regarded as definitive when other seemingly definitive actions, in this recursive poem, keep happening repeatedly. One response is that nowhere else does Los destroy the Spectre's works; everywhere else he has sought to harness him. A more rigorous response is that if the apocalyptic conclusion that this act makes possible were not to oc-

volves a *choice* against a potentially ruinous alternative; Los, himself, could destroy his enterprise at any moment. Further, the overall *content* of the lessons is crucial. Each helps Los to learn how to act as inspirer and friend to Albion — the role he will fulfill at the poem's end. Without them, the dénouement could hardly take the form it does, since Los's example is crucial to Albion's self-sacrificing acts.

Formally, the series of lessons I have examined superimposes a sequential pattern on the other, non-sequential structures of *Jerusalem.* The lessons are not the same, though they are related; and while they could conceivably occur in some other order, the progression from a conflict over loyalty to Albion through questions about the means or realizing this loyalty to the rejection of political abstraction makes deep sense. Hence, while the overall events of the poem resist chronological sequencing, Los's lessons do show sequential development. They may be thought of, if necessary, successive experiences Los has while contemplating the world of oppression in its instantaneous retrospective unity; better, perhaps, is to see them simply as another dimension among the poem's already multidimensional formal scheme.

Thematically, the lessons can be applied to Los's social as well as to his individual aspect. If the Spectre is that of Los as prophet, he is also, in a socially composite way, that of Los as art and labor. He is that aspect of the British laborers, artisans, and artists — "Labourers of the Vintage" (*Milton* 25:16) — that is alienated from the people as a whole and rejects devotion to them. Hence, the lessons that Los as prophet-figure has learned in his four moments of in-

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cur, the Spectre would unquestionably regenerate; even after the apocalyptic clash, as discussed below, a Spectre remains to be dealt with, though it is not Los's.

tellectual clarification are also lessons that Los as art and labor must learn: devotion to Albion; rejection of vengeance and dictatorship; patient labor of preparation; casting off abstraction and grounding the work of restoration in the particulars of common life.

These are *political* lessons, to an extent not granted in most Blake interpretation, though of course they are densely interwoven with other aspects of Blake's thought. They are both a coming to terms with Blake's personal and political inheritance from the radicalism of the 1790s and his early pro-Jacobinism, and a projection of apocalyptic goals through new means — without the agency of Orc, and through patient preparation. In one aspect, the emphasis on concrete life and long-term labor, they are closer to the lessons of piecemeal struggle that the emerging labor movement did learn than might at first appear. In another, their emphasis on apocalypse, they are quite different; Los's lessons present in imaginative terms a linkage *between* grounding in the "Minute Particulars" and the apocalyptic goal. This link is given by the terms of Los's last speech to the Spectre: attention to the minute particulars is the means to a vision that sees in individuals human collectivity, or Jesus. The Spectre prevents this linkage from forming, not only by abstract thought but also by his hatred of Albion, his self-righteousness and self-pity, etc. The Spectre whom Los smashes with a hammerblow, then, in all his aspects, is what prevents Los — as prophet figure and as social art and labor — from annihilating his/their separateness from human collectivity, and thus actually becoming Jesus.

We may now consider Blake's late view of apocalypse.

Apocalypse in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*

Blake's presentation of apocalypse in *Milton* and *Jerusalem* has three main

facets. It outlines an apocalypse of "mercy" or "forgiveness," in place of the celebration of social rebellion and retributive justice in *The Four Zoas.* This idea, however, is not spelled out in any detail, and is hedged in important ways. Blake's treatment also addresses the likelihood of resistance, through terse but comprehensive symbolisms that differ somewhat in the two poems. These accounts raise by implication the question of whether the apocalyptic upheaval will be violent or nonviolent — not quite the same issue as retribution vs. forgiveness — and leave it unanswered. Finally, Blake's presentations do answer the question of agency, who is to carry out an apocalyptic change. The question is answered both substantively — apocalypse is to be a mass, collective response to the resistance of Satan or Antichrist — and poetically, in that Blake works out a symbolism that addresses such questions as the timing of Albion's awaking, whether this waking will occur providentially or through human agents, and whether it is a mental or a social, insurrectionary event.

The contention that apocalypse in these works is historical and signifies a reformation of the social world goes against a widely accepted view holding the very opposite — that while Blake may have envisioned such an apocalypse as late as *The Four Zoas*, in *Milton* and *Jerusalem* apocalypse is not only internal (mental) but provisional, a process continually recurring in moments of vision and, as continually, necessitated by the falling-off from such moments. Thus for W. J. T. Mitchell Los's work, "like that of Sisyphus" in Camus' affirmation of human process, "does not end when he reaches the summit"; Los's repose is "rest before labor" (217-18). Stuart Curran concurs: "the repeated acts by which [*Jerusalem*] is structured do not end with the apocalypse. The judgment and crucifixion recur once more and indeed forever, but transfigured. . . . Blake's epic purpose is not reformation, but conversion" (344-46). The provisional character

of apocalypse in these accounts is bound up with its internal quality; *because* it occurs in the individual mind, in a world that goes on the same for the foreseeable future, apocalypse can be nothing other than a recurrent moment of vision. As Leopold Damrosch argues in one of the most closely reasoned of such analyses, in *The Four Zoas* Blake's vision was a traditional one in which "man awaits not himself but the king" (337). In *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, however, Blake "awaits the total renovation of man before expecting the renovation of society," and since "there can be no apocalypse in the state of bondage that we are accustomed to," the hope of change becomes "private and internal" (342). Apocalypse then becomes "an accession of Jesus into the individual imagination," and the Edenic vision at the end of *Jerusalem* "is just that — a vision, not a condition which the poem has made available to its readers." Hence, "apocalypse is a matter of individual (and perhaps temporary) vision" (345). So, it "can never come permanently, for we will always sink in weariness . . . and therefore . . . Los must rouse himself again and again" (345).

The line of reasoning that Damrosch so ably presents nevertheless slights several important points in Blake's late thought. First, Blake does not "await the total renovation of man" before expecting apocalypse; this is the conception he attacks on plate 3 of *Jerusalem*. Second, the "state of bondage that we are accustomed to," including the bondage to the body and death in which Damrosch grounds it (342), is a temporary state to be voided by what Blake insists in *Milton* is an imminent last judgment ("Six Thousand years are passd away the end approaches fast"). Whether this appears a realistic prospect to us is irrelevant; it is Blake's conception. Third, and perhaps most important, the recasting of the last judgment as an "accession of Jesus into the individual imagination" is one Blake does not make. While Blake does speak, in a much-cited passage from

the *Vision of the Last Judgment*, of how a last judgment may pass upon an individual who "Rejects Error & Embraces Truth" (*E*562), this perspective does not substitute for the idea of a general last judgment, of which Blake speaks repeatedly in the same document; both conceptions are valid.[40] Hence, Los's labors strive for a moment of general human renovation made by imperfect human beings. Fundamentally, "man" in late Blake does "await . . . himself," not a transcendent savior, but the "man" is neither perfected nor an individual, but a social being. The imagination into which Jesus must enter is that of Albion, humanity as a whole.

The centrality of mercy and forgiveness in Blake's late perspective is broached in doctrinal speeches prior to the apocalyptic episodes themselves — for example, in Los's speeches to Rintrah and Palamabron and to the laborers in *Milton*, in the Saviour's first speech to Albion and in Los's exploration of London in *Jerusalem*. An idea of the profound rethinking of earlier ideas involved in these conceptions may be gathered from a visual source roughly contemporary with the composition of *Milton*, one of Blake's alternative designs for the title-page of Blair's *The Grave* (1806), showing the resurrection of the dead (Butlin cat. 613). This design, among other things, is a thoroughgoing revision of one of Blake's designs in *America*, as well as of their common sources in Revelation. At the bottom are waking figures of the dead, some just stretching and others soaring upward diagonally to the left in a way reminiscent of Blake's

40. Blake gives "last judgment" a bewildering variety of meanings in this draft document; for example, "this is A Last Judgment when Men of Real Art Govern & Pretenders Fall" (561). As so often, criticism has simply selected those that fit its preconceptions. The *Vision* appears to comprehend "last judgments" of individual renovation, of wise rule under which the arts flourish, and of the final abolition of corporeal reality, among others. Its perspective should not, at any rate, be privileged over that of the late engraved poems, especially not through selective quotation.

Last Judgment designs. Above are three angels: one hovering at upper right with a scroll and balance; one descending with a key, his extended hand almost touching a snapped chain among the dead; the third ascending above the rising figures, with a half-sheathed sword. The key and chain are the most pertinent biblical revisions. In Rev. 9:1-6 the key opens the bottomless pit, loosing tortures on the unrighteous; in Rev. 20:1-4 the chain binds Satan and the key again opens the pit, into which Satan is cast while the righteous (only) are allowed to reign with Christ. But in Blake's design the key is not in use, the chain seems to have bound the dead and snapped at the angel's touch, and *all* the dead rise. A more pointed rejection of the idea of apocalypse as retribution would be difficult to conceive. In addition, the postures of the angels vary the apocalyptic design of *America* 5, where three soaring figures — one with a flaming sword, one raising a helpless man above his shoulders, the third with balances — hurl a series of victims down the picture-edge toward flames and a snake-vortex. In the *Grave* design, the victims rise, the right-hand angel ignores his scrolls and contemplates his balances (Rev. 6:5, Dan. 5:27), for which there is no obvious use, and the angel at left places his open hand on the hilt of the sword (Rev. 6:4), evidently pushing it *back into its sheath.* If the *America* design shows a revolutionary tribunal, as both Erdman and Jean H. Hagstrum assume, then the *Grave* design revises *America*'s conception of justice through its visual reworking, even if it does not refer to revolution directly.[41]

As Jesus is the emblem of forgiveness in *Jerusalem,* the most striking single image of apocalyptic forgiveness in that poem is the crucifixion design on plate

41. The *America* design is described by Erdman, "New Expanses" 107-108 and *Illuminated Blake* 143; Hagstrum, *Poet* 100. Erdman sees details I do not (e.g., that the figure being carried is bound.) For discussion of the snake, see Chap. 2.

76; here, however, we will have to notice several aspects besides this central one. With most commentators, I agree that this design should be understood positively, and that it illustrates not simply the crucifixion, but the encounter of Albion and Jesus (who is also Los, as discussed below) on plate 96. Specifically, the design shows Albion's wonder at Jesus-Los's "Mysterious / Offering of Self for Another" (96:19-20); and this wonder is not passive awe, but active emulation and discipleship — hence Albion's replication of Jesus' cruciform posture.[42] The design may, of course, be viewed in isolation, simply *as* a design, as its placement between chapters encourages; in this context, it primarily refers to the crucifixion and excites pity and wonder at Jesus' sacrifice. But it may also be viewed in conjunction with Blake's text, and in this framework it primarily draws attention to Albion's action. In this context the design is apocalyptic, because its focus is the change in Albion that, on plate 96, inspires his own descent into the furnaces.

Two points need to be added to bring the design into sharper focus. First, while Albion's action is an "annihilation of Selfhood" (Mitchell, *Composite Art* 210), such a general description does not spell out what the annihilation of selfhood really means. Jesus' responses to Albion give a variety of meanings: "Wouldest thou love one who never died / For thee or ever die for one who had not died for thee"; "every kindness to another is a little Death / In the Divine Image nor can Man exist but by Brotherhood"; "This is Friendship & Brother-

42. The design is discussed by Mitchell, *Composite Art* 209-211; Paley, *City* 113-18; Mellor 321-23; Lesnick 399, to whom Mitchell and Paley both reply; Damrosch 297-98, in the context of a critical view of Blake's treatment of the crucifixion generally, 284-98 *passim*. See Mitchell and Paley for other references.

hood without it Man Is Not" (96:23-24, 27-28, 16). "Offering of Self for Another" is exemplified here in a broad spectrum of possible, daily *human* acts ranging from individual kindness to collective meanings such as solidarity in struggle; trade unions and friendly societies would be examples of offering self for another. The echo on plate 96 of plate 34/38, "loves and tears of brothers, sisters, sons, fathers, and friends / Which if Man ceases to behold, he ceases to exist:" (lines 12-13), underscores the point that the human emulation of Jesus is brotherhood — a social, mutualistic, public *activity*.[43] Second, plate 76 provides a broad domain of meanings for Jesus as well, primarily through the tree on which he is crucified and its echoes elsewhere in Blake's text. As seen in its leaves and trunk, the tree is an oak, Blake's emblem of Druidism, war, and capital punishment through its associations with "Tyburns fatal tree" or "Albions fatal tree" (12:26, 82:60). In an extended sense, then, Jesus is all the dead in war, and all the executed criminals, in history. Further, Jesus can be associated with the "spiritual deaths of mighty men / Who give themselves, in Golgotha, Victims to Justice" (34/38:50-51), and hence with Edinburgh, and ultimately London — sites of political and class suppression, and portions of Albion whom Albion, or his sons, have crucified. Through the multiple associations of the oak and the "Cities / Are Men" sequence, the Jesus of plate 76 gains immeasurably rich meaning as the sacrificed of history and as Albion's present-day victims who are ready to forgive his sins and die for him.

Blake's idea of forgiveness has important religious implications that in one sense are outside my scope, but that should be touched on for what they imply

43. For an excellent treatment of Blake's idea of brotherhood and friendship in general, see Ferber 67-88. Ferber cites the plate 96 passage but does not comment extensively on it.

about *Milton* and *Jerusalem*'s social perspective. They are best approached through Blake's epigraph in the preface "To the Deists" in Chapter 3 of *Jerusalem*: "Rahab is an Eternal State [. . .] The Spiritual States of the Soul are all Eternal Distinguish between the Man, & his present State" (52, prose). As we know, Blake uses the doctrine of states to make it clear that individuals are redeemable though states are not; in the most pertinent example, "when Luvah in Orc became a Serpent he des[c]ended into / That State calld Satan" (*The Four Zoas* VIII, 107 [115]:26-27, *E*380; see Chap. 4). What does it mean, however, to say that states are eternal — an idea quite different, by the way, from that in *Milton*, where the states called Satan and Adam, at least, are "Created into Twenty-seven Churches," i.e., for the duration of historical time (32:35)? Taken as written, Blake's words would imply a non-apocalyptic view — because Rahab will always exist — and, further, a socially conservative view, since institutions of oppression are one meaning of Satan and Rahab.[44] Yet, *Jerusalem*'s climax is apocalyptic, and we shall see that it is socially radical as well. The contradictions must be deliberate and designed to force the reader to consider different possible meanings.

The key to this passage would seem to be that Blake *is* repudiating one meaning of apocalypse, that which expects a new society of perfect human beings. He attacks this idea head-on in the rest of the preface through an assault on the idea of perfectibility and an enunciation of original sin. This conception, in turn, motivates his belief that "he who waits to be righteous before

44. For other formulations of the doctrine, see *The Four Zoas* VIII, as cited above, lines 23-40; *Milton* 32:10-38; *Jerusalem* 49:65-75. Even within *Jerusalem* Blake's statements present apparent inconsistencies; for example, 49:72-74 seems to imply that states are transient. Most accounts have not recognized that states are social at all; but see *Milton* 32:10, where they are called "Combinations of Individuals[.]"

he enters into the Saviours kingdom, the Divine Body; will never enter there" (*Jerusalem* 3, prose). I have already offered a social way of reading the latter passage, but its broader implication concerns me here: Rahab and Satan will always exist, individuals will always commit murder and acts of cruelty, and apocalypse or entry into the Divine Body requires forgiving such acts continually, not demanding that they cease. A long tradition of associating social radicalism with the idea of perfectibility insists that one read this embrace of human sinfulness as a repudiation of social transformation. Blake, however, does not participate in this tradition. On the contrary, the idea that not only reconciles *Jerusalem* 52 with Blake's social radicalism but links the two tightly is that the institutions of oppression themselves rest on false ideas of suppressing sin and achieving perfection — a false "Heaven in which all shall be pure & holy / In their Own Selfhoods . . . / . . . to become One Great Satan / Inslavd to the most powerful Selfhood" (49:27-30).[45] By implication, if there is continual forgiveness of sin, *the justification for social hierarchy vanishes*, a crucial step in ideologically readying people to abolish the hierarchies themselves. In this way, Blake reconceives Jerusalem as a society of imperfect individuals, but one without *institutions* of oppression.

Despite this wealth of positive associations, "mercy" and "forgiveness" are not absolutes in Blake's use. His own terms clearly state this: Los's plea to avoid "fury premature" (*Milton* 23:47) indicates that some fury is *not* premature, and the doctrinal statement, cited earlier, that "the Will must not be bended but in the day of Divine / Power" (*Jerusalem* 39/44:18-19) means that it *may* be bended then. Force may be used, that is, by the "Divine Power" — Jesus or the

45. Erin is speaking. See also *Urizen* II:4, 4:10-13 (copies A-C).

human family. The reason for this is clear enough: the forgiveness of Albion, his awakening, and his own willingness to give himself in sacrifice do not mean that all his members are willing to do so. Once again, this is explicit:

> Albion said. O Lord what can I do! my Selfhood cruel
> Marches against thee deceitful from Sinai & from Edom
> Into the Wilderness of Judah to meet thee in his pride
> I behold the Visions of my deadly sleep of Six Thousand Years
> Dazling around thy skirts like a Serpent of precious stones & gold
> I know it is my Self: (96:8-13)

The idea of the Antichrist, the Satanic opposite of Christ, that Blake makes use of here is a very traditional one, but two aspects are Blake's own. First, the Antichrist is *part* of Albion, an estranged portion materialized independent of his will. Second, while "Self" should certainly be read in psychic and moral senses as self-regard, radical denial of others, etc. — even cruelty, exploitation, and oppression — the historical dimension of the passage gives the Antichrist a meaning akin to those of popular millenarianism, in which it was regularly associated with Rome, monarchy, and other social targets. Sinai and Edom probably stand for Urizen and Luvah — through Urizen and Orc's association with these locales in earlier works — and therefore for the English and French state machines. More generally, the "Visions of my deadly Sleep of Six Thousand Years / Dazling around thy skirts" can hardly be other than historic structures of oppression and the mental structures that support them, manifested in the present as persons and institutions that actively advance to destroy Jesus and Albion.

Blake explores this idea in a series of remarkable images. In *Milton* there are two, the cloud and the garment, and they are linked. The advent of Milton is marked by "a black cloud spreading over Europe" (15:50; see 21:36), identified by Damon as Milton's negative legacy of Puritanism (*William Blake* 413) but probably also including European warfare. This legacy is overcome by Milton's struggle with Urizen/Satan, and in the preapocalyptic moment that ends the poem the cloud reappears, transformed, in the "robes of blood" image already familiar from *The Four Zoas*: "round his [Jesus'] limbs / The Clouds of Ololon folded as a Garment dipped in blood" (42:11-12). But the destructive cloud has not disappeared; it has been transferred to Satan, who appears "in a cloud," "Coming in a Cloud . . . / An awful Form eastward," and in it Rahab Babylon is seen "Eastward . . . across Europe & Asia / Glorious as the midday Sun in Satans Bosom glowing: / A Female hidden in a Male, Religion hidden in War" (38:50, 39:23-24, 40:18-20). Given Blake's many uses of the east to signify war theaters — France, the Rhine and Danube, and the Nile, all eastward from England — the cloud and shrouded sun would indicate war and religion even if this were not stated explicitly.

These images are linked with a second group of negative images derived from Vala's garment woven of "poverty pain & woe" that figured in Orc's fruitless appeal to her (18). In a later speech by Ololon, Vala's weaving is generalized in a passage that joins the female "weaving" of bodies with the weaving of a cloud-garment of death over the earth — an evocation of the female destiny of bearing children to be destroyed in war and oppression:

> O piteous Female forms compelld
> To weave the Woof of Death, On Camberwell Tirzahs Courts

> Malahs on Blackheath, Rahab & Noah. dwell on Windsors heights
> . . . . . .
> Loud roll the Weights & Spindles over the whole Earth let down
> On all sides round to the Four Quarters of the World, eastward on
> Europe to Euphrates & Hindu, to Nile & back in Clouds
> Of Death across the Atlantic to America North & South (35:7-9, 14-18)

Jesus' cloud-garment, balancing this one, is therefore a garment of struggle against empire, among its other meanings. Importantly, neither Vala's cloud-garment nor Satan's cloud is ever dispersed; necessarily, then, the final lines introduce another cloud to combat them, Los's "Cloud / Over London in volume terrific, low bended" (42:35), and the poem concludes in preparation for conflict.

In *Jerusalem* the *blazon* and counter-*blazon* of Jerusalem and the Antichrist/Covering Cherub function to balance the forces of recovery and destruction against each other, as the cloud-garment did in *Milton.* The images used in the *blazon* to Jerusalem signify a renewed human body, but are also insistently social. They are pastoral-urban scenes of peace: Jerusalem's head contains Albion's mountains, hills, valleys, and cities; her heart the tribes of Israel and the new Jerusalem; and her reins and vagina Israel in tents guided by pillars of fire and cloud, an Exodus image of a nation reborn (86:1-32). The counter-*blazon* incorporates images of perverted thought and religion, slavery, and tyranny — "Minute Particulars in slavery . . . among the brick-kilns / . . . Pharoh in his iron Court" — as well as war: "And Albions forests of Oaks coverd the Earth from Pole to Pole" (89:17-18, 23). Concluding with a view of the Covering Cherub's wings spread from Japan to "Irelands farthest rocks," the song is succeeded by

an awakening of the dead who "Burst the bottoms of the Graves" and "become One with the Antichrist & are absorbd in him" (89:50, 60-62).[46] Once formed, this entity is not seen again until after Albion's waking, when it appears advancing toward Albion and Jesus from the east, the theater of earthly war, in the passage cited above. In a merger of the Cherub's wings with the cloud imagery of *Milton*, "the Covering Cherub coming on in darkness / Overshadowd them," and a moment later, "the Cloud overshadowing divided them asunder" (96:17-18, 29).

Resistance forms and persists, then, through and past the redemptive moments of Milton's destruction of his selfhood (in *Milton*) and Albion's awakening and colloquy with Jesus (in *Jerusalem*). Comments such as John Howard's, that Milton "lifts no finger" against Satan (Howard, *Milton* 249), are somewhat beside the point, as Milton does not halt Satan. His role is different. It is, through the example of his willingness to annihilate himself for Satan, and through active persuasion, "to teach Men to despise death & to go on / In fearless majesty annihilating Self, laughing to scorn / Thy Laws & terrors, shaking down thy Synagogues as webs" (38:40-42). Milton's role is preparatory, like Los's in *Jerusalem*. It is to gather forces of self-annihilation — "Friendship & Brotherhood" in *Jerusalem*'s terms — to oppose those of selfhood or Satan. Milton's description of this task gains force as we remember that Satan's synagogues are the institutions of this world, his laws its laws — "the Synagogue of Satan. calling the Prince of this World, God[,]" as Blake says in *Jerusalem* (52, prose). What is being prepared, then, is a confrontation of self-annihilating brotherhood with the rulers of this world and those who follow the laws of self,

46. Unlike in *The Four Zoas*, the Dead function negatively in most of their many appearances in *Jerusalem*.

or separation from Albion. Milton's teaching to "put off / . . . all that is not of God alone:" (38:48) cannot refer to a life of passive good conduct. Rather, using orthodox language in the most heterodox way, as was the late Blake's habit, it must mean giving unstinting service to the realization of humanity's divinity.[47]

To return to a point raised in the previous chapter, it should now be clear why Blake's contention that all reality is of the imagination cannot imply what is ordinarily meant by a "revolution of consciousness" or an "apocalypse by imagination or cognition" (Abrams 334). In Blake's terms, the *entire* world, what we call external as well as what we call internal, is of the imagination (Chapter 1). To change the imagination is to change the material and social world (in our terms) as well as the psychic. Further, imagination, at least in its full development, is the collective human imagination: "expanding we behold as one[.]" Hence, though the world can be changed by the imagination, the change is one that occurs in the collective human imagination, and that involves what we would call the material and social world. The heaven that "in your own Bosom you bear" (71:17) exists fully only within *humanity's* bosom, as economically indicated by the use of plural pronouns with a singular noun; the real point of this passage is simply that the world is not immutable, that collective humanity can make such a change. In Blake's terms, however, the idea of an apocalypse oc-

47. W. J. T. Mitchell notes very aptly that "the courage required for self-annihilation is not in itself sufficient to redeem either the self or the world." His ultimate point differs from mine in holding that the struggle in the poem "is not primarily to recognize and correct the evils of the world, but of the self as an image of the world" ("Radical Comedy" 305, 304). In my view, Blake would reject the dualism in the idea of self as reflection; hence the evils corrected are of the larger human self, or collective humanity, whose imagination has created the social world.

curring within what we normally call the mind would have no meaning, and the idea that apocalypse consists in a change in how we perceive an outer reality would be a monstrous acceptance of dualism, "natural religion." Finally, as the world of imagination is the entire world, so the obstacles to human transformation, referred to as Satan, the Covering Cherub, or Antichrist, consist both of authoritarian mental structures *and* of their material counterparts: armies, prisons, kings, and parliaments, "Congregated Assemblies of wicked men" (*The Four Zoas* VIII; see Chap. 4). The human bosom cannot exist fully, or be created by human imagination, without overcoming the obstacles to unification, which are *also* part of human imagination, but an alienated part not controllable by the first. In Blake's narration, the cloud-garment imagery and the Jerusalem-Antichrist polarity clarify that apocalypse must be collective and social, since these entities — segments of humanity organized as Satan or Antichrist — move actively to destroy those portions that have awakened as Albion.

Milton and *Jerusalem* handle the question of whether this social struggle will be violent somewhat differently. The doctrine of states, already referred to, repudiates retribution directed specifically against individuals, and focuses, instead, on the "states" they enter into. The doctrine, however, does not answer the question of whether the large-scale struggle against Satan or the Covering Cherub/Antichrist and the individuals who continue to serve it will be nonviolent. *Milton* strongly implies that it will not. The preapocalyptic moment that concludes the poem begins with Ololon's descent

> to Felphams Vale
> In clouds of blood, in streams of gore, with dreadful thunderings
> Into the Fires of Intellect that rejoic'd in Felphams Vale

> Around the Starry Eight: with one accord the Starry Eight became
> One Man Jesus the Saviour. wonderful! (42:7-11)

The fires of intellect and the unification of the Eight (the seven Angels of the Presence plus Milton) into Jesus mark this as a moment of intellectual clarification; the blood imagery, drawn from Revelation, may signify both birth (through association with the female Ololon) and war, ideas that are linked elsewhere in Blake (e.g., *America* 2:17). The passage's continuation joins the blood-cloud imagery clearly with war, as the clouds become Jesus' garment

> dipped in blood
> Written within & without in woven letters: & the Writing
> Is the Divine Revelation in the Litteral expression:
> A Garment of War, I heard it namd the Woof of Six Thousand Years
> (12-15)

As the garment counterbalances Vala's, so the writing on it counterbalances the "Writings written all over it in Human Words" of her garment (18:12). The "Divine Revelation" is most likely the Book of Revelation itself, since the phrase "in the Litteral expression" seems to allude to conflicting traditions in Revelation commentary, particularly concerning its images of destruction and bloodshed. As traced by Terence Hoagwood, one tradition read these images as referring to the actual downfall of earthly powers; the second, as figuring mental or spiritual events. According to the second tradition, the prophecies are not "*to be brought in by the* Sword *unless it be by the* Sword *of the* Spirit"; the wine presses, for example (Rev. 14:19-20), signify "*the pressure* of *conscience*"

(More, *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos*, qtd. Hoagwood 43, 42). While these were not exclusive positions, they did identify different tendencies and preferences in interpretation.[48] Though both traditions are actually figural — one emphasizing temporal and the other spiritual meanings of Revelation's figuration — the term "literal" would easily be applied to the first, and Blake underscores the point by providing an interpretation for the words in this sense. Evidently, the "vesture dipped in blood" of Rev. 19:13, in its "Litteral" meaning, is a war-cloak formed from the wars of history.

The question is whether Blake means to endorse this meaning or to suggest that it fallaciously uses the "letter" to obscure the true "Word."[49] Most Blake commentaries have in effect assumed the latter, though without reference to the Revelation texts or interpretations. Thus for Florence Sandler, Jesus "wears as a garment Love, Mental Warfare, and Poetry," while to Morton Paley "the literal expression always threatens to supersede the revelation behind it. . . . History itself is the garment of war" (Sandler 43; Paley, "Garment" 135). Such comments, however, rearrange or add to Blake's words.[50] Blake himself

48. I closely follow the discussion by Hoagwood (39-44) and take my quotations from his examples. Hoagwood cites Isaac and Thomas Newton among those offering literal or temporal readings; Henry More and Swedenborg as offering predominantly "spiritual" ones (41-44). Though acknowledging the validity of multiple levels of interpretation, including the political, Hoagwood emphasizes internal or mental readings of Blake's symbolism, and tends to associate him with the "spiritual" interpreters of Revelation. As his scope is limited to *Jerusalem*, Hoagwood does not discuss the *Milton* passage I comment on here.

49. For uses of this distinction by Muggleton and Swedenborg, whose formulations may have been apposite for Blake, see quotations in Wittreich, *Poetics* 29, and Hoagwood 74.

50. Sandler's "Poetry" may refer to the woven letters, and "Mental War" may refer to the "Fires of Intellect" (line 9); "Love" is an idea conventionally associated with Jesus. Paley adds to the text the idea of the superficiality of literal expression; the traditional spirit-word distinction cannot be relied on to supply Blake's meaning automatically, and in any case there is no basis for

provides no "spiritual" reading to oppose to the "Litteral" one. On the contrary, the "Litteral" sense is consistent with the judgment and harvest sequences that follow (42:16-23; 42:33-43:1); with the emphasis of Los's earlier speeches on avoiding "fury premature" before Albion's waking; and with the evocation of class war in Los's last appearance in the poem's closing moments:

> Los listens to the Cry of the Poor Man: his Cloud
> Over London in volume terrific, low bended *in anger*. (42:34-35; my emphasis)

If read without preconceptions, these passages clearly point toward a possible violent apocalypse.[51] Their implications are reinforced by the large-scale structure of the poem, most specifically by the unresolved Orc-Vala confrontation (plate 18). The violent energy there associated with Orc, expressed in earthquake imagery, returns in the garment of war and the cloud of Los's anger, purged of the narrowness implied by the idea of the chain of jealousy. It is primarily the correspondence between the two episodes, and the effective transfer of Orc's energy to the final plates, that prevent us from adhering to the more usual reading that the blood and cloud signify purely spiritual conflicts.

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replacing "War" with "history," an equally temporal conception. In another example of this type of reading, Damon inserts the "spiritual" into the literal literally, in quoting Blake: " 'the Writing is the Divine Revelation in the Litteral expression, a Garment of [spiritual] War' " (*Dictionary* 280; Damon's insertion). For a view of these lines as a self-referential direction for the reading of Blake's own work, see McGann, *Towards a Literature of Knowledge* 31.

51. Bloom is unusual in recognizing the threat of destruction in Los's anger (*Apocalypse* 399-400, *E*928); Sandler and Paley (*Energy* 243-44, 249) simply fail to mention these lines. Of course, no interpreter can mention all Blake's lines, but these are relevant to the theses Sandler and Paley are arguing.

Milton ends before the moment of apocalypse, however, and *Jerusalem*, which does portray this moment, adopts a different approach. In the poem's climactic moment, Blake's text slurs over the exact means of apocalyptic change through a narrative discontinuity:

> And all the Cities of Albion rose from their Slumbers, and All
> The Sons & Daughters of Albion on soft clouds Waking from Sleep
> Soon all around remote the Heavens burnt with flaming fires (96:38-40)

By omitting the events, prior to "Soon," that set the heavens on fire, Blake leaves open the question of exactly how apocalypse will occur. It is important to realize what he has done and how it varies from his earlier presentations of the same moment. In *The Four Zoas*, Blake shows apocalypse as an extensive uprising marked by class violence and retribution. Fire is used repeatedly in these sequences as emblem both of the violence and of its transmutation into intellectual combat (117:10; 118:9-12, 18; 119:1-4, 22; 123:17-19, 26-27, etc.). In *Milton*, the same element appears in the preapocalyptic moment as the "Fires of Intellect" and as the form assumed by Jesus and the "Immortal Four" (42:9, 22), and this fire imagery is closely linked with cloud-garment images suggesting war. In *Jerusalem*, fire images have accompanied Albion's waking, and their exact scope was unclear: "Albion rose / In anger: the wrath of God breaking bright flaming on all sides round" suggests the violent meaning of the image, while two lines later, "broad flashes of flaming lightning & pillars / Of fire, speaking the Words of Eternity in Human Forms" suggests the intellectual meaning (95:5-6, 8-9).[52] Jesus' ensuing colloquy with Albion has sacrifice for brotherhood as its

52. Paley notes that the words in human forms signify recovery of "the unfallen form of language" (*City* 231 and n.). For a similar discussion, focusing on plate 98, see Essick, *Language* 230-36.

theme, and may seem to close off the first set of meanings for the image. But while defined images of violence are omitted in the moment of transformation, they are not replaced by equivalent images narrating the crucial events in a different way. The reference to the heavens burning "all around remote" itself is ambiguous, suggesting the aftermath of battle as much as intellectual clarification. *Some* battle has occurred; whether it was intellectual or physical is unsaid.

Blake's reticence is, at one level, a response to the specific moment when he was completing *Jerusalem*. Outside the world of his poem, the possibility and means of political and social change were similarly unsure in Britain after the war. Faced with a massive awakening of the people, would the propertied classes agree to share power, making peaceful democratization possible, or would they resist violently? Despite the long train of repressions culminating in Peterloo, many British radicals hoped for a change of heart by the rulers, or at least factored this possibility into their thought and presentations. Further, they were not wrong about the possibility of nonviolent change, though they were wrong about its scope: the ruling classes did eventually commit themselves to conservative reforms, aimed not at abolishing class privilege but at preserving it on a broadened political base. In the years after 1815, however, a peaceful transition of whatever character could not be foreseen with any confidence. In this light, Blake's treatment shows a contingent attitude toward this possibility, a preference for a nonviolent apocalypse if at all possible. A similar contingent approach is, in fact, found in roughly contemporary political works, most notably Shelley's draft essay "A Philosophical View of Reform" (1819), which expresses a preference for peaceful methods along with the willingness to use violence "in case the subsisting Government should compel the people to

revolt" (45; 42-54 *passim*). More generally, Shelley's treatise is marked by a sense of sharply divergent possible futures: Shelley cannot tell whether the country is headed for a destructive crisis because of what he sees as the selfishness and stupidity of the ruling class, or toward a period of reform that would open up changes in the property system as well as the political regime. The uncertainty that Shelley addresses through a complex consideration of alternative scenarios is felt in Blake's text through the lack of specificity on how apocalypse occurs.

The lacuna on plate 96 has a broader meaning as well. In effect, it declares that the means and timing of accomplishing apocalypse can never be known in advance. This uncertainty is expressed at more than one point in *Jerusalem*. It reflects, in part, the extraordinary scope of Blake's social (as well as psychic and sexual) utopianism, as compared to relatively limited schemes of governmental and social reform that were themselves fraught with unanswerable questions about means and possibility. The uncertainty Blake expresses stems, as well, from the dependence of apocalypse in his text on Albion. Albion's time of awaking and his ensuing actions are *necessarily* unsure once Blake's protagonist has resolved the issue of revolutionary dictatorship. Los can advise Albion but cannot dictate to him. Consequently — in the world of the poem and the real world it refers to — Blake cannot specify exactly what Albion will do or when, without violating the integrity of the Albion symbol.

In *Milton* and *Jerusalem* Blake does, however, answer the questions about agency that were left unclear in *The Four Zoas*, spelling out the mass, communitarian character of Albion's actions in partial counterposition to the ambiuous portrayal in that poem. In *Milton*, this treatment begins with a mythologized

consideration of the failure of the past radical movement. In Book 1, as we saw, the debates of Orc with Vala and of Los with his sons involved the question of whether the apocalyptic scenario of Blake's earlier works — his own version of the radical politics of the 1790s — must be replayed or can be fulfilled in a more positive way. In Book 2, this question is raised again through the treatment of Albion's waking, which begins as the seven Angels of the Presence — answered by, or perhaps identical with, Los's furnaces — blow apocalyptic trumpets and call Albion and the four zoas to awake (39:3-15). Portions of Blake's newer symbolism, such as the angels and the furnaces, combine here with elements drawn from his previous works, such as the zoas and the trumpets, which recall the one Newton blew in *Europe*. These admixtures of Blake's earlier vocabulary serve the purpose of critique. In response to the trumpets' peal, first Satan mobilizes, and then, in a failed moment of emancipation, Albion rises on his couch — Britain's three nations with their cities and topography — and

> He strove to rise to walk into the Deep. but strength failing
> Forbad & down with dreadful groans he sank upon his Couch
> In moony Beulah. Los his strong Guard walks round beneath the
> Moon (50-52)

This miscarriage is followed by a sequence of events that seem unrelated to it or to one another: Milton strives with the zoas on the Brooks of Arnon; Ololon is ordered by Milton to "Obey" the command of self-annihilation; Milton declares that his mission is to struggle against rationalism and mimetic poetry with a poetry of faith and inspiration (40:4-8, 28-37; 41:1-28).

Historical perspective supplies a meaning for Albion's attempt to walk: so

too did the British people attempt and fail to walk forward in the 1790s. In this perspective, the three episodes that follow offer correctives to what Blake would see as causes of the failure — the lack of a developed prophetic art, sexual division, and the struggle of the zoas against one another rather than their absorption into an overall giving of self for humanity or Albion.[53] Additionally, the speeches of Milton and Ololon mesh three key strands in *Milton*'s fabric. In the poetic plot, prophetic and visionary poetry triumphs over the classical and decorative traditions; in the sexual plot, the sexual division of humanity, an instance of "Selfhood" that Blake always blames on women, is overcome; in the political plot, Milton overcomes and transforms the zoas. These plot strands, each easily viewed in isolation as the main subject of the poem, function in narrative context as preparation for the presumptively successful apocalyptic episode that now follows.

The same three elements recur in this sequence, but in positive forms: sexual unification (Ololon's putting off of the sexual, resumption of the human, and unification with the Starry Eight and Jesus); prophetic vision (the words of Revelation seen in the garment of blood); and the transformation of the zoas. This last occurs in the lines following the garment-cloud passage, as

> I beheld the Twenty-four Cities of Albion
> Arise upon their Thrones to Judge the Nations of the Earth
> And the Immortal Four in whom the Twenty-four appear Four-fold
> Arose around Albions body: Jesus wept & walked forth
> From Felphams Vale clothed in Clouds of blood, to enter into

53. For a reading of the episode as Albion's failure to achieve "the identity of man and world," see Deen 188-89.

> Albions Bosom, the bosom of death & the Four surrounded him
> In the Column of Fire in Felphams Vale; then to their mouths the Four
> Applied their Four Trumpets & them sounded to the Four winds
> (42:16-23)

Together with the harvest images that follow (42:29-43:1), these lines allude to the judgment and harvest sequences that end *The Four Zoas*; in effect, *Milton*'s final line, "To go forth to the Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations" (43:1) sums up, in prelude, the apocalypse that ends the earlier poem.

But it does so with a difference. The difference does not concern violence, but rather agency. The zoas, whose "overlordly" aspects were so problematic in the earlier work, have merged with the cities. Blake's wording exploits an ambiguity between his older and newer vocabularies: with his earlier symbolism in mind, one naturally takes the "Immortal Four" (18) as the zoas, while in the relatively new city symbolism, the phrase refers to London, Bath, Legions, and Edinburgh, already mentioned during Albion's waking (39:35).[54] The ambiguity appears to demand a choice between competing symbol systems. We know, however, that zoas are in part collective populations, and that "Cities / Are Men"; the cities *are* what the zoa symbol, in its plural aspect, always meant. But whereas the zoas denote separate faculties, even in their apparently recovered forms at the end of *The Four Zoas*, the cities are collectivities that are not divided by function. Further, the cities are urban; while the poem's last lines employ the imagery of harvest, Los's cloud is directed toward yet another urban setting, London, so that the apocalyptic pastoralism of *The Four Zoas* IX is relo-

54. For Legions, see Damon, *Dictionary* 237. In *Jerusalem*, the four cities, Albion's key friends, become Verulam, Bath, York, and Edinburgh (34/38:45-54, 37/41:24).

cated in modern, nineteenth-century settings. Finally and most importantly, the cities that rise in judgment are collectivities of *ordinary human beings* (the biblical "Thrones" notwithstanding), not the demigods that the zoas often become in Blake's usage. Fittingly, then, the four cities repeat the trumpet-blast from Albion's waking, this time, presumably, with success; the repetition signifies that the unsuccessful awakening of humanity as distinct faculties has been overcome by a rising in collective unity.

The new symbolism replaces the elite judgment in the wine presses sequence of *The Four Zoas* IX with an embodiment of collective, mass, democratic action. This symbolism corresponds to the mass aspects of the uprising in the early part of Night IX. It mutes but does not eliminate the violence of that uprising, reducing it to forms expressed through image rather than description, in keeping with Blake's later ethical preference for minimizing violence; the retributive and sadomasochistic actions associated with the wine presses do disappear. In the cities, then, Blake finds the large-scale imaginative equivalent for mass activity that was missing in the earlier poem's harvest imagery.

Jerusalem's treatment uses these same elements, with the other key entities analyzed in this chapter — Jesus and the furnaces — to establish both the connection between the apocalyptic moment and Los's earlier lessons, and the mass, collective nature of that moment. The first movement in the apocalyptic action, Albion's waking, occurs in a seemingly arbitrary way. It comes at a moment of absolute stasis as Albion, here shown as the British isles, lies shrouded by storms, with England on his breast as a winter fog that is also a manifestation of class oppression — "deadly damps / Of the mines of Cornwall & Derbyshire" (94:7-8). The crucial moment occurs without preparation: "then pausing in

deathlike silence / Time was Finished! The Breath Divine Breathed over Albion / Beneath the Furnaces & starry Wheels" (17-19). Waking England or Brittannia, the breath recurs twice as her laments in turn wake Albion (94:20, 95:3, 5). Its apparently unmotivated entry into the narrative leads W. J. T. Mitchell to observe that "[t]he apocalyptic moment steals in during a pause . . . ; it is not presented as the direct consequence of any particular creative or revolutionary action" (*Composite Art* 184). Nevertheless, if not the outcome of a strict causal chain, the breath comes as the culmination of a defined sequence of events — the series of lessons Los has learned, lessons of devotion, refusal of vengeance, and the smashing of pride and intellectual and political abstraction.

These lessons condition the awakening in two ways. Morally, they are what make it possible for Albion to wake. The poem's concern here, clearly, is not to show an ultimately unsuccessful awakening such as that of the 1790s, already treated critically in *Milton.* For Albion's waking to have a positive outcome, he/they must be able to absorb from Los what Los has already learned. The waking, then, can occur only after Los has negotiated the intellectual crises described earlier. Yet even if this is granted, the breath can still appear as a providential narrative device, introduced when Blake needs it to close off his plot. What connects it to earlier events, in fact to Los's intellectual crises, is the nature of those crises and of Blake's providential symbols. Using our knowledge of these symbols' consistently human and nonprovidential meanings, we can associate the Breath Divine with other entities such as the Divine Family and the Divine Vision, and realize that, like them, it must be a manifestation of human brotherhood and unity. It should now become clear why the breath is felt when Los has overcome the temptations that separate him, in self-pity, ar-

rogance, vengeance, or abstraction, from Albion. The absorption of those lessons, by Los as prophet and as the community of art and labor, *creates* the human brotherhood, or divine entity, whose breath is felt by Albion.

My point that Blake's providential symbols are really nonprovidential may now be slightly qualified. What is "providential" — in the sense that it is unpredictable and contingent, a possibility created by people's awareness of their own higher qualities but never guaranteed — is that Los should have learned the lessons he has, that Albion should wake, and that he should be able to learn the lessons in turn. The seemingly puzzling fact that Blake's texts continually turn on unpredictable shifts — in *The Four Zoas*, Los's reconciliation with his Spectre, and here, the breath — needs to be understood in this light. This aspect of Blake's climaxes does not, in other words, make them nonnarrative or nonreferential so much as it recognizes the unpredictability of great changes in individual and social life. A different symbolism would imply that events such as the development of prophetic consciousness among working people, the awakening of a nation's population, and the motivation of its struggles by ideals of brotherhood, are foreseeable, even inevitable. Blake's symbolism treats these developments, instead, as unpredictable leaps of awareness.

The breath conditions the final development of the poem in other ways as well. Its connection with Los's previous lessons complicates Los's point in *Milton* that his and his sons' role is to labor without knowing the duration of their efforts, "Till Albion is arisen" (23:54). In *Jerusalem*, while the moment of fruition remains unknowable, the process is conceived in a more interrelated way. Apocalypse will occur when Albion arises, but he cannot do so successfully until he is ideologically prepared, and this can occur only when the faculties of

prophecy, art, and labor overcome their own selfishness and division from Albion, becoming the "Breath Divine." In turn, it is strongly suggested — both for Los and later for Albion — that this selflessness is attained only under the mortal threat of the consolidation and advance of Antichrist.

Further, the overcoming of these divisive tendencies, which allows the breath to be felt, makes Los, in both his individual and social aspects, ready to give himself for Albion; hence, it makes him/them a part of Jesus, conceived as a unified humanity marked by that same willingness. The identification by which Albion perceives Jesus as Los is therefore literal, although it must be qualified. Jesus, or "the Lord the Universal Humanity," is seen in "the Likeness & Similitude of Los" (96:5, 7) because this humanity has now appeared in Los. Blake's text at this point maintains a complex double reference by which Jesus speaks but is also felt to be Los; when, for example, Albion feels terror "not for himself but for his Friend / Divine," the friend is felt both as Jesus and as Los, an identification strengthened by the following reference to Albion's wonder "at the Divine Mercy and at Los's sublime honour" (6:30, 31). Against this apparent identification of Los and Jesus, it has been argued that "likeness & similitude" maintains a distinction between the two, so that the "identification . . . is never quite complete or allowed to stand" (Deen 256). While this point is valid in itself, the assumption behind such arguments has been that if Jesus and Los are distinct, then Jesus remains transcendent and ineffable: "At the end of *Jerusalem* we are repeatedly baffled in our desire to know or to identify God" (*ibid.*). Such comments, however, slide over the middle term, the identity of Jesus. Blake is quite explicit, as already seen, that Jesus is "the Universal Humanity." Los, then, is *not* identical to Jesus, because he is only a portion of

this humanity, but neither is Jesus a transcendent entity; he is humanity and is felt in Los, who is no longer separated from universal humanity. Blake's reference to Jesus' presence in Los is, clearly, a version of the Incarnation. But it is one in which universal humanity, rather than a suprahuman entity, appears in an individual/collective human form.

The selflessness of which Los-Jesus is exemplar in turn determines the final turn in the apocalyptic plot, Albion's response to the advancing Covering Cherub/Antichrist. Albion has risen, as noted above, in "anger" and amid flames; in the following lines, he walks forward in "Revolutions of Action & Passion" (10), compels the "fallen" zoas to return to their rightful tasks, and finds Urthona/Los still laboring at his. These references have (at least) double meanings; they signify human renovation, but at the same time they evoke the conclusion to *The Four Zoas*, its own fire imagery, and, through the ambiguous reference of "Revolution," the failed French Revolution. Jesus' urging of "Friendship & Brotherhood" in the ensuing dialogue, and Albion's acceptance of this idea, will effect a shift in the imagery from fire to water, evidently representing the supersession of anger, or, perhaps, its temporary suppression from the surface of the narrative until the reappearance of fire in the heavens. Such a shift has occurred before in Blake, with negative significance: at the end of *America* Urizen's snows temporarily smother Orc's fires (16:9-15), and in Night VIIB of *The Four Zoas* the dispersal of Orc's fires is felt in the strewing of the Vortex/Vala "Like clouds upon the winter sky" (93:28; see Chap. 4). Here, the same dispersal of fire/wrath by water will be given positive meaning by its association with Jesus-Los.

An intellectually lazy response to this change will read it simply as an ex-

change of wrath, vengeance, or violence for "the forgiveness of sins." Read in the context of social thought, however, the passage is open to a more profound, and more socially and intellectually radical, meaning. In this context it suggests that Antichrist, as multiple psychic, social, and institutional structures of oppression, including the murderous violence of the ruling class detailed throughout the preceding poem, cannot be turned back by wrath alone. To defeat the tyrants requires, rather, positive solidarity and love *among the oppressed*, and the positive ideal of a renovated world — "Friendship & Brotherhood" and "Mysterious / Offering of Self for Another" (96:20-21). The social, mutualistic, class meanings of this idea have already been indicated; it remains to be seen how they are realized in practice. The crucial events occur when

> the Cloud overshadowing divided them asunder
> Albion stood in terror: not for himself but for his Friend
> Divine, & Self was lost in the contemplation of faith
> And wonder at the Divine Mercy & at Los's sublime honour
>
> Do I sleep amidst danger to Friends! O my Cities & Counties
> Do you sleep! rouze up! rouze up. Eternal Death is abroad
>
> So Albion spoke & threw himself into the Furnaces of affliction
> All was a Vision, all a Dream: the Furnaces became
> Fountains of Living Waters flowing from the Humanity Divine
> And all the Cities of Albion rose from their Slumbers, and All
> The Sons & Daughters of Albion on soft clouds Waking from Sleep
> Soon all around remote the Heavens burnt with flaming fires (29-40)

Quite apart from the lacuna that leaves the means of resistance ambiguous, four things stand out about this passage:

It describes a descent. As already noted, the topological significance of descent in Blake is as transition from a supramundane or intellectual sphere to the spheres of daily life and struggle, often called Generation or Ulro. While those terms are not used here, the furnaces of affliction to which Albion descends are clearly within those spheres. Hence, like Milton's descent, to which it is parallel, Albion's is a sign that the decisive combat with Antichrist must be fought on the real terrain of daily life, not in mental space. It should be emphasized that this interpretation depends primarily on Blakean topography, not on reading specific symbols as referring to social activity; if topography in Blake has any meaning at all, it is that downward movement is toward the material. But the point is reinforced by the specific site to which Albion descends, the furnaces.

The descent is into the common people. Throughout *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, the furnaces of affliction have been the sites of Los's labors and of historical oppression. We recall that the Spectre saw in them "Across all Europe & Asia. he saw the tortures of the Victims." In them, too, are manufactured "swords; arrows; cannons; mortars / The terrible ball: the wedge: the loud sounding hammer of destruction" (8:24, 73:11-12). But in addition to these meanings, they are the sites of concrete material labor; the laborers in them are, among other aspects, real workers; and the geographic locales found within them refer to actual popular struggles and martyrdoms during Blake's lifetime. In descending to the furnaces, then, Albion is not turning simply to the terrain of this-worldly struggle, but by synecdoche and metonymy, to the foundries, mills, and mines of Britain, to the neighborhoods around them, and to the people who

work and live there.

The descent is inspired by and appeals to collective solidarity. That Albion acts from love is the best-understood aspect of this passage. But it should be noted that the love is human solidarity on a collective scale. The Jesus at whose peril Albion is moved is the friend with whom he has been conversing "as Man with Man" (96:6) and, as noted above, is all but indistinguishable from Los; Los in his own right stirs Albion by his "sublime honour." But Los is, in aggregate, all those who have been faithful to Albion, and Albion's plural syntax has a general reference: "Do I sleep amidst danger to Friends!" Further, Albion cannot win the struggle against Antichrist by himself, but only by descending among, and appealing to, broader populations, and the response for which he appeals is collective as well: "O my Cities & Counties / Do you sleep! rouze up!" Blake's language, indeed, echoes handbills posted during the bread riots of September 1800, whose first days the Blakes witnessed — "Rouse to glory Ye slumbering Britons"; "rouze yourselves from that fatal sleep."[55] The cities and counties take on the same significance as at the end of *Milton* and in *Jerusalem* 34/38, i.e., masses of ordinary people acting in unity. The cities *are* their populations, and the appeal is for active joint aid in struggle.

The response is insurrectionary. The result of Albion's appeal is both an intellectual and social uprising: "all the Cities of Albion rose from their Slumbers[.]" The response emerges from the furnaces — themselves emblems of material production and oppressive suffering — and takes the form of a transforma-

55. The bills are quoted by Lord Mayor William C. Coombe in secret reports to the Duke of Portland, the Home Secretary, Sept. 17 and 18, 1800; qtd. Worrall *Culture* 45-46. Worrall shows that Blake was aware of the bread agitation and finds echoes of its language in *The Four Zoas* and other passages in *Jerusalem*.

tion of the furnaces into fountains. The fountains are the "living fountains of waters" where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 7:17), and therefore a promise of apocalyptic peace. But they are also an outpouring of the furnaces' populations. The waters flow from "the Humanity Divine," i.e., humanity united in brotherhood and solidarity, not here emblematized as Jesus, but appearing simply as itself. This transformation is "a Vision . . . a Dream," but not in the sense of an internal mental transformation. Rather, the people's *former existence*, in the furnaces, has become like a dream, and their new existence also appears as a vision or dream, as when the freed prisoner's wife and children "look behind at every step & believe it is a dream" (*America* 6:12). The "Vision" can be associated, indeed, with the "Vision; a perfect Whole" of 91:20, that is, a vision of brotherhood. The lack of specific description of what happens once the fountains pour out and the cities rise leaves open multiple possibilities on the level of direct social allegory, ranging from a violent struggle to a capitulation by the rulers to a united and determined population. The central point, however, is that the descent into the furnaces in response to the advance of Antichrist, the appeal to the cities to rouse themselves, and the resulting outpouring of human populations define a collective social movement, an oppositional mobilization of the people. It is therefore quite incorrect to summarize that Albion "understand[s] Jesus' act of self-sacrifice and indeed replicates it by throwing himself into the Furnaces of Affliction. . . . This single act . . . makes possible the immediate transformation of the universe" (Paley, *City* 232). Albion's act is indeed self-sacrificing in motivation but it is *not* a self-sacrifice — it is an appeal for solidarity, aid, and active response, and it is incomplete until this response — the surge of human "Waters" — makes possible

the transformation of the universe.[56]

The events on plate 96, and especially the flood of "Living Waters," express Blake's late sense of apocalypse as social upheaval — now actuated by brotherhood and self-sacrifice. The subsequent plates outline several further aspects of the process — such as the slaying of the Spectre, the visionary conversing of recovered humanity, and the final hymn to freedom, all discussed later — that have a strongly spiritual, nonmaterial emphasis. The actual apocalyptic moment, however, is shown beginning on the ground of real social life, with the heroic efforts of ordinary people roused to more than human devotion and self-sacrifice. Though highly compressed, the terse imagery of the cloud of Antichrist advancing from Sinai and Edom should carry a dense mass of accumulated associations from previous plates that make it clearly a figure for earthly tyranny — physical as well as psychic and spiritual. At the same time, the elements of Blake's new symbolic syntax — Jesus, the furnaces, and the cities — make it clear that the overthrow of tyranny can occur only through collective action inspired by brotherhood. The furnaces and cities would, indeed, imply working class popular action even if these images occurred here for the first time; but they do so much more richly because of the meanings elaborated for them throughout the body of the poem. These elements of Blake's symbolism make it possible to resolve the problems increasingly associated with the Orc symbol and to outline a social apocalypse without Orc.

56. Erdman too misses the significance of the furnaces and waters, writing that Albion's call to the cities "in itself accomplishes the revolution, demonstrating as it does that Albion has begun to think 'not for himself but for his friend' " (485). For some other treatments of plate 96 see Deen 254, Doskow 163-65, and Witke 207.

Social Agency: Blake's Synthesis

Blake's presentations of apocalyptic change, or social revolution, were accompanied from the start by ambiguities in what its symbolic embodiment, Orc, implied about social agency. These first appeared, in the early prophecies, as an ambiguity about the mass or elite character of social change, resulting from an identification of Orc both with mobilized populations and with the specific regime of French Jacobinism. Blake addressed these problems, in *Ahania*, by beginning the process of splitting the Orc symbol, elaborating the ambiguous features of Jacobinism through Fuzon while leaving Orc implicitly in his chains. In *The Four Zoas*, Blake's criticism of the French Revolution sharpened, motivating a radical reshaping of Orc. In that poem, Blake focused on the inability of Orc as elemental rage at oppression to withstand the temptation to divide against himself and join forces with Urizen. Orc now functioned as a dual symbol of mass oppression and of radical impulses that have lost their initial transforming impetus, their "wrath." With great acuity Blake showed that the temptation of power leads to a loss of oppositional energy and to submission to, and collusion with, Urizen. In Night VIII, in addition, the treatment of serpent-Orc's fusion with Urizen became a criticism of popular war-madness and support for repression. Finally, in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, the Orc symbol was split in a distinct way. *Milton* points to the inevitability of an Orc-Vala struggle if Milton cannot, or will not, free Orc in a larger struggle against "selfhood"; in a transformation of Blake's symbolism within the bounds of the poem, this struggle involves reorganizing the zoas as the cities, emblems of collective, mutualistic popular existence. *Jerusalem* points to the other side of *Milton*'s treatment. Imagining Orc as mere potentiality — the serpent coiled in the south — *Jerusalem*

examines the ethics and practicality of vengeance and dictatorship, rejecting both in favor of a broad trust in Albion's capabilities. Orc, then, is split into active presence in *Milton* and latent possibility in *Jerusalem*, but in both cases the emphasis is on the inadequacy of wrath as a principle of social transformation.

The alternative, however, is not social reconciliation. Indeed, the closing sequences of both poems show this to be impossible because of the independent existence of Satan or Antichrist, aspects of Los and Milton and of Albion — in the slightly different presentations of the two poems — that have crystallized as distinct entities. Blake's alternative to Orc, rather, is forgiveness and brotherhood as applied to Albion, an active social practice that, according to Blake's portrayal, makes possible human unification. The terms of Blake's symbolism make it clear what this unification would require. It must involve actual communities of mutual brotherhood and self-sacrifice (Jesus). These must be located in, and unify as conscious entities, communities of mass human habitation (cities). And the unified communities must take form around processes of art and material production and those who labor at them (furnaces). These symbolic elements resolve the ambiguities of agency associated with Orc.

There is a related reason for the shift of Blake's symbolism away from Orc. In addition to the increasingly problematical qualities Blake depicts in Orc's rebellion, Orc has inadequate symbolic possibilities for expressing the increasingly collective aspects of Blake's presentation. Orc was, of course, always a conceptualization of collective processes. But these were presented narratively as actions of an individual, implying a certain uniformity in the processes so represented; even the splitting of Orc shows opposed tendencies that each act as relatively unified beings. *Milton* and *Jerusalem* focus more and more on com-

plex relations within and between plural or collective entities — among Los, his sons, the laborers of the vintage, Erin, etc.; between all these and Albion; between Albion and his renegade sons and daughters (and, analogously, among Jerusalem, Vala, the daughters, and others my presentation has passed over); and, finally, among all these personified entities and those that are collective in form, such as the cities. Blake needs these increasingly varied elements because his presentation places growing emphasis on the social complexity of human renovation. He therefore elaborates varied, sometimes overlapping roles for his *dramatis personae*. Los, for example, in one aspect represents the prophetic faculty and the difficulties of maintaining its vocation "in time of trouble." This is both an artistic dilemma — the aspect most discussed in traditional writing about Blake — and a political one, that of holding to oppositional steadfastness in a time of apostasy, reaction, and political despair. In this aspect, Los engages in debates with his sons (in *Milton*) and interacts with his sons and daughters and with Erin to recover his faith (in *Jerusalem*).

These episodes are more than dramatizations of ideological positions. They make the point that prophetic and socially radical human capabilities are found as *communities* that do and should exist through debate. At the same time, Los and his sons have other aspects as well, primarily as material labor and art; in this aspect, their existence is complex indeed, since they maintain a potential for opposition to worldly tyranny and give form to social existence at the same time that they directly produce the wealth and power that oppress them and others. Finally, Los and his children, in interacting with the cities, Albion, etc., become the emblem of relations between minorities and majorities, small groups and larger populations; Blake uses the "friends of Albion"

episode, for example, both to show a radical community engaged in debate within itself and to show — and criticize — one way it interacts with the larger society. Orc, or any single entity, as presented in the early poems — an incantatory presence calling forth a single response — is an increasingly inadequate medium for a process more and more seen as interactive, voluntary, and mutually responsive.

An associated change takes place in the portrayal of the temptations of power that can subvert the process of social reformation. As we know, in *The Four Zoas* these are embodied in one part of the Orc symbol, and this treatment has its own integrity as a way of understanding the derailing of the French Revolution. But the process of betrayal of insurgent populations is a more general one, occurring both before the French Revolution (e.g., in the Cromwell regime) and after. Blake's representation becomes more general too, after *The Four Zoas*. He shows this process in *Milton* as a temptation of Milton by the sons and daughters of Rahab-Tirzah, and then transfers the whole problem to Los and his Spectre in *Jerusalem*. This last is the most comprehensive treatment: both individual revolutionaries and rebels, and oppositional populations, always face their own counterparts — those just like themselves — urging the logic and necessity of betrayal and despair. In making these changes, Blake loses some of the impact of *The Four Zoas*; Milton is not touched by the temptation and Los withstands it in a way that is too easily heroized (no reader believes for a moment that he will succumb to despair, and yet prophets often do).

But this treatment clarifies points left ambiguous in the image of divided Orc. Blake now indicates that popular groups cannot rise successfully if prophets and leaders lack a clear understanding of their own role. Further, in

Milton's "I know my power thee to annihilate / And be a greater in thy place" (*Milton* 38:29-30), Blake shows that the prophet-leader is in a position to negate liberation by taking supreme power — a temptation with a real history in revolutionary movements. The symbolism adopted in *Milton* does not fully resolve this problem, since Milton himself remains an emblem of command, as his "Obey" to Ololon shows all too clearly (40:29). The symbolism of Albion's descent into the furnaces in *Jerusalem* does provide resolution. Though this action is heroic, Albion is in no way a supreme leader; nor are Los or Jesus. The descent is an appeal for collective action and is itself an act of public organizing — like similar acts by generations of working men and women, the intellectuals who joined them, and intellectuals of the working classes who chose not to rise out of their class. The issue here is not that of avoiding violence, though Albion's symbolic action does imply doing so as far as possible. Rather, the issue is the avoidance of supreme rule, and the achievement of liberation through mutual struggle to build a cooperative commonwealth.

Finally, *Milton* and *Jerusalem* develop two ideas that add to, rather than directly revising, the ideas of earlier works, and yet do represent fundamental shifts in ideological emphasis. The first is the importance of what may be called the spiritual life of the working class, seen in such conceptions as the redemptive aspects of daily life (the doors the watch-fiends cannot find), the "Mysterious / Offering of Self for Another," and "Friendship & Brotherhood without [which] Man Is Not." These are *ethical* concepts. They are not necessary outgrowths of oppression or of simple resistance to oppression; rather — as Blake presents the case — they are necessary prerequisites for successful resistance. It is obvious that in these conceptions Blake finds a good deal of the glue to hold

his cooperative commonwealth together. Their importance is underlined by an act that follows the call for Jerusalem's return in the last pages of *Jerusalem* — the slaying of the Druid Spectre by the arrows of intellect (98:6-7). This action might perhaps be regarded as the completion of the struggle against Antichrist, since Albion recognized that entity as his "Self" (96:13), and hence, in a sense, a Spectre. But the apocalyptic passage implies that this struggle is completed with the burning of the fires in heaven, and it makes more sense to regard the Druid Spectre as a spiritual portion of the redeemed people that is slain *after* the struggle against Antichrist is completed. The slaying implies an intellectual struggle against cruelty, sacrifice, and support for war (the regular meanings of Druidism) *within* the people, a struggle for the spiritual health of the people. Though the contrast is not direct, this episode may be compared with the sado-masochistic voyeurism of the insect dance at the wine presses in *The Four Zoas.* If that episode is read critically, and if it is taken as referring in part to popular responses to the use of the guillotine, the import of the *Jerusalem* episode as an implied corrective to the mood of the dance is clear.

The second aspect of *Jerusalem* that adds to Blake's earlier conceptions is the evocation of redeemed humanity conversing "in Visionary forms dramatic . . . / . . . / . . . creating exemplars of Memory and of Intellect" (98:28-30). The significance of this episode as a model of intellectual contention and of recovered Adamic language has been well discussed,[57] but what is important for my purposes is, again, a comparison with *The Four Zoas* IX, specifically with Tharmas's version of the *America* 6 speech, "Let the slave grinding at the mill run out into the field" (134:18). The two moments are not counterposed; Tharmas's

57. On the latter aspect, see esp. Essick, *Language* 234-36.

speech as an anthem of liberation has full validity and finds its own echo in *Jerusalem*. But Blake *adds* to the apocalyptic conception of the earlier poem by specifying a postapocalyptic state of intellectual exchange, and, particularly, by avoiding direct speech — making the point that the content of the interchange cannot be known in advance. Both this episode and that of the Spectre are important enough to warrant treatment in my concluding chapter, in the context of other contemporary and subsequent conceptions of social liberation.

The conception of intellectual, spiritual, psychic, and social redemption given in these late poems thus both alters and adds to earlier conceptions. One point, however, remains constant: Blake's apocalypse is a social one, as expressed in the final speech in *Jerusalem*, the "Cry from all the Earth" (98:54):

> Where is the Covenant of Priam, the Moral Virtues of the Heathen
> Where is the Tree of Good & Evil that rooted beneath the cruel heel
> Of Albions Spectre the Patriarch Druid! where are all his Human Sacrifices
> For Sin in War & in the Druid Temples of the Accuser of Sin:[. . .]
> . . . . . .
> Where are the Kingdoms of the World & all their glory that grew on Desolation
> The Fruit of Albions Poverty Tree [. . .]
> . . . . . .
> Such is the Cry from all the Earth from the Living Creatures of the Earth
> And from the great City of Golgonooza in the Shadowy Generation
> And from the Thirty-two Nations of the Earth among the Living Creatures
>
> (98:46-49, 51-52, 54-56)

This is not a speech of mental freedom within an oppressive society (Frye, Damrosch), or an "apocalypse by imagination" (Abrams) — except so far as collective human imagination has laid its material hands on an actual social universe and altered it. The Covenant, Kingdoms, and Desolation are gone, in actual social fact, in "the Litteral expression." This point is underlined by the song's echoes of Tharmas in Night IX — "Are these the Slaves that groand along the streets of Mystery / Where are your bonds and task masters are these the prisoners / Where are your chains where are your tears" (134:25-27) — and, even more, of Blake's initial hymn to liberty:

> For Empire is no more, and now the Lion & Wolf shall cease.
>
> (*America* 6:15; *Marriage* 25)

The same point is made through the speakers in this closing tableau, a collective human social community that includes the redemptive brotherhood and the people of all nations: the city of Golgonooza ("Cities / Are Men"); the nations of the earth; and the "Living Creatures of the Earth" — one of whom (line 44), now "Humanize[d]," is "the all wondrous Serpent clothed in gems & rich array," or Orc.[58]

58. The serpent's gems have twice before been mentioned with unfavorable implications (55:13, 96:12); the word "Humanize" signals the transformation of a negative into a positive quality. (See Chap. 2.)

CHAPTER SEVEN

Blake and Marx

Blake's late understanding of apocalypse remains social-revolutionary, and yet it confounds several standard assumptions about what revolutionary conceptions mean. It is deeply hostile to elite dictatorship, committed both to substantive fraternity and to dialogue and exchange, and opposed to any notion of predestination or inevitability. If Blake retains a Christian patterning of history as fall, redemption, and apocalypse, he reconceives its outcome as deeply contingent, dependent on the human realization of brotherhood. He also modifies the workings of the pattern so that providential intervention becomes human and trust in providence becomes trust in human processes — "Labour well the Minute Particulars, attend to the Little-ones: / And those who are in misery cannot remain so long" (*Jerusalem* 55:51-52). Hence, Blake's humanization of apocalypse does not substitute a historical *telos* for a providential one; Blake envisions an apocalypse that *may* take place, not because it is encoded in the development of history but because humanity may be able to see the need for it.

Blake's conception, then, veers away from the tradition that nourished it. But, more important for a final evaluation of its significance, it is antithetical to the major secular conceptions of historical change that follow it in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first is the nineteenth-century gradualist

view of progress, which Blake's sense of ultimate crisis excludes. The second, my major concern, is Marxism, or what Fredric Jameson has called the historical "master narrative" of successive modes of production leading "from primitive communism to capitalism to communism" (*Political Unconscious* 33) — a conception that Jameson, in a complex discussion, qualifies yet ultimately affirms.[1]

Though this opposition between Blake's ideas and Marxist teleology is my main theme in this chapter, it will be well to approach it through the narrower lens of Blake's view of apocalypse. Here, a useful focus is provided by the sharp-sighted yet problematic reconsideration of apocalyptic in general in Steven Goldsmith's *Unbuilding Jerusalem: Apocalypse and Romantic Representation* (1993). Goldsmith's argument has three interrelated aspects. The first is a reassessment of apocalyptic discourse, both in Revelation and in seventeenth-

1. As I will take Jameson as a reference point for recent Marxist conceptions, it is worth noting some particulars of his discussion. He explicates the "narrative" as a "story" or "plot" whose "ultimate philosophical and methodological priority" must be assumed rather than demonstrated (19-21); its function for him is as a system by which to explain the underlying content of the overt ideas in literature. Jameson's conceptions of *telos* and inevitability are characteristically hard to pin down. Though he notes that the work of Althusser and his school has "effectively discredited the Marxist versions of a properly teleological history" (33), his concern is, in part, to rescue the Marxist base-superstructure concept with which such ideas have been associated from the challenge (in my view superficial) to which Althusser subjected them (23-49, esp. 36-40). Jameson's own view is that conceptions of historical progression and regression were, in classical Marxism, "fused into a wholly new order of thinking by the concept of historical inevitability," enabling Marx to "[show]" the dialectical relationship of these tendencies; "to think dialectically," Jameson affirms, "is to invent a space from which to think these two identical yet antagonistic features together" (235) — presumably the "space" of the "master narrative." Essentially, then, Jameson endorses both the "master narrative" of successive modes of production and the conception of inevitability that shapes Marx's dialectic; he uses both in his practice in this volume. He qualifies both conceptions in his later *Post-Modernism* (xxi), but without clearly stating his new position.

and eighteenth-century commentary. Here, Goldsmith pursues an argument already familiar to us, that apocalyptic discourse "attempt[s] to arrogate power by speaking in/of a voice that originates outside history" (21). This idea, though clearly derivative of Derrida's presentation of the "overlordly" in apocalyptic speech, shades the discussion in a subtly different way. For Goldsmith, the claims of apocalyptic to transcendent origin have most frequently served the politically conservative purpose of removing the hope of justice from a historical to a suprahistorical context; recent views (including Derrida's) of apocalyptic as primarily a mode of speech rather than of social action have similarly transformed "matters of power into matters of language" (15).[2] These considerations lead to the second facet of Goldsmith's discussion, an argument that Blake (along with Percy and Mary Shelley) is concerned to humanize and also to question apocalyptic language and claims — to "resist the temptation to speak with the authority that comes from positioning oneself outside history" (22). By highlighting the representational rather than authoritative and transcendental functions of language, Goldsmith believes, these writers fuse millenarian traditions with an emergent democratic politics.

While these points are similar to my own contention that Blake repudiates the authoritarian aspects of apocalyptic, Goldsmith goes further and asserts that Blake's "representation does its political work precisely *by blocking apocalypse*" (138). Indeed, Goldsmith endorses, in part, deconstructive readings and a broader "working consensus among Blake scholars" (162) that emphasize

2. Though Goldsmith devotes substantial space to Derrida's "Of an Apocalyptic Tone," he limits his treatment to a criticism of what he sees as Derrida's view of apocalyptic as a "textual politics without precise historical coordinates" (15), and does not acknowledge Derrida's discussion of the authoritarian aspects of apocalyptic.

Blake's resistance to closure and reworking of perspectives as subversive of any idea of final transformation. Goldsmith's identification with this consensus is a dissenting one, however, and it is here that his greatest pertinence for my discussion begins to emerge. He emphasizes the political inadequacy of this assumed Blakean focus on "the subversion of truth and authority as they are represented in discourse [rather than] the subversion of power relations themselves" (164); and, identifying Blake with a similar tendency in democratic politics starting with Paine, he attacks the inadequacy of this focus in politics as well. Thus Goldsmith's critique of apocalyptic discourse and his elucidation of anti-transcendent elements in Blake merges with a third level of discussion, a criticism of democratic politics as such:

> By privileging language so fully, democratic politics threatens to introduce a new, more subtle formalism that in practice might serve the oldest conservative function of formal apocalypse: the containment of millenarianism, or in secular terms, the containment of disruptive actions[.] (23)

Goldsmith's discussion reveals a surprising twist, then. Beginning with an exposure of authoritarian aspects of apocalyptic, he ends by criticizing the limits of antiauthoritarian discourse; and by treating representation as only linguistic, he implicitly revalidates a disregard for representation — but from a socially radical, rather than conservative, point of view.

Goldsmith's study has a double relevance to my discussion. The first is in its approach to Blake. Like the deconstructive readings that he critically endorses, Goldsmith — ironically enough — builds his case on a series of false closures and binaries. To begin with, he identifies as consensual what is only one

trend in recent Blake scholarship — the emphasis on continual reworking of perspectives, and, even more narrowly, on speech rather than action. And he amalgamates Blake with Paine — and Paine with narrow conceptions of constitutional democracy — on the basis of shared concerns without considering points of divergence. On the basis of this amalgamation, he asserts that Blake saw "representative democracy . . . [as] capable of producing revolutionary social change" (163), in the face of considerable evidence that Blake considered political absolutism only one among a pleiad of evils and viewed free discourse as a necessary component of a broad social revolt, rather than a sufficient means in itself for changing society. Further, Goldsmith conflates two senses of apocalypse in arguing that Blake's "apocalyptic imagery consistently collides with . . . [his] subversion of apocalypse through representation" (141). Goldsmith here assumes in Blake the collapse of apocalypse into mere language that he identifies in the exegetical tradition, and hence finds that subverting apocalyptic discourse subverts apocalypse altogether. The idea that Blake may rework his tradition into a conception of apocalyptic upheaval without apocalyptic authority is never considered.

Matching these false closures is a set of false binaries — in particular, for Blake as well as for radical-democratic politics, an assumed opposition between linguistic questioning of verbal authority and active opposition to social authority. In a particularly telling example from his political discussion, Goldsmith cites the burgeoning of pamphleteering and verbal debate in England in the 1790s to show that "[a]uthority had already been made a matter of representation, a rivalry of words" (173); a comparable proliferation of written polemics in *every* modern period of social upheaval, from the English Revolution to the

1960s, suggests instead that linguistic questioning and oppositional social action are closely related.

Goldsmith's greater importance for my argument, however, lies in the contemporary political perspective that his treatment of Blake, apocalypse, and the Paine tradition motivates. This perspective is established through a discussion of recent socialist reconsiderations of Marxism undertaken by Claude Lefort, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and others.[3] For Goldsmith, efforts by these writers to incorporate aspects of the radical-democratic tradition into socialist thinking partake of the overvaluation of verbal representation that Goldsmith has already discerned as the negative legacy of the Paine tradition. The present-day "apologists for democracy," Goldsmith argues, concede too much to democratic formalism and ignore Marx's "critique of democratic politics," which emphasized democracy's failure to affect economic power relations (191, 199). In this somewhat circuitous way, Goldsmith reaches the conclusion that the antiauthoritarian emphasis he discerns in Blake and other Romantics, as well as in Paine and the radical-democratic tradition, has led to a dead end that will endure "[u]ntil Marx's critique is more adequately answered" (204). And he adds that criticism of totalitarian possibilities in Marxism itself is misdirected: Marx "never stated that the liberal-democratic state was worse than the ancien régime. He simply argued that we could do better" (202n.).

Goldsmith's treatment here is marked by closures and binaries similar to those of his literary-historical discussion. On the one hand, all political strategies concerned to argue from democratic premises are reduced to the common

3. Goldsmith focuses on Lefort's *Democracy and Political Theory* (1988) and Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democracy* (1985).

denominator of an approach limited to advocacy of "representative government and free speech" (164). On the other, Goldsmith constructs a binary opposition in which advocacy of political rights and the struggle for social rebellion become mutually exclusive. In doing so, Goldsmith allows Marx, through his criticism of "democratic politics," to stand for the alternative, social rebellion, and he definitionally excludes strategies that would combine social rebellion with political rights.[4]

The full implications of this discussion, however, cannot be understood without referring to the twentieth-century history that lies everywhere around the margins of Goldsmith's argument but is excluded from his text; the deconstructionist view that any text is characterized as much by the questions it omits as by those it considers is fully valid here. The history in question, briefly, is that of the deaths of six to nine million people (perhaps many more) in Stalin's purges;[5] imprisonment and murder both of political oppositionists — especially left-wing ones — and of artists and writers critical of Stalin's rule; and, not coincidentally, a massive stripping away of the social rights of the working class. This history could, of course, be spelled out in more detail and extended to other Soviet-type regimes; and the history of revolts against them, and strikes and sabotage that never grew into full-scale revolt, could be added as well.[6] But

4. Goldsmith does refer, in a footnote, to Raymond Williams's distinction between democracy in a narrow procedural sense and as understood "[i]n the socialist tradition . . . to mean *popular power* . . . exercised by the majority" (199n., quoting *Keywords* 96). But he makes nothing of the distinction and, especially, does not comment on Williams's reference to majority rule.

5. The calculation is Robert Conquest's for the total number imprisoned in the four purges of 1936-39, the large majority of whom, Conquest believes, were either executed or died in prison, the camps, or exile (*Terror* 525-35). Estimates taking in larger time-periods yield higher figures.

6. To try to summarize the vast literature on these topics in a footnote would be futile. But mention should perhaps be made of strikes and dis-

enough has been said, perhaps, to indicate the inadequacy of responding to concerns about Marxism and totalitarianism by referring to Marx's view of the *ancien régime*.

This historical context places in sharper relief the counterposition that Goldsmith implicitly draws between Blake and Marx. An evaluation of this counterposition, however, must examine both Blake's and Marx's conceptions analytically, rather than assuming the validity of the latter or taking it as a methodological starting point. I use John Brenkman's criticism of Marx's conception of culture as a point of reference. In his *Culture and Domination* (1987), Brenkman distinguishes between two aspects of Marx's paradigm: the critical and utopian, which Brenkman calls "enthymemic," and the philosophical and theoretical, or "epistemic":

> In [its] critical-utopian register, Marx's is an *enthymemic* discourse: it argues from values to conclusions about reality; it advocates action within the reality so understood; and it promotes new values to orient that action and change those real circumstances.... [Marxism, however, also] lays claim to being an *epistemic* discourse: it argues from a philosophically grounded account of the historical movement of society as a whole.... (68)

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turbances in the post-Stalin USSR, which are less known than earlier events; see, *inter alia*, Belotserkovsky, "Workers' Struggles" *passim*. One incident Belotserkovsky recounts, the suppression of a mass strike and demonstration in Novocherkassk in 1962, was subsequently confirmed in its main points by surviving witnesses, according to a *New York Times* account headlined, "Soviet Paper Lists Secret '62 Killings. Official Article Discloses How Soldiers Shot Strikers and Later Buried Bodies" (June 3, 1989, A6).

In a crystallization of points implied throughout Marx's texts, Brenkman summarizes three conceptions that form the core of the "epistemic discourse": the social character of production (and human life in general), the private character of appropriation throughout history, and the overcoming of the contradiction between the two in the future society, communism:

> Having construed capitalism as the estrangement of intrinsically social human existence, Marx then argues that communism, as the abolition of private property, is (to be) the overcoming of that estrangement and the achievement of [truly free] human relationships. . . . (70)

Brenkman's concern is not with the validity of this basic model, but with the inadequacy of its conception of freedom, which he traces to that much-discussed target, Marx's base-superstructure topology. Brenkman notes the absence of substantive conceptions of debate, politics, and the plurality of cultures in Marx's theoretical model:

> As a condensation of Marx's enthymemic discourse, [his] threefold definition of the true realm of freedom is a utopian image with considerable critical force. As a thesis within the epistemic discourse, however, it establishes a thoroughly questionable chain of determinations: activity as an end-in-itself will follow from the egalitarian distribution of free time and will (consequently) be uncoercive and reciprocal activity. On this view, the political sense of freedom never figures *directly* in the valuation of culture. The coercion or noncoercion, nonreciprocity or reciprocity, of cultural practices is determined externally — by social relations, which are increasingly for Marx separated from cultural

practices as such and defined as relations of production. (76)

Brenkman's conclusions that the "political sense of freedom" plays no direct part in Marx's idea of culture, and that consequently there is an "eclipse of politics and culture in Marxism" (76), are searching and uncompromising. But while this criticism of Marx's derivation of cultural from productive relations is cogent, one may note a more basic source for the "eclipse," namely, the "epistemic" model itself and the way it connects history with the future. This problem, moreover, affects not only Marxism's idea of ultimate freedom, but its attitude toward ethics and culture in the present. It will have been noted that while the first two "epistemic" conceptions make potentially verifiable statements about the past, the third refers to the future and is not verifiable in the same sense. The superseding of class society by communism, in this conception, is a future occurrence that is scientifically grounded; though it is dependent on human will, that will is itself brought into being by a dialectical logic assumed to be immanent in historical development.[7] The link between the first two propositions and the third, then, is taken to be verifiable on the basis of the

7. The conception of Marxism's scientific character is implied in such writings as Marx's preface to *An Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* (see Chap. 1 above) and explicit in Engels's *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. (The German title, *Die Entwicklung der Sozialismus von Utopie zur Wissenschaft*, or *The Development of Socialism from a Utopia to a Science*, conveys the idea even more clearly.) It is in any case a part of Marxism as historical praxis. In *Marxism and Form*, Jameson criticizes the idea: "such otherwise estimable summaries of Marx as those of Bukharin" do a disservice in that "the notion of a 'scientific socialism' encourages the misconception that Marxism is an objective and systematic body of ideas rather than a form moving in time" (362). But if Jameson really objects to the idea he should blame it on Marx and Engels, not Bukharin; in any case the notion of "a form moving in time" is only a more pretentious version of the same thing.

basis of the assumed historical dialectic, or teleological paradigm, connecting past and future.

This point has several implications. One I have already noted (Chapter 1): the assumption of a teleological pattern, understood in the present only by a minority, leads to viewing the minority's conceptions as "true" historical consciousness, and potentially to imposing the minority's will on those who disagree with the pattern either factually or ethically. This implication needs, perhaps, no more elaboration than Georg Lukács has already given it, but it should be emphasized that it is not a spinoff or misreading of the basic Marxist paradigm, but deeply grounded in its root assumption of an immanent historical pattern connecting past and future, or "master narrative" (Jameson).

A second implication bears directly on Brenkman's points about politics and culture. Since the "epistemic" model *is* conceived as a "philosophically grounded account of the historical movement of society" (Brenkman), that is, as deducible as a whole from the movement of historical "forces," it regards both ethical and political argument, and at a deeper level cultural practices, as extrinsic to its basic character. While there may be political argumentation *within* the Marxist discourse, the paradigm itself is assumed not to consist of ethical or political statements (i.e., statements about moral or social "goods"), but, rather, to be an objective statement about the future (ultimately to be verified by the fact that it will come true). This aspect of the paradigm is intimately connected with the political implication regarding minority rule noted above. If, for example, one lacks a belief in an immanent historical pattern leading to classless communism, then one may argue politically or ethically with a worker who holds conservative or acquisitive-competitive beliefs. But if one believes in such a pattern, then statements made within it are simply factual statements and

workers who reject them do not recognize the truth about their condition. In fact, Lukács would insist, they are not class conscious. Though naturally it would be preferable to win them over, their opinions may be disregarded if necessary, and in times of crisis these workers, even if in the majority, may be ruled by force. A series of revealing comments by Soviet Marxist leaders,[8] and a good deal of blood besides, go to show the applicability of this statement. Hence. the "eclipse of politics" that Brenkman notes in Marx's model of society flows from the assumed existence of an immanent logic linking historical past and future.

The same is true of the "eclipse" of culture, in a more subtle way. All cultural activities, whether artistic productions, religious practices, or patterns of daily living, ultimately involve ideas about the overall nature of reality, about ethics, and about personal and social conduct and goals. Cultural life, then, consists of the interaction between these explicit or implicit ideas, including open or tacit debates, tolerance, and/or attempts to suppress competing cultures and their expression. The assumption of an immanent pattern in history, like other conceptions of knowable absolute meaning, in effect turns this interaction from an open to a closed field. Cultural products and practices may be evaluated as expressions of certain aspects of the paradigm, which they embody or reflect in a distorted way — such as the assumed culture of the progressive bourgeoisie in Lukács's discussions of the nineteenth-century novel, or the problem of "reification" in Jameson's. But they are not considered as theoretical,

8. One example among many is Trotsky's statement at the Tenth Congress of the Bolshevik Party in March 1921, against the syndicalist "Workers' Opposition": "The party is obliged to maintain its dictatorship, regardless of temporary wavering in the spontaneous moods of the masses, regardless of the temporary vacillations even in the working class" (qtd. Deutscher 509).

ethical, or imaginative evaluations of social-ethical problems on the *same level* as the paradigm; as independent *ideas* about how society is or should be constituted, cultural conceptions outside the paradigm are simply discounted. In asserting, for example, that semiotic theoretical texts can be taken as "the symptomatic projection[s] of something quite different, namely of social contradiction" (*Political Unconscious* 83), Jameson assumes an objective or "prior" status for the idea of social contradiction which — as Marxism's *theory* of social contradiction — it has not been granted by all parties in the debate; and he asserts that this theory, alone, can evaluate cultural expressions. The result is an effective devaluation of cultural products to the status of reflections, and cultural life becomes not society's way of solving social-ethical problems, but an adjunct to an independently-existing way of solving them.

This approach acts, in fact, as one form of cultural intolerance, though the intolerance is often only implied. When Jameson refers, no doubt in a deliberately provocative way, to the works of Dostoevsky, Conrad, and Orwell as "powerful counter-revolutionary tracts," part of a long "tradition of counter-revolutionary propaganda" (*Political Unconscious* 268, 202), one feels the force both of his use of the Marxist historical paradigm to evaluate literature and of his choice of terms whose own history is one of punishing ideological and political criticism by imprisonment and execution.

A final implication of the dependence of Marx's "epistemic discourse" on statements about the future is closely linked with those already mentioned. If the dialectical progression that joins the first two "epistemic" propositions with the third is *not* assumed to be immanent in history, then the third proposition becomes, precisely, enthymemic rather than epistemic — in fact, an ethical statement about the kind of future one *wishes* to see. Brenkman's phrasing, "is (to

be) the overcoming of that estrangement [etc.]," makes this rather clear: the words in parentheses present the future as scientific projection, and yet, read critically, they reveal the dependence of this projection on ethical preference. But if, in fact, the third proposition is ultimately an ethical one, then several further points follow. (1) Since there is no teleologically grounded future, there is no such thing as false consciousness — there are only distinct conceptions that compete as ideas, and, additionally, as organized political and military bodies. (2) Since there is no false consciousness, there can be no minority rule that embodies the true (future, teleological) consciousness or true interests of the masses; there is only minority rule that embodies *ideas about* the interests of the masses. (3) Finally, different statements about the future, from affirmations of human solidarity to projections of competitive, elitist, racist, or sexist possibilities and visions, are all ethical rather than scientific in character — if a society based on ideals of equality and mutuality is to be argued for, the argument must be on ethical grounds.

We may now return to Blake. The cluster of late Blakean ideas with which I have been concerned may be related to several contemporary intellectual and political contexts. Some of these contextualizations reveal ambiguous aspects because of the extraordinary complexity of Blake's works and the possibility of reading them legitimately in more than one way. I have stressed, for example, that Blake's use of heavily Christian vocabulary and symbolism expressed a socially radical understanding of Jesus and the Christian message, and enabled Blake — putatively, at least — to engage in debate with Christians and other religious persuasions about the meaning of a common vocabulary. Nevertheless, Blake's terms are open to fully orthodox and socially quietistic interpretations, and have been read this way repeatedly. One instance of this prob-

lem would be Milton's speech on putting off "In Self annihilation all that is not of God alone" (*Milton* 38:48). In Chapter Six, I argued that the last phrase refers to all that does not give itself in service to divine humanity. While I continue to think this gloss identifies Blake's deepest meaning, this and similar passages can be read at a superficial level as referring to service to God *rather than* humanity.

The ambiguity of some of Blake's late conceptions deepens when they are placed in social context. The endorsement of "mercy" or "forgiveness of sins," for example, though directed in Blake's texts toward Albion's sins, still has much in common with the ideas of class conciliation that other reformers, such as Robert Owen, used to distance themselves from an increasingly confrontational labor movement in the 1820s. Similarly, Blake's qualified advocacy of planting "The seeds of Cities & of Villages in the Human bosom" (*Jerusalem* 83:55) in place of direct opposition to the ruling powers, and his warning against "fury premature" (*Milton* 23:47), can be read as opposing outright rebellion without spiritual preparation, but also as opposing partial, daily struggles such as strikes, mass demonstrations, etc. In this latter aspect they are deeply ambiguous, since limited struggles are one means by which social groups learn organization and self-reliance.

Another point, Blake's affirmation of ultimate popular resistance to tyranny, shows distinct aspects depending on how it is contextualized. In relation to the conspiratorial tradition in reform politics, Blake is distinguished by his rejection of coercion and minority action. In conventional political terms, then, Blake may seem "moderate." But in relation to actual moderate and intellectual reform trends, a distinct set of oppositions emerges. Here Blake may usefully be compared to Shelley. I have already noted that both writers finesse the

question of whether violence is likely in a popular uprising; Shelley, however, while admitting the justice of violent revolt if one should occur, directly advocates nonresistance to violent repression ("Philosophic View" 48; "The Mask of Anarchy," 340-47). In this respect Shelley approximates Blake's stand in the manuscript draft that he drew on for "The Grey Monk" and "I saw a Monk of Charlemagne," and goes farther toward programmatic pacifism than Blake did in *Jerusalem* (see Chap. 6). In a second aspect of their presentations, that of the mass or elite character of resistance, Blake's doctrine is, unambiguously, one of *popular* action, as the Albion symbol in all its meanings makes clear. Shelley, in contrast, favors popular activity, but with the leading role played by "poets, philosophers and artists . . . Godwin, Hazlitt Bentham and Hunt" — an emphasis based at least in part on Shelley's belief that the "refined and cultivated intellect" is less subject to the temptation of retribution than "the ignorant and uneducated" ("Philosophic View" 52, 55). Shelley's model, then, tends to perpetuate the deference of the people to the educated classes in a way foreign to Blake.[9] Additionally, Blake's emphasis on preparation may be compared to Shelley's explicit advocacy of a two-stage revolution, with which it is similar in some ways, but in others quite different. Shelley argues for an initial agitation for concessive reforms, followed by a fuller struggle for a republic, the redistribution of wealth, etc., after a decade or two, when the people "become fitted to demand more" ("Philosophic View" 52). The stress on preparation, then, is to some degree a common theme of the time;[10] what is distinct about Blake is his

9. On the other hand, as several recent interpreters have stressed, Shelley actually modified his poetic practice in an effort to reach a popular readership, developing a more accessible style in the political poems of 1819 (Curran, *Annus* 186; Scrivener, *Radical Shelley* 199-246 *passim*; Goldsmith 234-50 *passim*). Blake made no such effort.

10. It is found in Cartwright as well; in a statement dictated during his last

conception of a single apocalyptic upheaval, in contrast to Shelley's advocacy of incremental reform.

What distinguishes Blake from Shelley and the moderate republican trends, then, is his emphasis on mass upheaval and total liberation — in Blake's intellectual terms, a religious, sexual, social, and psychic apocalypse that destroys the earthly power of Antichrist — *in preference to* reforms enacted from above and gradual change. What distinguishes him from the conspiratorial elements of the Paineite and Jacobin traditions, on the other hand, is the clarity with which he insists that change must come through patient preparatory work and an awakening of the people that can be worked for, but not foreseen or brought about by an act of will. These distinctions become especially pointed in light of later developments. Shelley's stance, of course, approximated the actual course that the reform struggle would follow in later decades; but, contrary to his hopes, that strategy did not establish a republic or the equal distribution of wealth. (One may argue, of course, that liberty of representation and a lessening of exploitation are sufficient goals, and many would share this view; but it was not Shelley's.) Blake's contrasting emphasis on preparation for a somewhat vaguely defined apocalyptic confrontation was, at any rate, not less realistic than Shelley's as a way of reaching radical goals. In the decades after 1820, too, the conspiratorial tradition in England was largely though not totally eclipsed by the emergence of the mass labor movement, while the French Jacobin tradition, along with other intellectual and social elements, underwent transformation in

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illness, Cartwright states, "I have never ceased to entertain the most consolatory hopes of the ultimate establishment of civil and religious liberty: but to this end, there must be virtuous instruments, which, it is to be hoped, the times will supply" (*Life* 2:282).

the emergence of Marxism. What these two otherwise distinct social-intellectual trends had in common was the emphasis on mass work and grounding in the actual life of the working class — an element I have traced in Blake as well. They were separated by differing attitudes to reform and authority — with the developing labor tradition accepting Shelleyan perspectives and Marxism stressing (at least rhetorically) an ultimate transformation justified by its own historicized version of apocalyptic authority. Blake's emphasis on the common life, persuasion, and apocalyptic change, then, represented a linkage lost in the subsequent development of the labor and revolutionary movements.

Because of this linkage, Blake's most fruitful contextualization is in relation to the chief later paradigm of social liberation, Marxism. Of the several ways in which Blake's conception is different from Marxism's, the most basic is its combination of apocalypse in action with a rejection of what Goldsmith calls apocalyptic "univocalization" (58), secularized in Marxist discussion as immanent historical logic, the "true" consciousness based on it, and the devaluation of politics and culture. Blake's rejection of "univocalization" is dramatized in the conversing of a reborn humanity "in Visionary forms dramatic" on the morrow of apocalypse (*Jerusalem* 98:28-40). This passage has been subjected to proto-deconstructive and deconstructive readings arguing that it fails to achieve a perfect unity of word and object, but remains within the "fallen" world of allegory and trope.[11] Except for the misconception that Blake was trying to

11. Damrosch 345-48, Miller 162-67. Miller correctly notes that Blake's language in this passage retains "a system of oppositions. . . . The lawfulness implicit in 'according to' balances the freedom of absolute creativity; a principle of 'fitness & order' coexists with the desire for '[n]ew Expanses' " (165, citing lines 30, 40, and repeated uses of "according to"). But Miller regards these characteristics as indicating the failure to achieve a transcendent language, rather than a rejection of the desirability of such a language. Miller also perceives, as a tension within the passage, a shift from the human to "a sudden allegory of

achieve such a unity, this is indeed the passage's point. It rejects the conception of a post-apocalyptic world in which divine revelation is immediately present and authoritative, and in which, therefore, there is no need for, or even possibility of, differences in language. The passage presents, instead, the remaking of the world by human cooperative debate following an apocalyptic change. This conception is evidently the opposite of the "eclipse of politics and culture" that Brenkman notes in Marxism.

Returning to conventional political categories, and particularly to the "right-left" continuum used to think about revolution (Chapter 1), it can be seen that Blake's approach combines values that are usually assigned to "center" and "left" positions — democratic discourse and insurrection, respectively. This alone makes Blake's political thought worth examination. But Blake goes beyond simply making this linkage. As we know, Blake criticized the social divisions and temptations to supreme power that set Fuzon implicitly against Orc, serpent Orc against human Orc, and, potentially though not actually, Milton against Orc (*Ahania*, *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*). These treatments argue that the "overlordly" relation — the claim to a position of supreme authority from which to liberate a passive humanity — cannot in reality liberate the suppressed elements of society and psyche that Blake calls Orc. Now, in the "Visionary forms" conception, Blake argues the corollary — that only by repudiating authoritative discourse and its suppression of difference does apocalypse as free mass action become possible.

A second difference from the Marxist approach is ultimately related to this one, but should first be examined in its own right. The last chapter noted

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the divine" in lines 4-45, but does not note the redefinition of Jehovah's voice (line 40) as that of the "Living Creatures of the Earth," which resolves the tension (line 54; see Chap. 5 above).

the annihilation of the "Druid Spectre" *after* the apocalyptic rising (*Jerusalem* 98:5) as expressing a need to struggle for the spiritual health of the working class or common people. The episode exemplifies, more broadly, the independent role of utopian values in Blake, and these aspects are linked. These values may be taken as religious, spiritual, or ethical — depending on how one regards them; for Blake they are certainly religious. But in any case they are not derivative of an underlying deeper level of reality, either in the Marxist sense of derivation from a dialectical historical scheme or in the sense supplied by Blake's intellectual tradition, that of accordance with a divine plan. The values of love and brotherhood, especially in the sense of devotion to universal humanity, correspond to Blake's beliefs about the nature of Jesus, and this Jesus is immanent in humanity. But he is present as humanity's own capacities for comradeship and persuasion, not as an overriding suprahuman principle — "I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend." Humanity's response to its own potential to unify in love (to become Jesus) is therefore motivated *by* love, not by obedience to higher authority.[12] Further, as the emphasis on love indicates, the response is a free one, not a simple recognition of necessity; in this respect Blake's view differs from the Hegelian conception of freedom as the understanding of necessity that Engels affirms and incorporates into Marxism.[13] As we have seen, it is love that draws Los to Albion's side when he is free to

12. These points are especially marked in a contrast between *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*. In the former, Jesus appears in a relatively orthodox, and certainly terrifying, manifestation, as the "Cloud of the Son of Man," a cloud of "Blood dazling upon the heavens" (Night IX, 123:27, 33). In *Jerusalem* he appears beside Albion, arguably as a result of Los's own transformation, and engages in quiet persuasion.

13. See *Anti-Dühring* 136-37.

"expatiate in the Gardens of bliss," and it is terror "for his Friend / Divine" that leads Albion to plunge into the furnaces (*Jerusalem* 82:82, 96:30-31).

These spiritual-ethical values and the explicit utopianism of the apocalyptic pages in *America*, *The Four Zoas*, and *Jerusalem* become Blake's means of bridging the gap between the present consciousness of Albion (and Los) and the consciousness that can create an apocalypse. As such, they are an alternative for the Marxian *telos* that Blake rejects in the Christian form familiar to him ("But how this is as yet we know not, and we cannot know; / Till Albion is arisen" [*Milton* 23:53-54]). They answer too, in what Marxism would surely regard as a fuzzy, unscientific way, the question of how apocalyptic (revolutionary) consciousness will come to exist — unanswered in Marxism itself. Blake's answers are directly ethical. His presentation of the "Visionary forms" is shaped by the kind of universe he wishes to see, not just a conception of what is possible. However, the Marxist conception, with its relative indifference to culture and ethics, is *also* an ethical preference, though the model itself tends not to recognize this. Of the various aspects of Marxism, Blake would have found its rationalism, its opposition to utopian speculation and the motivating force of ethical ideas, and, especially, its conception of the communist future as scientifically determined the most repugnant.

Aside from their intrinsic importance, the ethical-spiritual claims in Blake's scheme bear an important relation to his idea of a post-apocalyptic world of open discourse. This conception raises a crucial problem also found in secular revolutionary theories: how is it possible to have a completely free, democratic politics in a post-revolutionary society without at least the possibility of the reemergence of class and political oppression? This issue does not simply

involve a choice between tolerating or suppressing a small class of exploiters, but primarily relates to the free speech and other political and social rights of ordinary people. This is so, first, because the exploiters inevitably have millions of supporters who are tied materially *or by belief* to their system of rule; and second, because ideas of individual acquisitiveness, class, racial, and sexual superiority, etc., are shared in varying degrees by supporters of the new system. Marxism is, of course, aware of this point, which it conceptualizes through Marx's formula that the new society will be "economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges" (*Critique* 8). Blake, however, is more frank in facing the problem of the deep internalization of oppressive values (for example, in *Jerusalem* 45), and his concerns with psychic division and sexual deformation and their relations to social oppression give considerably more scope for understanding the problem. In either case, the persistence of such tendencies means that there can be no free speech and organization without the possibility of a reemergence of oppression. One classic Marxist response to this issue calls (in theory) for freedom for all political and social views "within the revolution," or, in the Maoist formulation of the same idea, for giving (supervised) scope to "non-antagonistic contradictions among the people"; at the same time, views that are against the revolution, or "antagonistic contradictions" in the Maoist terminology, are to be repressed. These responses, however, presuppose an authority empowered to decide which views are "within the revolution" or "nonantagonistic," and hence they create a supreme power entitled to suppress speech and action.[14]

14. This problem has an economic dimension as well; a Marxist defense of dictatorship would assert that if the new society is built in an advanced international economy, or rapidly expands production to improve material existence, the majority of people will support the regime and their speech and actions will not need to be limited. Aside from any other difficulties it might have, this con-

Blake's response, in contrast, is to rely on the active force of brotherhood and love to make full freedom possible without the reemergence of oppression. In this conception, the conscious commitment of a large enough group of people to cooperative forms of social organization and to fraternal political and social relations — cemented by the religious idea of a humanized Jesus — would be sufficient to allow open political debate and organization to occur without acquisitive and oppressive behavior becoming dominant. No doubt this idea is open to the charge of naïveté. But it is not necessarily more naïve than supposing that an elite with unlimited power will or can rule in the interests of the common people, or that a social system designed to maximize capital growth can produce a free and prosperous life for all. In any case, Blake's focus on the spiritual and ethical life of the working class or common people is not just important as an alternative to traditional left-wing disinterest in religion and ethics, but is an important component of his idea of an apocalyptic rising that leads to a society of mutual rights.[15]

Blake's late view of apocalypse, then, offers an implied criticism of and alternative to the most important model of human liberation in the epoch fol-

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ception assumes that people's political, ethical, and spiritual values flow directly out of their economic condition, and this is not true. In any new society, there will be common people who for ethical, religious, or philosophical reasons do not support the regime.

15. Besides the Marxist conception and this reliance on "brotherhood," a third approach might hold that humanity will recognize the necessity of creating and maintaining a cooperative society as an alternative to the military and ecological destruction of the planet. Such an idea is certainly involved in the image of the cloud advancing from the east (*Jerusalem* 96). But recognition of a threat to planetary existence does not mean the threat will be fought through cooperation, so an ethical appeal is still necessary.

lowing his own. In doing so, it recognizes the same problems of oppression that Marxism deals with, but attacks dictatorial elements that were common to Jacobinism and Marxism. It is to be emphasized, however, Blake's criticism is leveled against solutions that, in his view, failed to break the chain of oppression; it is not a denial of the need to break the chain or an internalization of this process. The central problems leading to Blake's concern with apocalypse remain: the structures and institutions of oppression, and their human executors, threaten universal destruction; how can the threat be turned back? Rebellion occurs, but is not successful, or, without an overall vision that goes to the root of "the chain of jealousy," it fails to bring real freedom. How then can rebellion guide itself, through love and prophetic awareness, to a truly human society? Blake's implied critique of Marx brings us back to the core of his idea of revolution.

London and Jerusalem

Walk out onto the street — let us say to buy the morning paper — and you are in Blake's London. The gutters are full of trash, and men are ransacking garbage bags for bottles to turn in for deposits. In front of the drug clinic, early arrivals stand or pace, smoking cigarettes with long, deep drags. On up the street, a wall holds a painting, six feet high in monochromes, of an olive-skinned, studious-looking boy with large glasses, and the words "Mick 1974-1993" — *I hear my Childrens voices / I see their piteous faces gleam out upon the cruel winds.* On Broadway a muscled, wiry man, bearded, in his forties — a Vietnam vet, he says — has been attacked by the local toughs and needs money to go to relatives in Monroe, New York; another day, he needs money to go to the

Montrose VA hospital for treatment of his leukemia. Is any of this true? From a Christian point of view, and I am not a Christian, he is a man in need, to whom one should give what one can: *I see London blind & age-bent begging thro the Streets / Of Babylon, led by a child. his tears run down his beard.* Later, on the street that leads past the park to the river, a woman sitting on a coat on the grass verge calls, "Take me home with you; I'll clean your house, I'll massage you; I'll . . . " — *A Harlot I am calld. I am sold from street to street!*

In the newspaper, on the train, one reads of *the Spectre Sons of Albion . . . / Mocking and deriding at the writhings of their Victim on Salisbury* ("Officers Cleared in Slaying of Fleeing Man"); one recalls Albion's lament, *I have taught my children sacrifices of cruelty* ("Man Acquitted in 1987 Beating of Indian Doctor"; "How Can Murdered Girl Be Missed by No One?"); and one reads of Orc in his most degraded aspect, *Mingl[ing] with [Vala's] dolorous members strewn thro the Abyss*, in a twisting of rage into sexual violence ("6 Held in Brooklyn Rape: Two Are 13 and 3 are 15"). And as the train pulls out of Ninety-sixth Street, four children, aged perhaps six to eleven, do clumsy break-dancing, for coins. In imagination, one

> views the City of Golgonooza, & its smaller Cities:
> The Looms & Mills & Prisons & Work-houses of Og & Anak:
> The Amalekite: the Canaanite: the Moabite: the Egyptian:
> And all that has existed in the space of six thousand years:
> Permanent, & not lost not lost nor vanishd (*Jerusalem* 13:55-59)[16]

16. Blake quotations in these paragraphs are from *Jerusalem* 21:37-39; 84:11-12; 62:4; 65:56-57; 23:17; *The Four Zoas* 93:22. Headlines are from *The New York Times*, April 23, 1993, B1; May 29, 1993, B3; September 1, 1993, B3; November 17, 1993, B3.

New York is Blake's London, but tonight the street is different. It is past midnight when my young anarchist friend Christopher, who lives around the corner, rings my bell and calls up to the window, "The people have risen. Come out and see your neighborhood." Though the street had been quiet when I walked in hours ago, I don't have to be told what is going on, for returning from a July Fourth weekend, I had noted a small item in the Monday paper about the neighborhood. Friday night a white cop, following a Dominican youth into the lobby of an apartment building, had shot and killed him. The dead man was a twenty-one-year-old named Kiko Garcia, said to be a suspected drug dealer. Witnesses said Garcia was unarmed and helpless, while police said he had a gun and tried to attack the cop. Two days later, a protest demonstration was held at the precinct station, addressed by the local City Councilman; someone began throwing bottles and neighborhood youths skirmished with the police until early the following morning — Monday, now a full day earlier. (Eventually a grand jury will find that the cop acted with justification; its members are Hand, Hyle, Coban, Kwantok, Peachey, Brereton, Slayd, Hutton, Scofield, Kox, Kotope, and Bowen.)

I join Christopher and we walk through local streets toward Broadway. There is smoke everywhere, and small drifting groups of youths; older people stand in the doorways, watching. Trash cans are smoking, a dumpster smoldering; in the space of a block, we see two or three cars black and smoking, one still burning with small flickering flames. Farther up the crowds are thicker — groups of fifteen and twenty, mainly Dominican and mainly, but not entirely, male. Fire trucks, escorted by police cars, are pushing up the street to douse the fires; the cops aren't making arrests (nor are the kids fighting them, tonight), but are

fanning out and pushing the crowds back, and in the sky a helicopter is swinging around and around the same block of roofs, stabbing down a white, moving bar of light. The cops push the intersection clear, and the groups of youths, Christopher and I among them, thin out up the neighboring streets, circle the block, come back. There's a lot of quick, low talk on the street and some bottles of malt liquor going around, but not many; it's a stifling July night, still barely cool at one a.m., and the scene is like an enlarged block party — people milling everywhere, the cops present but not really interfering. (Later this tactic will be sharply attacked and blamed on the softness of the then-mayor, David Dinkins, who is Black.) A few blocks over, there are more smoldering cars, and a small group — young women — in front of a store whose window has been smashed out, methodically passing out items of clothing. A little farther on, a small knot of people, with a larger, excited crowd around them, approaches a car and sloshes it with gasoline. At the center of the group, a tee-shirt white against his brown arms, is Orc; he flicks a match and the flames burst up, momentarily seeming to wrap around his limbs.

The cops are nowhere to be seen now, but soon a fire truck comes, with police escort. Forty minutes pass, this six- or eight-block area becomes empty and quiet, and Christopher and I move down Broadway, closer to the street two miles to the south where Garcia was shot. But there are too many cops there to approach close, and we start back. It's three o'clock now, and Broadway is empty, a few shells of cars still smoking. We're tired, not talking, and my thoughts run on in my head: *Well, this will die down in a day or two, there's no organization to carry the protest on, and in a year or so the same thing will happen again.* So, I wonder, perhaps the "Orc cycle" is right. *But,* my thoughts go on,

people have to fight back somehow, whether it wins anything or not. And I conclude, *So: that's what the Orc-Vala debate and the Los-Palamabron-Rintrah debate are about.*[17]

That night passes, providing insight into my nineteenth-century interlocutor, but no new life for the youths who briefly made their neighborhood what Michelet said revolution was, a festival of the oppressed. Tonight on the block, it's a September dusk, with the sharp colors of a cool fall day just starting to fade; the kids are playing basketball, the neighbors are out, and back at the building, the door is held by Anne, an older woman, a recovered alcoholic, whose days are spent doing errands for the ninety-year-old woman next door, for her sister in the hospital, for whomever . . . *this Gate cannot be found / By Satans Watch-fiends tho' they search numbering every grain / Of sand on Earth every night* (*Jerusalem* 34/29:59-35/30:2). But will nothing change, year by year or epoch by epoch?

This scene, the universal London, Blake saw transformed to Jerusalem. He saw it transformed, not into a city of imagination, but into a real city whose real "stones are pity, and the bricks, well wrought affections" because of the transformed human relations of its inhabitants, and he foresaw that those inhabitants would look back and ask, "Where are the Kingdoms of the World & all their glory that grew on Desolation" (*Jerusalem* 12:30, 98:51). Of all aspects of Blake, this is perhaps the most misunderstood. As we know, for Northrop

17. I have taken some liberties here; I did not actually see a car set on fire, though I saw many burning or burnt-out, and I have condensed the events of two nights. Names of grand jury members, of course, are not made public. For the events and follow-up, see *The New York Times*, July 5, 1992, 1:20, July 6, B1, July 7-9, all A1, and related stories July 6-16; for the grand jury, Sept. 10 and 11, A1; for Dinkins, Aug. 20, A6, and Sept. 11, B2.

Frye an apocalypse was an "imaginative conception" of nature as a living body, and Blake's aim was to build "a continuing city [of imagination] in the England of the Satanic mills" (*Anatomy* 119; *Symmetry* 355). Morton D. Paley, echoing Frye, took his phrase as the title of his own study, *The Continuing City: William Blake's* Jerusalem. (And yet the text on which they both drew, Hebrews 13:14, is on the passing of earthly empire: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.") It is no wonder that these writers, important as their contributions to explaining Blake might otherwise be, understood apocalypse and Jerusalem in these ways. For it is easier to imagine an internalized, mental apocalypse that achieves psychic reintegration in the midst of a Satanic London, than to imagine the real universal London transformed into Jerusalem. Looking around us, and seeing every aspect of the degradation of Orc, it is easier to believe in an Orc transformed into Urizen than in one redeemed and freed. We can envision Albion entering metaphoric furnaces of imagination, carrying out a psychic self-annihilation, forgiving his oppressors, far more easily than we can conceive of the common people of Britain, or the world, going into actual places of work, suffering there, and rousing a human flood to build the world anew. But this is what Blake asks us to imagine, and to dare to try to accomplish.

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