

THE POET AND THE CYCLES OF HISTORY
A READING OF BLAKE'S AMERICA AND EUROPE

by

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B.A., University of British Columbia, 1972

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of

English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April, 1974

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April 30 / 1974

Abstract

Blake's first interest in America and Europe is with transcending the cycles of history, the Orc cycle, which, despite the weight of much critical opinion, is a real presence in these poems. The two poems are "prophecies," and the prophet is defined as the poet, the just man uttering his opinions: prophecy is a kind of interpretive history. Blake's apocalypse is a conditional human revelation. The "stern Bard" in the America Preludium is an example of the prophetic mode misrepresented, as he is aligned with the cycles of history.

A close reading of America supports the view that history is cyclic. In the text and designs to America we are not encouraged to expect transcendence from Orc's revolution, but at the defeat of Albion's Angel the prophetic voice moves to an apocalyptic vision as appearances are burned away. Orc is in his dual character as spirit of liberty and spirit of war, but both sides of his character are involved in cycles.

The Orc cycle seen in America has been anticipated in Tiriel, Visions and the Marriage. The implication is that the only value of the American Revolution is its significance in terms of the individual. The movement within America, and from America to Europe, is generally one from concern with social unrest to concern with the individual consciousness, from physical to mental tyranny.

The Fairy's song prefixed to Europe indicates that the nature of the material world is Blake's theme in the poem, and in the Preludium, Nature appears in a state of despair. The designs

demonstrate the strife and injustice of the world ruled by tyrants, here particularly the Female Will. Enitharmon's dream describes the aftermath of the American Revolution, in which the intensification of the tyranny compels its victims to see its true nature. The eternal world is that of universal psychological processes and forces, and Enitharmon's children represent various manifestations of her doctrines. Orc and Los are the only two figures to escape the passivity her doctrines instill.

Enitharmon's children are also Los's children, and the closing passage to Europe outlines the various traps into which a poet can fall, all of which arise from the concept that the material world is dead, that an outside authority is necessary to dictate a code of ethics. Though Los is a tyrant in the early part of the poem, here he has regenerated and speaks with authority. The closing line to "Africa" in the Song of Los indicates that Los is also the narrator of America, that Orc's revolution is in fact Los's revolution, for it is seen through Los's eyes. Orc, like spring and dawn, is an image of apocalypse, but it is the poet-figure who sees beyond the cycles to interpret the significance of this manifestation of power.

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Chapter One: Introductory

As the subtitle indicates, this paper is largely taken up with a close reading of the two poems Blake called "prophecies," America and Europe. A "reading" implies a sense of direction, an argument, but also a close allegiance with the text (and, in Blake's case, with the designs as well), and the inevitable tension between structured argument and less direct commentary is here relieved by the length of the chapters of commentary. The commentary reveals, I think, the broad scope of the poems, their subtleties, and their "minute particulars" on which analysis must be based. By moving leisurely through the poems, a commentary hopefully permits the reader to experience the poems as poems, rather than as philosophical tracts. Finally, the commentary serves as a kind of sounding-board to compliment and reinforce the argument. The role of the poet in society and the nature of the cycles of history are the two thematic centres that will be presented. Ultimately to be resolved is the question of the role of Los in Europe, an "uncertain point" indeed in the "broad consistency in Blake's mythology."¹

1. Northrop Frye, "Preface," Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake, (Princeton, 1969), p. [ii].

I

William Blake lived in a world of revolution and social unrest. The second half of the eighteenth century in England began in relative peace but the political situation continued to worsen as the years passed, culminating in the revolutions in America and France. It has often been observed that this social unrest plays an important part in the background of Blake's myth-making. The literary world was, in Blake's opinion, similarly regenerating itself out of a peaceful but sterile half century. One of his very early poems, "To the Muses,"² reflects his concern at the low state of poetry at the time. In the 1790's Blake wrote a great deal of poetry, and in tone and content it struck forcibly the "languid strings" he lamented in "To the Muses." These poems, the "minor prophecies," are concerned with the nature of revolution in the social world and the role of the poet in the context of social upheaval. Blake viewed history as eternally cyclic, and the problem of transcending the cycles of history is his primary concern.

The "Orc cycle" is Northrop Frye's term, and with it he describes Blake's concept of natural and historical cycles:

Revolution, in the sense of a renewal of energy and the power to live, is not haphazard but cyclic. The light dies every day, vegetable life every winter and human life at the end of a finite period; the sun rises again, the year returns and new babies are born.³

2. David V. Erdman, (ed.), The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, (New York: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 408-9. Geoffrey Keynes, (ed.), Complete Writings of William Blake, (Oxford, 1969), pp. 10-11. Subsequent references to Blake's works in this form (E408-9/K10-11). Quotations are taken from the Keynes text, except in chapters two and four, and where indicated.

3. Frye, p. 207.

In a sense, the Orc cycle is no more than an awareness of the inevitability of decay. Revolution must at last degenerate into another kind of tyranny, just as youth moves toward age:

The natural world is based largely on the daily return of the sun and the yearly return of vegetable life, and the sun and the tree are therefore the central symbols of the natural cycle. Looked at from the point of view of sense experience, they suggest nothing but a cycle, persisting indefinitely in time. Looked at from an imaginative point of view, their renewal is an image of resurrection into eternity.⁴

Revolution is an image of escape from cycles, but in the political, as in the natural world, the cycles are inescapable. Orc, the revolutionary, and Urizen, the tyrant, are related, as youth and age are related, but at the same time they are "eternally different things."⁵ In social terms the Orc cycle can be defined as the "slave-rebel-tyrant"⁶ progression in the history of religions, nations and individuals.

All this is familiar to readers of Blake. But the Orc cycle as Frye describes it--the necessity for the degeneration of the social renewal revolution brings--is not readily apparent in America, where the name "Orc" first appears. Accordingly, many critics see Orc as fading from the saviour figure in America to a point in a cycle in the later works, and regard his first appearance in America and Europe in terms essentially different from those of his later appearances in The Four Zoas, and, disguised as "Fuzon," in Ahania.

4. Ibid., p. 211.

5. Ibid., p. 227.

6. See Erdman, "A Note on the Orc Cycle," Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic, ed. D. V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 112-14, and below, p. 78.

In fact, there is a kind of "tradition" developing in Blake scholarship that Blake in the 1790's was full of revolutionary fervour and in anticipation of an imminent apocalypse, and that he ended, in about 1795, by needing a "readjustment in expectations"⁷ to overcome his disillusionment over the French Revolution and his gradual awareness that Orc, the spirit of social upheaval, was after all unable to achieve the expected apocalypse. This "tradition" is widespread indeed, involving critics like Erdman, Bronowski, Paley, Altizer, and so on.⁸ To one extent or another, Blake is considered to be fascinated with Orc and unable to see any wrong in him. But that Blake was unafraid of change does not mean he overrated it.

7. Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., "Opening the Seals," Blake's Sublime Allegory, ed. Wittreich and Stuart Curran (Univ. of Wisconsin, 1973), p. 54.

8. All insist or imply that America represents Blake's literal expectations of history, and that the Orc cycle as a completed pattern does not exist in the minor prophecies before Ahania. See T. J. J. Altizer, The New Apocalypse (Michigan State Univ., 1967), p. 156, where the American Revolution is the literal "historical epiphany of a new heaven upon earth;" J. Bronowski, William Blake and the Age of Revolution (New York: Harper, 1965), p. 86, where Blake is "baffled and hopeless" in this period; Erdman, Prophet Against Empire (Princeton, 1954), p. 264, for Blake's "intense pessimism;" Morton D. Paley, Energy and Imagination (Oxford, 1970), p. 80, where "the Orc cycle does not exist in a completed pattern" before Ahania; Michael J. Tolley, "Europe: 'to those ychain'd in sleep,'" Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic (hereafter BVFD), p. 145n, where "in Europe Blake had not yet projected Orc's perversion;" George Quasha, "Orc as a Fiery Paradigm of Poetic Torsion," BVFD, p. 263, where "the Orc cycle may be a more characteristic creation of Frye's cartography than of Blake's poetic system, which strove for escape from circular closure in space and time," Quasha forgetting that one must have closure before one can escape from closure. And so on.

This "tradition" is centred on the poems America and Europe, both of which are explicitly termed "prophecies." They are both concerned with revolution, and both end in apocalyptic fires and war. The question, of course, centres on the nature of the apocalypse with which the poems end. In what terms did Blake view the apocalypse he describes? A close reading of these two poems is necessary to reevaluate Blake's position on the nature of the revolution.

Blake's poems are usually deemed obscure to a fault, but much obscurity is due to a misunderstanding of several key terms, and to an underestimating of the significance of the illustrations in elucidating the text. Again, of course, Blake's poems are also intentionally obscure, for as Blake remarks, "That which can be made explicit to the idiot is not worth my care." To deal with this obscurity, it is necessary to find a set of terms with which to articulate Blake's meaning without oversimplifying. It is in this context that source studies have their validity. A knowledge of Blake's sources is no certain key to understanding Blake. His poetry is largely independent and unfolds as the reader becomes aware of the multileveled significance of the single poem as a whole. The world of Blake's poems is, then, something of a private world, and "Blake can be understood only in so far as his spirit enters into the reader."⁹ Source materials, though seldom necessary to explain subtleties in the text, further illuminate, and, most important, supply terms with which to discuss the material of the text. While this paper is not a source study, source materials

9. Mona Wilson, The Life of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 66.

play a significant role in coming to terms with Blake's meaning. Source materials supply a context in which Blake's characters can be discussed, and his often bewildering eclecticism, by which elements as diverse as Milton, Plato, the Edda, the Geeta, and the Bible, make themselves felt, and which serves to instill the sense of impenetrable obscurity, is also in fact one means of overcoming that obscurity.

The "several key terms" mentioned above as contributing to the reader's sense of bewilderment at a Blake poem because often misunderstood, or vaguely understood, include "prophecy," the "poetic genius," and "apocalypse," as well as the nature of revolution and historical cycles. Some attention must be given to each of these before a successful entry can be made into the poems themselves.

II

Blake's concept of prophecy may be traced to a variety of sources. It owes much to his personal reading of the Biblical prophets, to Thomas Taylor's discussions of fable and poetry, to Milton, and to the general atmosphere of the times. Again, to look into the sources and parallels of the concept is to be more fully aware of its ramifications and to be able to place Blake's treatment of it in some kind of historical and philosophical context.

The concept of the prophet is central to Blake's thought.

In one of his annotations to Watson, he says,

Prophets, in the modern sense of the word, have never existed. Jonah was no prophet in the modern sense, for his prophecy of Nineveh failed. Every honest man is a prophet; he utters his opinion both of private & public matters. Thus: If you go on So, the result is So. He never says, such a thing shall happen let you do what you will. A Prophet is a Seer, not an Arbitrary Dictator. It is man's fault if God is not able to do him good, for he gives to the just & to the unjust, but the unjust reject his gift. (E606-7/K392)

Further, "it is strange that God should speak to man formerly & not now, because it is not true." (E605/K390) Prophecy, then, is in a sense interpretive history, the honest man "bearing witness" of his vision of the nature and significance of events. It utilizes "vision," the imaginative perception of eternal realities, and for Blake prophecy records not only the significance of events for the present, but also indicates their relationship with the future and with the individual in terms of "what can be built up out of an inevitable development."¹⁰ That is, prophecy records what has happened, or what is happening, and what it implies to the prophet himself.

In the writings of Thomas Taylor, however, prophets or oracles maintain their roles as "prophets in the modern sense." He describes the Delphic "prophetess" as literally predicting future events.¹¹ The following passage, however, has parallels with Blake's view:

10. Frye, p. 407.

11. Taylor, tr., The Description of Greece by Pausanias (London, 1794), III, 353.

Indeed, in the greatest diseases and labours, to which certain persons are sometimes subject, through the indignation of the gods, in consequence of guilt; fury, when it takes place, predicting what they stand in need of, discovers a liberation of such evils, by flying to prayer and the worship of the gods. Hence, obtaining by this means purifications, and the advantages of initiation, it renders such a one free from disasters, both for the present and future time, by discovering to him a solution of his present evil, through the means of one who is properly furious and divinely inspired.¹²

The benefits of prophecy, and its role in people's lives, lie in self-awareness, in determining "what they stand in need of," rather than specifically what will happen to them. Taylor notes in another passage that descriptions of the gods as indignant or joyful refer only to the states of our souls. "It is the same thing ... to assert that divinity is turned from the evil, as to say that the sun is concealed from those who are deprived of sight."¹³ Again, Taylor says of prayer, "we must not conceive, that our prayers cause any animadversion in the Gods, or, properly speaking, draw down their beneficence; but that they are rather the means of elevating the soul to these divinities, and disposing it for the reception of their supernal illumination."¹⁴ It is, in effect, self-illumination that prayer offers, and self-awareness that prophecy endues.

Blake identified the prophet with the poet, and saw their roles as one. In his annotations to Bacon, where Bacon says of the heathens, "you may imagine what kind of faith theirs was, when the chief doctors and fathers of their church were the poets," Blake

12. Ibid., III, 316.

13. Ibid., III, 310.

14. Taylor, tr., Orphic Hymns, Selected Writings, ed. Kathleen Raine and G. M. Harper (Princeton, 1969), p. 193.

substitutes the word "prophets" for "poets" (E611/K399). And, in the Marriage, Blake's Ezekiel identifies the "first principle" as the poetic genius (E38/K153), and Isaiah further says, "I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my senses discover'd the infinite in everything, ... and I was then perswaded, & remain confirm'd that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God." (E38/K153) "The Religions of all Nations are derived from each nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius, which is every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy." (E2/K98)

Concerning poetry, Taylor notes:

The most excellent kind of poetry gives beatitude to the soul, from divinity, and places it among the Gods; Hence it abstracts the soul from all material connections, illuminates it with celestial light, inflames it with a divine fire; and compels the whole inferior constitution of the soul to be obedient to intellect alone. Indeed, a Fury of this kind is more excellent than any temperance, since it furnishes the soul with such a symmetry and proportion of divinity, that the very words bursting forth as its last effects appear to be adorned with the beautiful bands of measure and number. For as prophetic Fury arises from truth ... so the poetic proceeds from divine symmetry, by means of which it most intimately unites the poets with the Gods. Plato ... speaking of this Fury, says that it is an occupation of the Muses.... Its end is the instruction of posterity by celebrating the infinite deeds of antiquity. From these words it is plain, that Plato ... ascribes divinity to this kind of poetry.... He calls it ... a Fury, because it relinquishes its own proper ingenuity, and is carried according to the vigorous impulse of a superior power.¹⁵

Passages such as this, and those dealing with the nature of poetic inspiration, tend to make vague the distinction between poetic and prophetic Fury.¹⁶ In Blake the poet and prophet are one, and in

15. Ibid., p. 279.

16. Another example occurs later in the passage quoted above: "Poetic Fury is a medium between a divine principle and the rhapsodists ... distributing supernal gifts to inferiors." (p. 280)

his writings, Blake attempts to lift others to a perception of the infinite in all things.

More important than Blake's readings in Taylor is the Hebraic tradition. In 1741, Robert Lowth began delivering his Lectures on Ancient Hebrew Poetry¹⁷ in which he rediscovered the concept of "parallelism," the principle of cadence, "a loose structural relationship of phrases"¹⁸ by which the Old Testament could be understood and enjoyed as poetry. Stylistically, Blake's poetry is obviously and eminently Biblical, and since the more important source of Blake's style is his reading of the Old Testament prophets, it is almost inconceivable that he would have been unaware of Lowth.¹⁹

In fact, Blake had simply adopted the Biblical parallelist forms which ignore regular metre and rely instead upon a rhythm of meaning. By including the Couch of Death in his Poetical Sketches, Blake had shown that he regarded it as poetry even when it was set out as prose. In the prophetic books, however, Blake ... set out his parallelist writing line by line in much the same way as Lowth had set out his own translation of Isaiah.²⁰

The main point here is that in utilizing the style, Blake was also assuming the character, of the Biblical prophet:

Only too frequently critics write of Blake as though his was a sudden, almost inexplicable eruption of intensely individualistic poetry which happened to employ, among other models, the idiom of the Old Testament. In fact, so far from merely adopting Biblical idiom as a suitable means of expression, Blake found in the Old Testament the very source of his inspiration, deriving from it his concept of the poet as a fiery visionary seeing the eternal in the transitory, and rejecting mere social expediency in favour of justice, mercy, and compassion.²¹

17. Translated from the Latin by G. Gregory in 1787. Lowth's work was preceded by more than a century of attempts to scan the Bible metrically.

18. Murray Roston, Prophet and Poet: The Bible and the Growth of Romanticism (London: Faber, 1965), p. 22.

19. On the significance of Lowth, see also Feldman and Richardson, The Rise of Modern Mythology, 1680-1860 (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1972), and Paley, p. 20n.

20. Roston, p. 165.

21. Ibid., p. 160.

Morton Paley notes other sources from which Blake may have derived his notion of the poet as prophet, the common bond among whom is their concept of the sublime in poetry:

It is intense, suggestive of infinity, and productive of enthusiasm; it is associated with energy and is produced by contraries; it is, in its most powerful form, terrifying; and the chief source of it in literature is the Old Testament.²²

The sublime in poetry is that "divine fire" Taylor finds in Plato (above, p. 9), the participation of the poet and reader in the "rigorous impulse of a superior power." Paley links this eighteenth-century view of poetic power with critical theory in the Medieval and Renaissance periods and with Milton,²³ and cites many succinct statements that, first, prophecy is poetry, that the Bible is great literature, and, more importantly, that poetry is prophecy, that the sublime of scripture is one with that of poetry.²⁴

However, as Paley is aware, it is not enough to note that for Blake the poet and prophet are one without noting the nature of the "Poetic Genius" in Blake's eyes. It is that faculty which perceives: "Man apprehends the sublime through his Poetic Genius."²⁵ Thus in the tractates:

- I. Man cannot naturally Perceive but through his natural or bodily organs.
- II. Man by his reasoning power can only compare & judge of what he has already perceived. ...
- IV. None could have other than natural or organic thoughts if he had none but organic perceptions.

22. Paley, p. 19.

23. Ibid., pp. 20-21. But the eighteenth-century concept of sublimity seems not to have been as widespread as Paley implies: see Frye, pp. 161-76.

24. For example, Lowth: "The prophetic office had a most strict connection with the poetic art. They had one common name, one common origin, one common author, the Holy Spirit;" and Paine: "The word prophet, to which later times have affixed a new idea, was the Bible word for poet, and the word prophesying meant the act of making poetry;" and so on, Paley, p. 21 & n.

25. Paley, p. 24.

V. Man's desires are limited by his perceptions, none can desire what he has not perciev'd. ...
 If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character the Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things, & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again. (E1/K97)

It is obvious from this, and especially proposition IV, that the Poetic Genius is a sense organ, one which supplies "inorganic" or spiritual awareness. Significantly it is here called the "Poetic or Prophetic character." In the "Second Series" of There Is No Natural Religion, it is noted that man "perceives more than sense ... can discover." That is to say, our perceptions of the objective world are not only coloured but expanded by imagination in that the imagination perceives spiritual realities behind the objective world. Finally, in All Religions are One, the Poetic Genius is "the true faculty of knowing ... the faculty which experiences."

As none by travelling over known lands can find out the unknown, So from already acquired knowledge Man could not acquire more: Therefore an Universal Poetic Genius exists.
 (E2/K98)

Due to "the confined nature of bodily sensation," the Poetic Genius, or the "Spirit of Prophecy," is the only means to escape sinking into the "ratio of all things," becoming part of an abstract, objective world, "unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again." The Poetic Genius, or imagination, is the faculty by which one can escape the cycles of history, and especially in the minor prophecies, Blake as prophet is deeply concerned with the escape of individuals from the "same dull round" of historical cycles, the state of experience. Critics who assume from America, for instance, that Blake expected a literal Last Judgment to arise out of the American Revolution, that Orc is one stage of Blake's search

for a genuine redeemer, are, it seems, underestimating Blake's historical awareness and misunderstanding his intentions in writing prophecy. Blake is describing a stage in a historical cycle in terms which suggest the possibility of a personal apocalypse within the observer of events.

Again, "Poetic Genius" is a synonym for the imagination, and many sources have been postulated.²⁶ But whatever his immediate source, Blake early distilled his concept of the transcendent imagination which is both spectator, a sense organ open to spiritual realities, and an actor, a presence we can observe. Blake's concept of the imagination, however, frequently obscures his term "prophecy," although the two are of course related in that prophecy is one vehicle of imagination. The prophet for Blake is the just man, the honest man, who voices his opinion, which is based on his perceptions of archetypes of history and individual experience.

As Frye notes, the honest, "who act as though they believed evil to be neither necessary nor desirable" are "not quite the noblest work of God until the faith by which the just live develops into full imaginative vision."²⁷ Properly speaking, they are not even "honest" in Blake's terms until they do so, for, "is he honest who resists his genius or conscience only for present ease or gratification?" (Marriage, 13) Blake's Ezekiel makes this remark in justifying his rather anti-social behaviour, which he indulged in, he says, in an effort to "raise other men into a perception of the infinite." As Raine comments,

26. Sources or analogues to the concept include: eighteenth-century primitivism (Frye, pp. 170-72; Paley, p. 24); Berkeley, Boehme, Priestley's discussion of the Logos, and Blake's reaction to Locke (Raine, *Blake and Tradition* (Princeton, 1968), II, 194-95, 105-20, *passim*); Pareus (Wittreich, p. 50); Ezekiel (Bloom, "Blake's Jerusalem," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 4 (1970), 7).

27. Frye, p. 59.

It is clear that "the perception of the infinite" means, quite specifically, the realization that the infinite lies within man himself as the indwelling mind of God. It is this voice that he must obey, whether or not his actions seem reasonable to other men.²⁸

Again, then, the "honest" man is not simply the man aware of the undesirability of evil, but he whose "faith by which the just live is transformed into full imaginative vision," he who recognizes a responsibility toward "the infinite that lies within," and the power by which we perceive it.

The fully imaginative man is therefore a visionary whose imaginative activity is prophecy and whose perception produces art. ...

Those whose minds are befuddled with the two contradictory notions of mystery and necessity, will naturally think of a prophet as someone with a mysterious knack of foretelling an inevitable future. This is exactly what the prophet cannot be. The "seer" has insight, not second sight: he is not a charlatan but the contrary of one, an honest man with a sharper perception and a clearer perspective than other honest men possess. The imagination in seeing a bird sees through it an "immense world of delight;" the imagination in looking at society not only sees its hypocrisies but sees through them, and sees an infinitely better world. The prophet can see an infinite and eternal reality, but nobody can see an indefinite future, except conditionally.²⁹

As can be seen from the tractates of 1788, all this was quite clear to Blake as he wrote America and Europe in the mid-1790's. Basically, Blake's aim in writing is to explain the nature, character and operation of universal mental forces and to describe the reflection of these forces in social forces and religious doctrines. He speaks as the "honest" or "just" man who can make the imaginative reach to view these realities. He is "inspired," not in the sense that he is unaware of his meaning, but rather that he is communicating his insights.

28. Raine, Blake and Tradition, II, 113.

29. Frye, p. 59.

III

One most important implication of this definition of prophecy is the resulting concept of "necessity" or "Fate," and the nature of the prophet's aspiration to apocalypse. A good starting point would be Soames Jenyns' note on "Fate" in his Origin of Evil:

In every possible method of ordering, disposing, and framing the universal system of things, such numberless inconveniences might necessarily arise, that all that infinite Power and Wisdom could do, was to make choice of that method, which was attended with the least and fewest; and this not proceeding from any defect of power of the Creator, but from that imperfection which is inherent in the nature of all created things. This necessity, I imagine, is what the Ancients meant by Fate, to which they fancied that Jupiter, and all the Gods, were obliged to submit, and which was to be controlled by no power whatever.³⁰

Fate is an embodiment of the nature of things, so to speak, not an "arbitrary dictator," but a personification of man's awareness of his psychological makeup, the warring contraries within every aspect of creation, in human terms within both the individual and the state. Each "power" is unable to control its contrary, and unable to establish a stable, unshakable dominion. Jenyns regards Fate as the flaw in creation, the necessity of imperfection due to the presence of evil in the physical world. This imperfection is the reason for the inevitable impermanence of any state of being. Blake would regard Fate in just this sense, but with the important qualification that the "imperfection" of creation is not that a permanent state cannot be established. He would regard this happening as a fall into absolute entropy, one good totally

30. S. Jenyns, The Origin of Evil, (London, 1757), pp. 16-17.

destroying its contrary and becoming tyrant. The imperfection is rather this very attempt of one contrary to destroy another. This understanding of Fate implies the certainty of the cycles of experience, both on personal and social levels. And to the extent to which he is aware of these cycles, and can say "if you go on so, the result is so," the poet/prophet is a prophet "in the modern sense" since he reveals the dictates of Fate. This sense of the poet/prophet as predicting future events is extremely limited and has nothing of the sense of Fate as arbitrary dictator that one finds for example in the Greek dramatists.

When Newton sounds "the trump of the last doom" in Europe 13:5, he is attempting, as representative of the "angels," to destroy the "devils," as represented by Orc, and to establish an unshakable millenium. This is a false apocalypse, deriving from a false sense of Fate. By trying to destroy one half of the human character in the interests of social cohesion or "moral virtue," it ends in throwing both into confusion, and the "strife of blood" resumes in that poem. Fate is not the "divine providence" by which the desires of the abstract, Deistic God will ultimately be fulfilled. It is not the Divine Will, but the necessity for conflict within the individual, which keeps the individual and society from complete stagnation, but at the same time traps them in cycles of history. In writing the minor prophecies, Blake is dealing with a very modern problem: the search for absolutes in a universe without a clockmaker god.

One of Blake's major preoccupations in the minor prophecies is with overcoming, or finding an alternative to, this "false apocalypse." A false apocalypse is one in which a single point of view becomes the "good" and demands allegiance: "One Law for the Lion and Ox." (Marriage 24) And again, it springs from a concept of Fate that is a Divine Providence which must not be questioned. At this point, for Blake, Fate is the necessity for chaos. Later, in the Four Zoas (iv:271-3), he will introduce the limits of contraction and opacity which preserve man from sinking into oblivion. Here, however, there is no mention of Fate being divinely ordained, only the declaration that there will be a true apocalypse. Blake's apocalypse is not the ultimate divine revelation, but a conditional human revelation, and just as the false apocalypse presumes to be the consummation of Divine Will, so the true apocalypse is the consummation of the necessity for discord and the emergence of unity. "Whenever an individual rejects error and embraces Truth, a last judgment passes on that individual," as Blake wrote in 1807, and was well aware of in 1790. It is for Blake, as for the Deists, a question of overcoming the physical world, the "same dull round" of history. A secure static society is the Urizenic ideal, but Blake sees in the overthrow of this society the rise of another ideal, that of personal liberty. His apocalypse is an individual awakening.

The selfish or self-righteous hope for apocalypse to destroy their enemies, and to remove the sense of unease, or of guilt, which those enemies instill. Blake's apocalypse is different in kind, and he does not indulge in that sort of wish-fulfillment. He does not

anticipate the conquest of one point of view over all others. Blake's ideals are liberty and equality, and the only evil is "hindering another." Thus the American Revolution is "good" because the Americans are on the defensive, asserting their right to liberty, but the post-revolutionary society, as described in Visions, is "evil" in that it places restraints on the individual.

That Blake's apocalypse is different in kind from the "false apocalypse" of Newton and Albion's Angel seems clear, but the corollary to that, that Blake does not indulge in wish-fulfillment, is not so obvious. In America, for instance, the British soldiers are described as prostrating themselves before Washington and rushing in fear and torment into the sea, seeking oblivion. But the passage is more correctly to be regarded as a description of their mental states: they are the servants of tyranny and their "anguish" is spiritual and subconscious. They were sent by England to be an extension of, and to reinforce, English opinion, as personified by Albion's Angel, and their anguish is at the realization that the Colonists have a just cause. This realization is almost impossible in the spectators in England, who can more easily indulge in moralistic condemnation since they lack full awareness of the conditions that led to the appearance of the revolutionary idealism which Orc personifies.³¹ This realization, too, usurps their identity as instruments of tyranny, and Blake makes clear that it is their "mental chains" that are revealed by the "visions of Orc," causing them to flee as from a superior force. Their response is to

31. We will see in Europe the process by which the "youth of England" later become aware of the nature of the power-structure under which they live. See below, pp. 133-35.

escape, to rationalize away this disturbing awareness.

Blake's attempt is to distill social and political, moral and philosophical traditions into a set of mythic figures who interact in human terms. The sense of transcendence, or apocalypse, is inspired by the all-but-forgotten sense of unity without hierarchy that is the nature of Eternity before the Fall. With the recovery of this sense, the last judgment ends and unity is restored. These are the aims of Blake's apocalypse: Blake opens our awareness of realities beyond hierarchical political and moral standards. In spite of this, America is too easily viewed as an isolated expression of Blake's glee at the downfall of his political and social enemies. Further, in spite of extravagant and bizarre imagery, the poem's chief purpose is not its shock-value to eighteenth-century sensibility. Because it appears more complex, Europe is not so commonly viewed as a demonstration of Blake's political naivete. But its relationship with America is not that it is simply a reconsideration of Blake's ill-considered enthusiasm. The two poems are parallels, and together constitute a study in revolution and the cycles of experience, a further explanation of the tragedy in Visions, and an elaboration of the contraries in the Marriage. The shift in power-structures in the American Colonies, which, as Blake by 1793 was aware, might be all the significance future historians would attach to the American Revolution, was to Blake an image of the manner in which universal mental forces effect change within the individual.

IV

One example of the ramifications of Blake's concept of the prophet and of the use of source-studies in his writings is the questions raised by the cancelled passage closing the Preludium to America. Having etched the lines, Blake then masked them as he printed most copies of the book.³² In later copies (in which he was presumably not so concerned with the text)³³ the lines appear as they were etched.

The stern Bard ceas'd, ashamed of his own song; enraged he
 swung
 His harp aloft sounding, then dash'd its shining frame
 against
 A ruin'd pillar in glitt'ring fragments; silent he turn'd
 away,
 And wander'd down the vales of Kent in sick & drear
 lamentings. (E51/K196)

Erdman epitomizes critical thought on the passage when he assumes it refers to Blake's own dissatisfaction at the way the American and French Revolutions were turning out.³⁴ But if the discussion of prophecy above indicated Blake was historically aware enough to not be disillusioned in this way, what is the significance of the passage?

Our understanding of the passage hinges, of course, on our understanding of the nature of the Bard. His song having become for some reason shameful, the Bard becomes enraged, perhaps at the forces that made it shameful or at himself for singing it, and

32. Hirsch's suggestion that this passage was added later is incorrect, since as Blunt indicates, Blake's method of printing preclude additions after the plate had been designed and burned. Bentley reproduces the two states of the plate and it is clear that the lines have been masked, since the vines down the side of the plate are also cut off. See E. D. Hirsch, Innocence and Experience (New Haven, Conn: Yale Univ., 1964), pp. 66-68; A. Blunt, "The First Illuminated Books," Blake: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. N. Frye (Prentice-Hall,

departs no longer singing or even composing, but wandering in the "sick lamentings" that suggest the plagues and torments of Albion's Angel and his followers. The Bard's rage also recalls that of Albion's Angel: thus he is not completely to be associated with the Bard "who Present, Past and Future sees," and his identity is difficult to specify. Broadly speaking, the implication seems to be that the American Revolution is also a symbol for the poet or the artist turning from one mode of composition to another. Perhaps what is described is an end to creativity, a turning away from old forms and the black period before new ones are hit upon. Apparently, though the fiery Orc uncovers the staleness of old forms, new forms are not immediately apparent, just as in the fall from innocence to experience the old way of looking at the world is lost, and the individual becomes a wanderer seeking a new perspective.

The identity of the Bard is the problem. We do not know if it is a good thing that he destroys his harp, or exactly why he laments, or how we should react to his lament. The implication seems to be that the destruction of the harp is good, but it is difficult to be sure. The Bard is associated with Albion's Angel in that his reactions are similar, and the only other Bard mentioned in the poem is the reptilian Bard of Albion, an obviously reactionary figure.

1966), pp. 127-41, esp. p. 128 & n; and G. E. Bentley, The Blake Collection, Pierpont Morgan Library (1971), plates 8-9.

33. Erdman, Prophet Against Empire, p. 287.

34. Ibid., pp. 286-87.

The difficulties in discovering a more definite understanding of the significance of the Bard are lifted considerably by considering the passage in terms of Thomas Gray, whose "The Bard" was well known to Blake and was in fact illustrated by him in 1785.³⁵

Blake's case against Gray's Bard involves the Bard's manner of opposition to the forces of tyranny represented by Edward. In Gray's poem, the Bard is defensive and suicidal. He with great relish predicts the fall and the torment of Edward, as well as the social chaos of history, which he anticipates as his revenge. He is a kind of Orc in that he is a rebel against tyranny, but his song is a bitter expression of thirst for terrible vengeance at which even his fellow bards are horrified in Blake's illustrations to the poem.³⁶ In its fulfillment the Bard loses his revenge, for the tyrant ceases to be a symbol and becomes, as Blake portrays him, "a bereaved husband bent in grief over a frail young wife."³⁷

Blake's apparent sympathy for the unfortunate queen must have complicated his feelings about the historical royal couple, as they complicated, I think, the tone of this curious design. Gray, however, does not pause to consider Edward as a private man. His concern is with the terrible vengeance of time upon tyranny: it is the theme of his poem, and an important theme in Blake's approving response.³⁸

But Blake's response is not entirely approving: Blake is aware that the Bard is as ruthless as the tyrant Edward, and that the Bard is in a state of error similar to that of his oppressor. Blake would see in Gray's poem the description of an Orc-figure becoming a tyrant. When the Bard casts himself into the torrent, in plate 13 of Blake's illustrations, his pose is exactly that of Urizen in

35. See Irene Tayler, Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray (Princeton, 1971), p. 14. Blake's water-colour was exhibited in the Royal Academy in that year.

36. Ibid., "The Bard," plate 10.

37. Ibid., pp. 101-2.

38. Ibid., p. 102.

America 4, and the "torrent" into which he falls is not a stream, but a sea. The Bard is not, as Tayler maintains, one who "will be-- indeed, already is--resurrected."³⁹ He is, rather, falling headlong into the waters of experience. Both the Bard and Edward contribute to the cycle of revenge. Since he knows of and approves the torments of Edward, the Bard ceases to be the heroic defender of freedom and becomes a ruthless, vengeful tyrant himself. Neither the Bard nor Edward can conceive of the other as an individual, and neither feels guilt at wishing to destroy the other.

The immediate connection between America and Gray's poem becomes clearer when we consider the cancelled plates to America. In plate c there are several echoes of Gray's poem. First, Albion's Angel is described as an aged King whose "only son outstretched / By rebel's hands was slain" (c:26-27), just as Edward's son is said to be killed in Gray's poem (l. 68). Like that of the Bard, the beard of Albion's Angel is described as "waving in the "wild wind," (c:27, "Bard," 19-20) and, like the Bard, Albion's Angel hears and participates in "the voices of the religious dead heard in the mountains." (c:29, "Bard," 44-48) It seems clear that Blake sees the Bard both as Gray intended, a hero standing firm against tyranny, and at the same time as a tyrant himself. There are other minor echoes of Gray's poem in the cancelled plates,⁴⁰ and it seems clear that the cancelled passage in the Preludium relates to Gray's poem by means of these echoes. Blake's ambivalent attitude toward Gray's Bard is partly due to his presentation by Gray, and also due to Blake's own ambivalent attitude to Druidism. Druidism

39. Ibid., p. 107.

40. The meteor-hair metaphor (America a:16; "Bard" 20), the clouds-soldier image (b:18, c:16; 135-56), the tree-filled vales, and the ship image, which presages evil (b:20-22; 70-76).

symbolizes to Blake both the primal, bardic religion, and the institutionalized religion of cruelty, of the sacrifice of others for sin instead of self-sacrifice.⁴¹ Thus when Blake's Bard destroys his harp he is refusing to celebrate the cruelties of war and refusing to participate in the vengeful tyranny Albion's Angel represents. But he is also, in effect, denying the possibility of escape from the cycles of experience by wandering off and lamenting.

It seems likely, then, that Blake's first conception of America contained stronger Druidic elements, that originally the poem viewed the American Revolution as another manifestation of the Edward-Bards conflict, in which neither side can escape the futile, cyclic course of history. Other Druidic elements are included on these cancelled plates, such as the stone of Night, the massy pillars, and even Sotha, who in "Africa" is identified as the Norse Woden.

The downcast goatherd depicted on Blake's final illustration to "The Bard" demonstrates again Blake's ambivalent attitude toward the Bard. The world of experience is clearly indicated in the surrounding terrain, and as Tayler notes, "the total effect is of oppressed weariness and inactivity, of art and human life held still in a deadening sleep."⁴² But the goatherd is also a piper, another musician, and his unregarded pipe signifies the potential to escape this depression, and forms as well a parallel to the Bard destroying his harp in America. In destroying or neglecting his instrument, the musician is denying his creative powers, and the reason for doing so is his awareness of his creation as false in some way.

⁴¹. Thus the Bard in the "Introduction" to Experience is a positive figure, as is that in the "Voice of the Ancient Bard," but

The Bard in America is, like the piper, falling into Experience and losing his vision.

The cancelled passage in the Preludium indicates the Bard's turning away from even the ruined pillar, which signifies Orc's success in that the temple of Albion's Angel has fallen (c:3, 24-25), and despairing even at the destruction of the tyrant. It is noteworthy that the description of the lamenting Bard follows the cry of the shadowy daughter of Urthona, "This is eternal death, and this the torment long foretold," which signals her sudden awareness of the circular nature of experience.

Gray's Bard is a prophet "in the modern sense" in that he predicts what will happen, and this implies what Blake would regard as the Bard's misguided nature, his misrepresenting his occupation. It is Gray's Bard, and not Blake himself, that is being criticised. The error of Gray's Bard is not that he does not predict events accurately: it is rather that he does not understand the significance of events and so offers no vision of escape from the world of Experience, and can only speak from the limited point of view of the world of Experience, the "dull round" of revolution and tyranny, motivated by the passion for revenge. Perhaps, at one stage, America was intended as a reinterpretation, and a rewriting, of Gray's poem. The figure of Orc, scarcely mentioned in the cancelled plates, probably came increasingly to dominate the poem to the point where the Bard's rescinding his desire for bloody vengeance is quite peripheral. The true prophet-figure is the speaker in the

Druidic stones and Ossianic imagery follow the tyrants throughout America and Europe. See below, p. 47.

42. Tayler, p. 107.

poem, and the harp-fragmenting passage was perhaps cancelled because of the likelihood of confusing the Bard with the prophet-narrator.

In reading the minor prophecies, then, we must remain conscious of following Blake, who in writing them is casting himself in the role of the poet/prophet, the "seer" behind the veil of event. He is interested in present and past events rather than the nature of the future. But more important, his design in writing is to replace the revenge-consciousness of the traditional conception of Necessity and the prophet with the ideal of escape from historical cycles.

Chapter Two: "America: A Prophecy"

The frontispiece and title-page to America give us an indication of the nature of the material and the purpose of the poem itself. The frontispiece presents us with an exceedingly cold scene. A woman and two children huddle together, and a bound angel beside them will not look at them, but hides his face between his knees. The revolution is over (a cannon and sword lie broken before them), but still they cannot escape, for the angel fills the breach in the wall. There seems to be a chill wind moving the woman's hair. Erdman emphasizes the silence of this and the title-page scene,¹ but more important is the stasis: nothing is in motion except for the wind, despite the fact that night and the revolution are over. The woman's legs are crossed in imitation of those of Theotormon in the illustrations to Visions. Indeed this frontispiece is parallel to that of Visions: again a woman is trapped by a crouching, mourning, self-involved male figure. There is again a break in the clouds, but here there is no sun. There is no transcendence, nothing has changed.

The title-page following gives us a sense of what this prophecy is intended to do. Two readers above, in the clouds, are intensely involved. Each has two attendants. The man's attendants point back left (to the page previous, the frontispiece, or to the word "America") and forward, off, or over, the page, and, as Warner suggests in a note to Erdman's essay, thereby urging us into the

1. "America: New Expanses," BVFD, pp. 95-96.

poem itself.² One of the woman's attendants points down to the word "Prophecy," or to the figures below. Erdman suggests that she is "reading properly," that the man's reading "needs redirection,"³ for her attendants reflect her interest in "Prophecy," rather than "America" itself, and her garments are less shroud-like. This is true, but at the same time the woman's posture is only a motion away from that of the despairing figure on plate 16. Beneath the readers, and perhaps the subject of their reading, is a woman weeping over the corpse of a man who still clutches his sword. Other bodies lie about. The implication is that these figures below are the experience, the reality that underlies the text. We are not invited to expect the revolution to transcend the cycles of history.

The text of America, like that of Europe, opens with a "Preludium," which is followed by the "Prophecy" itself. The presence of the Preludium is important since, as Keynes notes, the Preludium-Prophecy format was not hit upon until after the first plate was etched.⁴ This reinforces the temporal link between the two poems, implying that the final form of one is based on that of the other. In both poems the Preludium serves the same function. In terms of mythic characters it deals with the nature of the external world, describing a political or historical situation in natural terms. The shadowy daughter of Urthona, like the "shadowy female" in Europe, is a kind of earth-mother figure, a personification of the state of both human communities and the natural world, just as "Earth" in Songs of Experience is a similar double figure. In a sense, the

2. Ibid., p. 96n.

3. Ibid., p. 95n.

4. Geoffrey Keynes and Edwin Wolf 2nd, eds., William Blake's Illuminated Books: A Census (New York: Grolier, 1953), p. 43.

Preludium presents the universal forces underlying general events, the archetype behind a given historical event, and the Prophecy section describes the universal forces more particularly, and demonstrates their relationship with historical events. As Wittreich notes of Revelation, there are "universal visions" and "particular visions." The former, like the Preludium here, "embrace all time," and present an archetypal situation. The latter, like the prophecy section, "gathers into focus a distinct period of time."⁵ In Blake's prophecies the particular vision is demonstrated to be an example of the universal vision and the Preludium serves as a kind of frame for the prophecy itself.

There are three characters in the Preludium to America, Urthona, the daughter of Urthona, and Orc, just as in the prophecy there are three major forces, the British, the Americans and Orc. A parallel seems to be intended between Urthona and the British, and his daughter and the Americans.

Urthona is unseen, except in Orc's description of him. His name suggests "earth-owner," and, though in Europe Los calls himself "strong Urthona," and in the Song of Los he is the "Eternal Prophet," here Urthona seems only a vague tyrant-figure. Raine points out that Urthona is a kind of Pluto, his name being close to "U-thorno," the Ossianic Hades.⁶ Raine traces his origins through Ossian, the Orphic Hymns, and Milton.

The early Urthona was conceived as Death or Hades, and Blake, according to his usual practice, drew the figure from his favourite mythological masters, in a spirit of enthusiastic, if sometimes indiscriminate, eclecticism.⁷

5. "Opening the Seals," Blake's Sublime Allegory, p. 44.

6. Blake and Tradition, I, 244-48.

7. Ibid., I, 248.

One must recognize that it is not inappropriate for Urthona, the creative imagination, to also be a death-figure. In the Orphic Hymns, Pluto is called "terrestrial Jove," and Taylor notes, "Pluto ... is called terrestrial Jupiter because he governs by his providence the earth, and all she contains."⁸ Further, he defines the sphere of Pluto as "the western centre of the universe, since the west is allied to earth, on account of its being nocturnal, and the cause of obscurity and darkness."⁹ In this sense Urthona is the "earth-owner" presiding over this world, the kingdom of the dead. Taylor many times makes the point that the soul is "buried in body, as in a sepulchre."¹⁰ Traditionally, Jupiter, Pluto and Neptune were brothers, and they divided the cosmos among themselves, just as in Blake's later myth the four Zoas divide the compass points of Albion's psyche. Neptune and Pluto seem to be united here in Urthona, and in Orc's eyes Urthona is his enemy, like Urizen, the Jupiter-figure.

The daughter of Urthona may represent the united British colonies in America in the same way that the "Daughters of Albion" in Visions represent on one level colonies in the British Empire. At any rate, she is clearly identified with the American continents:

On my American plains I feel the struggling afflictions
Endur'd by roots that writhe their arms into the nether deep:
I see a serpent in Canada, who courts me to his love;
In Mexico an Eagle, and a Lion in Peru;
I see a Whale in the South-sea, drinking my soul away.
(2:10-14)

The figure of the Daughter of Urthona is borrowed largely from Taylor.

8. Selected Writings, eds., K. Raine and G. M. Harper (Princeton, 1969), p. 232n.

9. The Cratylus, Parmenides, Phaedo, and Timaeus (hereafter CPPT) (London, 1793), p. 50n.

10. Ibid., p. 38n.

Her helmet signifies the limitation imposed on the mind by the earthly, but also links her with Minerva, her bow and arrows of pestilence (1:5-6) link her with Diana, and her imprisonment in "regions of dark death" (2:9) suggest Persephone. These three goddesses are identified with the natural world by Taylor.¹¹ The shadowy daughter of Urthona may be identified as the spirit of Earth or Nature in the western world. Her silence is explained by the proverb, "Where man is not Nature is barren" (Marriage 10). She is passive and uncreative until the encounter with Orc. Similarly, until that point, she is "shadowy" and protected by clouds, common images in Taylor and Blake for physical reality, suggesting an undefined state. In this connection it is significant that the daughter of Urthona is given no other name, no other identity.

Orc is also something of a Pluto figure, for his name, too, suggests hell: "Orcus." If Orc is another Pluto figure, the daughter of Urthona is his Persephone. Thus she is "the animating part of the earth's soul," while he is "the intellectual part of the earth's soul; from whom she receives the divine light of mind, and copious streams of the nectar of divine knowledge."¹² As the daughter of Urthona expresses it: "Thou art the image of God ... / And thou art fall'n to give me life in regions of dark death" (2:8-9). But Orc's identification with Pluto ends with the implications of his name and the rape of "Persephone." For it is obvious that Orc is the spirit of revolution and passionate upheaval. It is through his influence that the Americans triumph over the forces of tyranny later in the poem. Orc represents reviving energy. The

11. Selected Writings, p. 343n; see also CPPT, pp. 51-52n.

12. Selected Writings, p. 241n.

logical development of the devils of the Marriage, his birth is alluded to in the "Song of Liberty" concluding the Marriage: "In her trembling hands she took the new born terror, howling: / On those infinite mountains of light, now barr'd out by the atlantic sea, the new born fire stood before the starry king!" (E43/K159)

Orc also embodies elements of Dionysus, Mars, Vulcan and Ossianic heroes. He is red-eyed (1:19) like most Ossianic heroes, "fallen" (2:9) and associated with fire like Vulcan, identified with Mars (5:4), and is a saviour-figure like Dionysus. He is in addition a kind of Prometheus, since he is friendly to man and opposed to the "sky-gods," and an Adonis, the dying and reviving god of fruitfulness. Though none of these identifications are sustained, they underline Orc's role as divine redeemer. And, though attributes are borrowed from various sources, the figure of Orc arises largely out of the train of Blake's thought in the Marriage and Visions. Urizen, who is the cold tyrant-god of law-bound religion and repressive social law, must be opposed by a force representing freedom and energy. If Urizen is God, then the Devil must be a life-giving force of energy struggling against tyranny. In natural terms, winter and summer, night and day, must usurp one another, and in classical terms, Jupiter is opposed by the Titans.

The most illuminating and far-reaching identification of Orc is with the Titans. In the passage quoted above from the "Song of Liberty," and in America 4:2-8, Orc's birth is described as taking place at Atlantis, home of the Titans. Concerning Atlantis and the Titans, Harper comments:

Blake's concept of the early inhabitants of the "Atlantic Mountains" as "Giants ... in Intellect" appears to be indebted to the Neoplatonists' allegorical interpretation of the myth. As descendants of Neptune, they belonged to the race of Titans or Giants: "The giant Albion, was Patriarch of the Atlantic; he is the Atlas of the Greeks, one of those Greeks called Titans".... Atlas, as the strongest of the ten sons of Neptune, was leader of the Atlanteans in their heroic age.... In the Marriage, Blake described the Giants as "the Antidiluvians who are our energies" and declared that "the Giants who formed this world into its sensual existence, and now seem to live in it in chains, are in truth the causes of its life & the sources of all activity." (Marriage 16)¹³

Orc is a persecuted Titan, and, like Prometheus, is trying to save man from the tyrannical "sky-gods."

The American War is made to parallel the Atlantean War described in the Timaeus. This war is to be understood as the conflict between the "evil" passions, the Titans, and the "good" reasoning power, the sky-gods. The flood which followed the defeat of Atlantis, destroying both powers, is certainly to be considered a degeneration into materialism and a loss of divine vision resulting from the defeat of the Atlantean "Giants in Intellect." Again, as in the Marriage, it is the "defeated" and denied Titans, or devils, that hold the key to man's "intellectual powers." This inversion of Neoplatonic thought was begun in the Marriage and continued in Visions: "O Urizen! Creator of men! mistaken demon of heaven!" (E47/K192) In Taylor's translations and notes the most distant gods were the most perfect, and the earth essentially degenerate. In America, however, Orc rises from out of the earth.

13. George M. Harper, The Neoplatonism of William Blake (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina, 1961), pp. 222-23.

The Preludium, obviously, is concerned with the confrontation of Orc and the daughter of Urthona. But in the design on this plate, it is someone else who stands before him. In the Book of Urizen she is identified as Enitharmon, who with Los is parent and torturer of Orc. Here her pose echoes that of Oothoon beside the self-tortured Theotormon in Visions 6.¹⁴ This is one of many visual "quotes" from the other minor prophecies which appear with great frequency and remind us that the Blake canon is to be read as an integrated whole.

The "visual quote" here significantly recalls the defensive and self-torturing attitude of a Theotormon and the helplessness of an Oothoon trapped in Theotormon's world. The significance of the visual quotation in Blake's designs is not that it necessarily interprets the material of the text here, but that it indicates a parallel situation. Neither Enitharmon nor the shadowy daughter of Urthona is to be identified with Oothoon. It is, I think, a question of atmosphere. Both Oothoon's helplessness before Theotormon, and Enitharmon's bowing before inevitability by consenting to the binding of Orc are invoked here, and they together suggest the polarity of irreconcilable opposites, and their inevitable conflict. The drive for security, which implies tyranny, and the drive for liberty, which implies chaos and revolution, are always opposed, generally violently opposed.

The "dark abode" and "caverns" mentioned in the text as Orc's place of confinement and which suggest a cave or a dungeon, are depicted as a flat place beneath a bent, spreading tree, the "tree

14. See Erdman, BVFD, p. 101n.

of mystery," according to Keynes.¹⁵ This tree will reappear in plate 14 as the emblem of false teaching. Its roots are seen down the margin of the page, involving what is evidently a torso, "struggling into life" perhaps. Beneath the roots is the source of the tree, the crouching, crosslegged, self-involved figure with closed eyes and a frightened, defensive air. This figure's attitude is the origin of the tree at which Orc is bound, as if to be sacrificed. The worm of mortality presides at the foot of the page, and is the ultimate source of the figure's defensiveness. It is man's fear of death, or change, and his drive for security and peace, that causes the "tree of mystery" to flourish.

The situation in the Preludium is the encounter of the physical world of America that has been exploited by the British, with the spirit of revolt that she has (perhaps secretly) nourished and kept alive. As the poem opens Orc is fourteen, the age of sexual awakening, but also the interval between Rousseau's Social Contract and the outbreak of the American Revolution.¹⁶ It is further, and perhaps more significantly, one-half of a lunar cycle. This is the first implication that Orc is bound in a cycle, that his revolution is part of a larger whole. Orc describes his spirit in the forms of an eagle, a lion, a whale and a serpent (1:13-16), symbols of power and strength. The first three dominate air, earth and water, and the serpent image follows the flames of Orc throughout the poem. Foster Damon notes, "though the body of Orc (the actuality of revolt) is bound, his spirit is abroad: his fire, as sublime

15. Keynes, Census, p. 40.

16. Erdman, Prophet, p. 239.

forces, penetrates the other three elements." The serpent is the embodiment of passion, "the Eagle ... is the Genius; the Lion is Divine Wrath, protecting the Lamb; and the Whale is a similar symbol of the realm of water."¹⁷ The sense of Orc's power and universality in the physical world is emphasized here, as in the daughter of Urthona's answering speech:

I see a serpent in Canada, who courts me to his love;
In Mexico an Eagle, and a Lion in Peru;
I see a Whale in the South-sea, drinking my soul away. (2:12-14)

These lines indicate both the extent of the daughter of Urthona's awareness and the wide-reaching stirrings before the revolution. That the Whale is "drinking" her soul underlines the identification of the daughter of Urthona with the physical world, since her soul is liquid: water is a recurring image in Taylor and Blake for matter or materialism. And in the following line, "O what limbering pains I feel. thy fire & my frost / Mingle in howling pains," the contrast is again between Orc's passionate "fires" and her "frost," her cold and fallen nature. The frost also anticipates the "snows" and "icy magazines" of Urizen (16:9). The implication is that her union with Orc is releasing her from a Urizenic oppression. But it is not a total or lasting release, for she cries at last, "This is eternal death, and this the torment long foretold." (2:17) Although Orc's energy saves the daughter of Urthona from her sterility, she is sent on another cyclic course:

The soul revolves according to a mystic and mundane circulation: for flying from an indivisible and Dionysiacal life, and evergizing according to a Titanic (sic) and revolting energy, she becomes bound in body as in a prison. Hence, too, she abides in punishment and takes care of her partial concerns.¹⁸

17. The Philosophy and Symbols of William Blake (Gloucester, Mass., 1958), p. 334.

18. Taylor, Selected Writings, p. 413.

From this passage it is suggested that Orc is no more than the "image" of God, and offers no absolute salvation to America. The final cry of the daughter of Urthona undercuts her praise of Orc's power, and leads us to re-evaluate his nature.

A tendril creeps up the side of this plate and points out the first lines, "Silent as despairing love, and strong as jealousy, / The hairy shoulders rend the links, free are the wrists of fire;" while Orc, at the bottom of the plate, is freeing himself, emerging, in Titanic fashion, from the earth. He is escaping his bondage, and looking up. Ironically, the line of text immediately above him is the final line, "This is eternal death; and this the torment long foretold."

The Preludium, again, contains the action of the rest of the poem in symbolic terms. America is momentarily released from her sterile, oppressed situation by the release of Revolution, whose spirit had already haunted the nation. Blake is abstracting archetypal characters to describe what has happened in America, linking the revolution with archetypal or mythic traditions. The Atlantean War is the primary point of reference, but the immediate situation echoes the Prometheus myth, Ossian, and various Norse myths. At the same time, Blake is describing what happens within one individual as he becomes caught up in the world of experience. The meeting of the shadowy daughter and Orc is the meeting of America with Revolt, but also that of an individual with "the power of the human desire to achieve a better world."¹⁹ This desire produces revolutions but also produces souls emmeshed in the cycles

19. Frye, p. 206.

of history. Thus the Preludium is also a study of the psychology of revolution in a world of flux. In "A Vision of the Last Judgment," Blake comments:

Many Persons, such as Paine & Voltaire with some of the Ancient Greeks say "we will... live in Paradise & Liberty." You may do so in Spirit, but not in the Mortal Body as you pretend, till after the Last Judgment.... You cannot have Liberty in the World without what you call Moral Virtue [a standard code of law] & you cannot have Moral Virtue without the Slavery of that half of the Human Race who hate what you call Moral Virtue. (E554/K615-6)

Blake's attitude to Paine is somewhat ambiguous. Here he seems to deny him, but he supports him against the accusations of Bishop Watson (E601-9/K383-96). The manner in which he defends him, however, indicates his reservations: "The Bishop never saw the Everlasting Gospel any more than Tom Paine" (E608/K394). However, "let the Bishop prove that he has not spoken against the Holy Ghost, who in Paine strives with Christendom as in Christ he strove with the Jews." (E604/K387) Orc, as is implicit in the discussion to this point, personifies the drive to live in "Paradise and Liberty." In Paine, as in Christ, this drive is termed the Holy Ghost: political and religious figures are not distinct in Blake. "If Caesar is Right, Christ is Wrong both in Politics & Religion, since they will divide them in Two." (E609/K396)

Orc represents the ideal of autonomy in terms of the church, state and individual. In essence he is the Holy Ghost, the Energy in every individual, which perceives a vision of unity without hierarchy. For no individual has the authority to dictate to another, and because such authority is assumed, the spirit of Liberty is always subversive.

In a sense, then, there are two Orcs. One is this drive for Liberty, a motivating force within the individual, as described above. The other is the form in which this drive often becomes manifested, the spirit of discord, Mars, or the Norse gods and heroes. These two are in fact two poles, absolute idealism and absolute cynicism. The first is represented in Orc's first speech to Albion's Angel (plate 6), the second in Orc's final appearance, "rejoicing in his terror" (12:10). Both are victims, for both are involved in cycles. In his "Note on the Orc Cycle," Erdman elaborates on Frye's concept of the Orc cycle by distinguishing two cycles: the "slave-rebel-slave" cycle, which he sees as Blake's early concept, as in America; and the "slave-rebel-tyrant" cycle, which he sees as Blake's later understanding of Orc's fate.²⁰ But Erdman overlooks the cycle in Tiriel, in which Tiriel begins as a slave-rebel to his parents, and becomes a tyrant and father of slave-rebel sons. Further, and more importantly, the two cycles are working at the same time in America. Orc, the spirit of liberty, is bound to the "slave-rebel-slave" cycle, for the spirit of liberty is always subversive. Orc the personification of war and chaos is inevitably bound to becoming a tyrant. Like all war leaders, Orc is somewhat schizophrenic: terrorism is his method, and security and peace ("Now the Lion and the Wolf shall cease") is his aim. In many ways he is similar to Albion's Angel. Damon is right to distinguish between the body of Orc and Orc's spirit, but he draws no conclusions. The body of Orc is serpentine and like that of Albion's Angel. Orc's spirit, his flames and visions, compel the reader to look at the apocalyptic overtones of revolution.

20. Erdman, BVFD, pp. 112-114.

II

In the Prophecy itself, archetypal characters such as Orc remain, but now the scene of the action is clearly the physical world, seen through the eyes of a prophet, so that the style is tailored to a theme that is to be read on both individual and social levels. The revolution heralds the emergence of the spirit of idealism and energy, an emergence that, in terms of the individual, is made no less important by the fact that in the political world there has indeed been a change only in power-structures. What this energy and idealism implies is the basic theme of America.

The opening line of the prophecy, "The Guardian Prince of Albion burns in his nightly tent," is the same as the closing line of "Africa," the first half of the Song of Los, in which the spread of materialism and tyranny is described. "Africa" describes the triumph of the forces of tyranny and America describes their downfall.

The "Guardian Prince of Albion" is a double figure, incorporating both "Albion's Angel" and the "King of England," or rather, he is the spirit that drives them both, the self-righteousness of dogma, the drive for power, and the ultimate ruthlessness of a materialistic view of the social and physical world. The King of England, George III, is his agent in the material world. "Albion's Angel" represents England's power, and the rigid, self-righteous and power-oriented religion that characterizes a nation maintaining an empire. Albion's Angel is England's "spiritual form," its soul,

the state in which the nation's leaders and its public opinion are resting. He represents the identity the English had created for themselves.

That the Guardian Prince is a tent-dweller suggests his mobile, warlike aspect, and that he "burns" with "sullen fires" underlines his smoldering, aggressive nature. Somewhat daunted, "warlike" Americans meet "on the coast glowing with blood from Albion's fiery Prince" (3:5), as if on a battlefield, or in a sunset, with the connotations of decline and decay implicit in the sunset motif. Though they have not the power of England, Washington speaks for them, and he speaks defiantly:

a heavy iron chain
Descends, link by link, from Albion's cliffs across the sea,
to bind
Brothers & sons of America (3:7-9)

The image of the chain recalls the "tenfold" iron chains with which Orc is bound, emphasizing the parallel between the two sections. Orc is the spirit that leads the rebels to be defiant. There may also be a reference to the Platonic golden chain of being, and, since Orc is a Titan, low on the chain of being, Blake is inverting the tradition once again in making him his hero. The chain is an obvious enough symbol of enslavement, as well as of hierarchical order, but the reader should recall the "mind forg'd manacles" of "London" (E26-7/K216), which keep the imagination in check and inhibit perception. It is a mental as well as a physical bondage. The "sultry sands," and the "furrows of the whip" in the lines following contribute to the recurring desert-slavery image which suggests Egypt and the Exodus or the captivity in Babylon, and the physical and mental slavery they involved.

The Guardian Prince reacts with rage to this defiance. He rises up, "a dragon form, clashing his scales." The dragon is a heraldic device of considerable antiquity in England. Bryant notes evidence of "the Saxons having often a Dragon in their standard."²¹ Taylor repeatedly identifies the dragon as a symbol for the "partial life of the soul, ... the condition of its intellect when separated from divine intellect."²² The dragon is thus an emblem of materialism. Most important here, "a dragon is of a vigilant and guardian nature,"²³ and a tyrant rather than a benevolent deity.²⁴

The imagery surrounding the appearance of this dragon is basically Ossianic:

at midnight he arose,
And flam'd red meteors round the land of Albion beneath;
His voice, his locks, his awful shoulders, and his glowing eyes
Appear to the Americans upon the cloudy night. (3:15-4:1)

In Fingal, for example, night is an image for the armies of conquest, described as the "winds of night," and the "terrors of the night."²⁵ The evil King Starvo's eyes are compared to "meteors of night" (38), spears are "the meteors of death" (43), and "red stars" together with winds, like that of the Guardian Prince's "terrible blast

21.. Jacob Bryant, Observations Upon the Poems of Rowley (London, 1781), I, 211-12. This is the first implication that the English in the poem are to be associated with decadent Druidism. See below, p. 47.

22. Description of Greece, III, 238. See also Selected Writings, p. 399.

24. Jacob Bryant, A New System: or, An Analysis of the Antient Mythology (London, 1774, 1807), II, 135-36.

23. Selected Writings, p. 244n.

25. J. Macpherson, Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books (London, 1762), p. 52. Subsequent references bracketed.

over the heaving sea," presage a great battle (30). The purpose of this Ossianic imagery, of course, is to underline the physical power of the Guardian Prince and as well to emphasize his character as the archetypal warrior-tyrant.

And again the illustration reflects the mood of the plate. Birds fly about in various directions as a figure rises despite his manacles, and wheat sprouts from the title. All seems well. But the coming battle is not forgotten, nor are its horrors, for below flames move between the lines of text and up the margin. A floating figure blows more flames from a trumpet while a family flees from them. The terror inspired by the Guardian Prince is not to be underrated, and it is not to be forgotten that the flames suggest Orc's terrorism as well.

Suddenly, between the two powers and perhaps aroused by the Guardian Prince's "terrible blast," Orc appears.

Solemn heave the Atlantic waves between the gloomy nations,
Swelling, belching from its deeps red clouds & raging fires.
(4:2-3)

This is certainly a more elemental and intense power than Albion's Guardian's "sullen fires," although the clouds are more characteristic of mystery and tyranny. The apocalyptic imagery continues:

Albion is sick! America faints! enrag'd the Zenith grew.
As human blood shooting its veins all round the orb'd heaven
Red rose the clouds from the Atlantic in vast wheels of blood
And in the red clouds rose a Wonder o'er the Atlantic sea;
Intense! naked! a Human fire fierce glowing, as the wedge
Of iron heated in the furnace; his terrible limbs were fire
With myriads of cloudy terrors banners dark & towers
Surrounded; heat but not light went thro' the murky
atmosphere. (4:6-11)

In this passage there is a studied ambivalence in the description, an ambivalence that is not explained by the concept of inversions

of sources. The bloody sky is apocalyptic in terms of Biblical imagery, and among the "great Wonders" described in Revelation are the woman clothed with the sun (12:1), the red dragon (12:3), and the beast from the sea (13:1). The dragon is the revealed form of the Guardian Prince. That is, the protector of the church is shown to be a Satanic figure. This is a straightforward inversion. Concerning Orc, however, we must repeatedly change our opinion, and at last cannot reach a firm conclusion. He is described first in terms of the Beast in Revelation, then as a "human fire," (4:8), a positive energizing force. Fire itself is ambivalent: it is apocalyptic, indicating change and renewal, but it is also the agent of destruction. At this point, the reader is tempted to regard Orc's Satanic appearance as another inversion of Biblical tradition: Orc appears Demonic but is a saviour-figure. As the description continues, however, the logic of the imagery does not invite us to be too enthusiastic over Orc's transcendent qualities. The "fierce glowing as the wedge / Of iron heated in the furnace" clearly implies that the fires of Orc appear in their intensity because of the pressure of the furnace. That is to say, Orc's fires are a force of reaction rather than of spontaneous action. His power derives from the pressures of oppression and ultimately will cool, just as the "wedge of iron" must cool outside of the furnace. Further, and most important, within the context of the imagery of the poem itself Orc's appearance is to say the least not positive.

With myriads of cloudy terrors banners dark & towers
Surrounded; heat but not light went thro' the murky atmosphere.

The "cloudy terrors" and "murky atmosphere" emphasize the "red clouds" with which the description began, and, as very often in

Blake's writings, clouds characterize tyranny, mystery, the shapelessness of evil. The "Banners dark & towers" is a clearer indication of Orc's essentially negative character. Dark banners and towers are in Blake associated with pride, defensiveness, social repression and power wrongly used. Later in the poem, Albion's Angel refers to their absence in America as one of his great woes. Arston is associated with them, and Urizen himself is associated with the remoteness and aloofness towers imply. And the tower is not incidentally linked with Orc: he is "surrounded" with them. Bryant, in his New System, dedicates much space to the point that a tower is to be understood for every reference to dragons in Greek mythology.²⁶ But the point is that, in terms of his own recurring imagery, Blake implies that Orc's nature is not such as can initiate an apocalypse in his own name. There is more involved than an inversion of his sources: in some respects at least Orc is genuinely hellish. The "heat but not light" obviously refers to the "darkness visible" of Paradise Lost (I:63), but Orc's Satanic attributes are real, not part of an inversion of sources, and insofar as he is limited to wishing to destroy dragon-towers in order to erect his own, Orc is not to be trusted.

Again, then, Orc, the redeemer-figure, is depicted in the course of the poem as a Titan, a serpent, a Miltonic devil-figure and so on. To a great degree, Orc is everything Albion's Angel is. He delights in power and conquest, he is associated with Mars (war),

26. Bryant, A New System, II, 134, 137, 148, et passim.

clouds (obscurity, mystery), darkness ("heat but not light"), coils (the serpent-dragon), and so on. Perhaps the Norse mythology is the best parallel, for there the difference between the gods and the forces of evil (the giants, Fenris the Wolf, and Midgard the world-serpent) is only that the gods are in control. In character they are no different. In Blake the repressed god becomes symbol for repressed ideals. Orc champions the rights of individual freedom, but, again, as the illustration on plate 3 makes clear, he does so by the same means as those by which Albion's Angel represses them, by terror and by demonstrations of power. Orc is a Prometheus, unbound prematurely. He exults in the fact that he will eventually have his captors in a similar situation. He refuses to forgive them and essentially is no different from them.

The King of England, a mortal, is overcome by the sight of Orc's birth. His fear is reflected perhaps in the crouching figure at the bottom of plate 4, who is holding his head in his hands. Erdman views this plate as a progressive cartoon. A dragon form (the Guardian Prince of Albion) with human hands, changes to Urizen or Albion's Angel descending in the margin with his scepter, books of law and white beard, and pursued by lightning. As a man, he is crouching on the shore regarding an object in terror. To Erdman it is a beached whale: "an 'orc' or killer whale ... a sea monster or spectre of his imagination, ... a manatee."²⁷ Above the frightened figure is the line, "The King of England looking westward trembles at the vision." But the object of the King's fear

27. Erdman, BVFD, p. 107.

only vaguely resembles a beached whale. Keynes describes it as a fallen tree, and indeed the object seems more likely a fallen tree, if somewhat distorted. Why Blake would portray a beached whale is difficult to ascertain, but the forest image consistently follows the reactionary forces throughout the poem.²⁸

Albion's Angel stands beside "the Stone of Night," an Ossianic image by which Blake implies Druidism. In Fingal, "the Stone of Power," "the Stone of Lubar," and "the circle of Brumo" are generally associated with the forces of evil. For example, when Starno is plotting against Fingal, "he called the gray-haired Snivan that often sung round the circle of Lodā: when the Stone of Power heard his cry, and the battle turned in the field of the valiant."²⁹ The stone here is a religious symbol, and the religion is one of warfare and conquest. In The Valley of Vision, Peter Fisher discusses the significance of Druidism to Blake's thought:

Since the fallen nature of man is the result of self-will, or what Blake calls the "selfhood," each age ends with the triumph of the Selfhood over man's original "Human Existence." Consequently, the last "church" of each era represents the final perversion of self-sacrifice into the sacrifice of others in the "Druidical" rite of atonement.... The name "Druidism" comes to symbolize the perverse substitution of an oracular formalism for the active life of the prophetic mentor and the arrogant reduction of the inner sacrifice of man's natural self to the imitative rite of human sacrifice.³⁰

28. Keynes, Census, p. 40. The object is tan-coloured, the wrong colour to be a killer whale, but I have no suggestions as to what it is. The object on the cancelled plate b, the first draft of the plate 4 design, is not resting on the ground, since a shadow is seen beneath it, and it seems certainly to be a falling tree trunk. See BVFD, plates 30-31.

29. Macpherson, Fingal, p. 36.

30. Fisher, The Valley of Vision (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1971), pp. 33-34. See also Fisher, "Blake and the Druids," Blake: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. N. Frye, (pp. 156-78; and Frye, passim).

"Human sacrifice" is the root of empire-building. In A Descriptive Catalogue (E533/K577), Blake speaks of the "ancient glory" of Britain, the period before the degeneration of the Druid era. Early Druidism is associated with the "Titans, or "Giants in Intellect." When the "Ancient Bard" speaks in Songs of Experience, it is as a representative of these. Later Druidism is a symbol for the religion of Albion's Angel, which is composed of politically-oriented and rigid dogma. The "Stone of Night" is also the stone of law, the tablet on which the ten commandments are written, the law Orc will "stamp to dust" (8:5). In one of the cancelled plates, it is called the "vast stone whose name is Truth," (c:10) implying an imposed restriction on the unbound nature of truth, as in the proverb, "One Law for the Lion and the Ox is Oppression" (Marriage 24).

As is evident from Europe, the Stone of Night also has a role on the individual level. It represents the skull, the emblem of mortality, and it indicates the confinement of man's powers in darkness. It is the concept of mortality, and the insecurity of individuals that the religion of Albion's Angel protectively stands beside and finds authority in.

From this rather defensive posture, Albion's Angel looks up and sees Orc:

The terror like a comet, or more like the planet red
 That once inclos'd the terrible wandering comets in its sphere.
 Then Mars thou wast our center, & the planets three flew round
 Thy crimson disk; so e'er the Sun was rent from thy red sphere.
 (5:2-5)

These lines may be simply a reflection of England's confusion. The astronomical theory is apparently original with Blake and is not

developed elsewhere. Orc is compared to a comet, one of the "terrible wandering comets" enclosed by Mars, god of war. Orc indeed has a warlike aspect, and is ultimately to be identified with Mars himself, who was once (and is again threatening to become) centre or arbiter of our universe. A period of order is suggested by the sun being "rent" from the "red sphere" of Mars and becoming centre of the solar system. Later in the poem, the rising sun is made an image of the new order being established. The period of order gradually degenerates into law-bound tyranny, when Mars again must take control of the "planets three." The passage implies that revolution and the cycles of history are inevitabilities that had been dismissed by those in power as qualities of the past no longer real threats.

Further, the two images, the Sun and Mars, represent the two sides of Orc's nature, as described above (p. 39). He is Mars, the war-god, the personification of the social chaos and the cruelty of war. The Sun, the life principle, and the principle of order, is to be a product of the supremacy of Mars. The passage is Albion's Angel's vision, of course, but the concept of the chaos of war as producing social order, and the necessity of violence, is common to Orc and Albion's Angel, and the characterization of Orc as Mars is disturbingly apt.

Orc appears as a defiling serpent:

The Spectre glow'd, his horrid length staining the temple long
With beams of blood. (5:6-7)

On one hand this is Orc's appearance from the point of view of Albion's Angel: Orc is a defiler of the sacred. At the same time, what is sacred to Albion's Angel is the "temple," the outward forms

of religion. The passage is not necessarily to be interpreted as part of the vision of Albion's Angel, however. At any rate, Orc as a serpent embodies an enormous store of connotations. In Taylor and in Bryant, the serpent is linked with the dragon with great regularity, both being images of a "divisible life."³¹ It is obvious from the Orc cycle that in one sense Orc and Albion's Angel are images of each other, since the revolution inspired by Orc will at last settle into another tyranny. Orc, the serpent, is simply a young dragon, just as in the design on plate 14, there is a serpent/dragon figure with a tongue of flame. On another level, Orc is a redeemer, an image of Christ, as the shadowy daughter calls him, an "image of God," and his revolution an anticipation of the Last Judgment, since Christ is identified with the Old Testament serpent of brass that was hung on a pole by Moses in Exodus to end a plague.³²

The serpent is also an image of sexuality, energy, and, as in Genesis, of evil and revolt. These are qualities of Orc, and later (8:1) Orc will openly identify himself with the serpent of Eden. From the point of view of Albion's Angel, as for all tyrants, insurrection is evil incarnate. It is a violation of the single basic tenet of their religion.

Frye sees Orc's conquering of the dragon that is Albion's Angel as St. George killing a dragon, thereby releasing the Church of England from Roman Catholicism. "Dragon-killing is thus a drama

31. Taylor, Selected Writings, p. 399; Bryant, II, 194. Bryant further mentions "Orus," a serpent god (II, 201) and "Orcun," the god of fire (I, 264).

32. Frye, pp. 210, 213.

both of reviving powers of nature and of a freedom from any kind of social oppression."³³ This accords with Bryant's concept of dragons as always representing towers or citadels, symbols of repression. But a serpent is in itself a symbol of cycles of history, as is illustrated in the design on plate 5, in which a figure is falling into flames, and into the circular coils of a serpent. In Taylor, Ceres, or Earth, when searching for her daughter, is "begirt with a serpent."³⁴ In the Edda, the earth is also in the coils of Midgard, the world-serpent, the head of which, interestingly enough, is in the mid-Atlantic. The created Adam is in the coils of a serpent in Blake's Elohim Creating Adam. Thus the serpent is a symbol for matter, and this again underlines the inadequacy of Orc to create a permanent change or to initiate a real apocalypse.

Orc's first speech, which "shook the temple, is one of the most impressive passages in the poem:

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.
(6:1-5)

This passage echoes the resurrection of Christ and the vision of the field of bones in Ezekiel. Ezekiel's vision (37:1-14) is interpreted as symbolic of the restoration of Israel. The dead who are raised are termed a "great army," an indication of the means by which the restoration must take place. A similar revolution is taking place here.³⁵ The "night" which decays is, of course, the tyranny of

33. Ibid., p. 209.

34. Selected Writings, p. 253.

35. In the context of Ezekiel it is apt that Orc's speech shakes the temple: an earthquake indicates overthrow of political power in Ezekiel's visions. Ezekiel is also the "watchman," 3:17.

Albion's Angel and his "Stone of Night." And again, as in the Orphic Hymns, the grave is symbolic of the physical world,³⁶ as well as of a life spent under "the oppressor's scourge." The apocalyptic image of resurrection is, however, only an anticipation of the Last Judgment, a "fresher morning" that must at last pass into darkness again. The world of time and space has not really been transcended. Rather it is the dawn of an idea that has appeared before, independence. When the released captives begin to think of themselves as independent, they sing, from Blake's "Song of Liberty," "Empire is no more, and now the Lion & Wolf shall cease." The Lion and the Wolf symbolize "the strife of the world,"³⁷ since the lion is the Biblical protector of the sheep and the wolf his traditional enemy. But here both of them feed on the sheep, who, of course, are the people imprisoned by political powers, victims of the conflicts of empire-builders. In this connection, it is interesting that the lion is also Ezekiel's image for Judah before the captivity, an image that reflects its power, but also its inordinate pride (19:1-9).

The design on plate 6 is similar to plate 21 of the Marriage, the Resurrected Man. The parallel to the man depicted here is the huddled figure at the root of the Tree of Mystery on plate 1. Here his knees are apart and his arms and head thrown back as he looks up. He represents the renewed vision of the transcendence of mortality by the captives of the world of experience. The man is seated on a grave, Keynes suggests, for there is a skull beside

36. Taylor, Selected Writings, pp. 232-33.

37. Damon, p. 336.

him.³⁸ The clouds are still in evidence, but they seem to be parting. Across the bottom of the plate are a thistle, newt, fly, toad and worm, "types of mortality,"³⁹ but they are also echoes of Visions and are emblematic of the diversity of forms of life.

Political power, however, cannot be willed into non-existence. Albion's Angel reacts with righteous fury, which, however, "does not at all succeed in concealing an acute nervousness."⁴⁰ He stands beside his Stone of Night in the role of the British Lion, protector of the Empire, protector, too, of the view of the material world as the extent of man's reality:

art thou not Orc; who serpent-
formed
Stands at the gate of Enitharmon to devour her children?
(7:3-4)

Since Orc is "leading mankind from Time and Space to Eternity and Infinity," he may be said to devour the children of Enitharmon, the physical world and its inhabitants.⁴¹ To Albion's Angel this is Satan, or Antichrist, for despite his pretensions to asceticism (cf. Boston's speech), Albion's Angel's interest is placed squarely on the present and the material. Orc's appearance before him is a religious confrontation:

Blasphemous Demon, Antichrist, hater of Dignities;
Lover of wild rebellion, and transgressor of Gods Law;
Why dost thou come to Angels eyes in this terrific form?
(7:5-7)

Again, among Orc's greatest sins is to be a hater of Dignities, to be without that respect for forms and absolute leaders that is the

38. Keynes, Census, p. 41.

39. Ibid.

40. Frye, p. 206.

41. Damon, p. 336.

basis of the Angel's religion and ethics. The self-righteousness and the uneasiness are evident in that last line.

Ironically, this passage is illustrated by a peaceful, pastoral scene. Two figures sleep beside a ram under a tree, like that in the title-page to Thel. There are birds resting in the tree. In the midst of this conflict there is still peace. This design seems to be a comment on the preceeding "resurrection" scene, indicating the renewed innocence the man has attained, and undercutting the threats and curses of Albion's Angel.

Orc accepts the epithets given by Albion's Angel because, given a religion of ritual and order, Orc certainly stands for the Edenic serpent:

I am Orc, wreath'd round the accursed tree:
The times are ended; shadows pass the morning gins to break;
The fiery joy, that Urizen perverted to ten commands,
What night he led the starry hosts thro' the wide wilderness:
That stony law I stamp to dust: and scatter religion abroad
To the four winds. (8:1-6)

Orc is the despoiler of "religion" in favour of the "fiery joy" of energy and independence, demonstrated both in the American Revolution and in Exodus. Orc is another Moses-figure, opposed by a tyrannical, law-bound society and their tyrannical god. The nation of Israel had been led away from one tyranny (Egypt) into the wilderness of religious tyranny. Just as the first Moses had been deceived by the God Urizen, who led him into this wilderness, and had caused one slavery to be exchanged for another, similarly the colonists who had left England seeking liberty find themselves still bound by repressive laws in another wilderness. Orc will "scatter religion abroad ... To make the desarts blossom,"

To renew the fiery joy, and burst the stony roof.
 For every thing that lives is holy, life delights in life;
 Because the soul of sweet delight can never be defiled.
 (8:9, 13-14)

These last two lines quote the Marriage and Visions, and are Orc's creed. They deny the authority of social and religious "Dignities" to dictate morality to the world.

The closing lines of Orc's statement invoke two histories in Daniel, the three prophets in the furnace, and Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the giant image:

Fires inwrap the earthly globe, yet man is not consumed;
 Amidst the lustful fires he walks: his feet become like brass,
 His knees and thighs like silver, & his breast and head like
 gold. (8:15-18)

The fires of both revolt and energy, or life force, are in fact purifying agents. Brass is the metal of solidarity and that the feet of the man become "brass" signifies firmness of purpose. Silver is associated with love and the passions, and gold with wisdom.⁴² In Daniel 2:31-35, the colossus had feet of iron and clay, but there is no such weakness and impurity here, or Orc does not see it. The deliverance of the three prophets (Daniel 3:19-27) is made to parallel the action of the fires of energy. After refusing to worship the Empire of Nebuchadnezzar as a religion, they are untouched by the fires, though the king's soldiers who are behind them are killed. Thus Blake's point is that social dogma is religious dogma, and the man who rejects both is living in the flames of energy, and is free of one mental torture.

⁴². S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary (New York: Dutton, 1971), pp. 58, 162, 373.

Orc's speech is illustrated by Urizen appearing in the clouds above, with a black sea, like that on the title-page to Visions, darkly heaving beneath the text. Urizen's arms are outstretched across the page and his facial expression demonstrates his self-righteousness. It is a cold scene indeed to illustrate Orc's final speech, and it serves to undercut somewhat our faith in Orc's ability to fulfill his desires in Urizen's world of institutions. Urizen's clouds reappear on the following page, plate 9, in which a tiny human figure lies totally surrounded by swirling stalks of wheat. He is completely lost in generation. Again a moving speech is illustrated by a scene of incongruous passivity. And again the speaker's words are undercut. On plate 9 is Albion's Angel's furious reply to Orc, but the reader is almost able to pity him, for the Angel, like the tiny figure in the illustration, is lost in a world he cannot control.

The reaction of Albion's Angel is an immediate war-cry, a calling for trumpets, like those of Revelation, against the arrival of this Antichrist. In his eyes, it is the Wolf of political and social chaos rising against the protecting Lion: "Loud howls the eternal Wolf! the eternal Lion lashes his tail!" His "punishing Demons" crouch in their caves, like the murderer depicted on Europe 1.

They cannot smite the wheat, nor quench the fatness of the earth.
 They cannot smite with sorrows, nor subdue the plow and spade.
 They cannot wall the city, nor moat round the castle of princes.
 They cannot bring the stubbed oak to overgrow the hills.
 For terrible men stand on the shores. (9:5-9)

Albion's demons, probably the British army, are stopped by Orc's doctrine of independence. They have lost their power and are unable

similarities of the two designs."⁴³ Orc is rising in flames, but we are led to wonder what is to happen when his revolution is over. The nature of the "metaphorical relationship" can be explained, perhaps, in terms of the Marriage. In the Marriage, speaking of angels and devils, Blake remarks, "These two classes of men are always upon earth & they should be enemies: whoever tries to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence." (Marriage 16) Orc cannot destroy Urizen and cannot be reconciled with him. To attempt to destroy him, Orc must cease to be among the "Prolific" and must become a "Devourer" (see below, p. 79f).

Albion's Angel concludes:

Sound! sound! my loud war-trumpets & alarm my thirteen Angels!
Loud howls the eternal Wolf: the eternal Lion lashes his tail!
(9:26-27)

But the call to arms in support of Britain is refused in America. Instead the angels of the thirteen colonies meet in conference. These angels are the counterparts of Albion's Angel: they represent the course of public opinion, the social and political atmosphere of each colony.

The conference is held at Atlantis.

On those vast shady hills between America & Albions shore;
Now barr'd out by the Atlantic sea: call'd Atlantean hills:
Because from their bright summits you may pass to the Golden
world
An ancient palace, archetype of mighty Emperies,
Rears its immortal pinnacles, built in the forest of God
By Ariston the king of beauty for his stolen bride. (10:5-10)

Blake's use of the Atlantis legend demonstrates his prophetic technique, and also his eclectic habits. In the Timaeus, Taylor

43. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Blake's Composite Art," BVFD, p. 80n.

describes the Atlantis myth as at once a true history, and

an image of the opposition of the natures which the universe contains ... the opposition perpetually flourishing in the universe between unity and multitude, bound and infinity, sameness and difference, motion and permanency, from which all things ... are composed.... So that the opposition of all these is occultly signified by that antient war; the higher and more excellent natures being every where implied by the Athenians, and those of a contrary order by the inhabitants of the Atlantic island.⁴⁴

That is, the Athenians represent "unity," "bound," "sameness" and "permanency," the ideals of Albion's Angel, and which are for Taylor the "more excellent natures," while the Atlanteans are identified with our Titanic energies, "multitude," "infinity," "difference" and "motion." Obviously Blake understands the Atlantean defeat as the defeat of Orc by the followers of absolute order and law, and it is thus not surprising that Orc first emerges from "the Atlantic waves between the gloomy nations" of England and America.

The Atlanteans are, in a sense, the British Druids before their religion became corrupted. Once the Atlanteans are defeated by the Athenians, the Atlantean hills become "shady," covered by the "stubbed oak" of the degenerated religion. A "palace" has been built in these forests, "the archetype of mighty Emperies." Empire-building (such as that England was engaged upon) and the mentality of conquest is the true nature of the flood which "destroyed" both Athens and Atlantis. Both nations became engaged in "war and Dominion." This is strictly in a figurative sense, of course. Once the religion of inspiration becomes forgotten, the tendency to subdue all to One Law becomes the major driving force.

44. CPPT, pp. 396-97.

Embodying this tendency is the figure of Ariston, whose story is told in Herodotus.⁴⁵ He was a Spartan king, thus associated with the military and with tyranny. Further, Spartan kings were also heads of their religion:

The Spartans distinguished their princes by many honourable privileges. The priesthoods of Lacedaemonian and of the celestial Jupiter were appropriated to them: they had the power also of making hostile expeditions wherever they pleased, nor might any Spartan obstruct them without incurring the curses of their religion.⁴⁶

The title "king of beauty" is thus not a compliment but a charge, for Ariston was a possessive sensualist as well as a tyrant. His "stolen bride" was the wife of one of his friends. In spirit, Ariston defines the nature of Atlantis, or of any nation, once the religion of inspiration or revelation is forgotten. It is not surprising that Ariston is linked with Urizen in the opening lines of the Song of Los.⁴⁷

The heights of the Atlantean mountains remain, and Blake clearly points out, "from their bright summits you may pass to the Golden world." Of these mountains Taylor notes: "According to the saying of Heraclitus, he who passes through a very profound region will arrive at the Atlantic mountain, whose magnitude is such ... that it touches the aether."⁴⁸ The Atlantic mountain represents a goal as well as a presence. It represents a refuge from the flood of materialism and a passage to "the Golden world," the world of the Eternals, outside of space and time. In the Critias, the island is struck by an earthquake and becomes an impassible barrier of mud.

⁴⁵. The History, tr. William Beloe, 4 vols. (London, 1791), III, 56-60.

⁴⁶. Ibid., III, 49-50.

⁴⁷. See also Dennis M. Welch, "America and Atlantis: Blake's Ambivalent Millennialism," Blake Newsletter 22 (Fall, 1972), p. 50.

⁴⁸. CPPT, p. 399.

No mention is made of the Atlantean mountain. But unless he read it in manuscript, Blake's knowledge of the Critias must have been second hand, for he could not have seen it until 1804, when it was first published by Taylor, as there was no other English edition. Blake was familiar with Bacon's New Atlantis, however, in which the catastrophe is changed. It is a shallow flood, "not past forty feet," that destroys the island, a flood from which those living in high places could escape. The implications as Blake would see them are obvious. Those living close to the sea of materialism are overcome by the loss of the inspired religion, while those who metaphorically live in the high places of intellect, near the "Golden world," are untouched by the flood. Bacon also speaks of the grandeur of Atlantis, and the "several degrees of ascent whereby men did climb up" the Atlantean hill, "as if it had been a scala coeli,"⁴⁹ or "ladder to heaven," which may have suggested Blake's line, "from their bright summits you may pass to the Golden world." Bacon, however, identifies Atlantis with America, and both Blake and Taylor are careful not to do this. The reason for Blake not doing so may be that he makes a subtle link between Atlantis and England. England once had a glorious past, before the Druid culture deteriorated. Ariston inhabiting Atlantis in his imperial palace is a parallel with Albion's Angel and his temple and Stone of Night in England.

Again, the conference of the thirteen Angels takes place in Ariston's palace on Atlantis, just as Orc's speech against tyranny is delivered from the temple of Albion's Angel. Structurally,

⁴⁹. Bacon, Selected Writings, ed. Hugh Dick (New York, 1955), pp. 558-60.

this is a major turning point in the poem. The confrontation between Orc and Albion's Angel is over and that between Albion's Angel and the Americans begins.

The angels convene between the two nations, but still under the roof of tyranny. At length they arise, "fiery," and "indignant burning with the fires of Orc." (11:1-2) Boston, the first city to defy England, speaks for all against hypocrisy and human degradation.

Why trembles honesty and like a murderer,
Why seeks he refuge from the frowns of his immortal station!
Must the generous tremble & leave his joy, to the idle: to
the pestilence!
That mock him? who commanded this? what God? what Angel!
(11:4-7)

Injustice is the most obvious symptom of tyranny, but all levels of a hypocritical society participate to make pity a "trade" without sympathy, "generosity a science / That men get rich by," the "science" of institutionalized charity. The "sandy desert" of exile or deprivation is given to the strong in spirit, the prophets, as in the Marriage, "And the just man rages in the wilds / Where lions roam" (Marriage 2). Boston's Angel concludes,

What crawling villain preaches abstinence & wraps himself
In fat of lambs? no more I follow, no more obedience pay.
(11:14-15)

The British Lion, rather than being a protector of sheep, is in fact living off them, while "preaching abstinence" to others. Boston's closing words echo Satan's "I will not serve" attitude in Paradise Lost, again ironically, because the real Satan is Albion's Angel. Casting aside their robes and scepters, the Angels join Orc and the Revolutionary leaders in America.

Meanwhile, the "thirteen Governors that England sent" meet under the roof of "Bernard," Sir Francis Bernard, a former governor who "was so distinguished for his avarice and double-dealing that when he was recalled to England, Boston gave the day to public rejoicing."⁵⁰ They are afflicted with "mental chains," reminiscent again of the "mind forg'd manacles" of "London," the imposed bondage placed on the mind by narrow vision, the pragmatic, materialistic view of reality. "They rush in fury to the sea / To quench their anguish," rushing further into materialism because of their lack of vision. They are afraid, too, of the power demonstrated by a society with an ideal. The British army is similarly afflicted with fear and anguish. The following passage,

The British soldiers thro' the thirteen states sent up a howl
Of anguish: threw down their swords & muskets to the earth
& ran
From their encampments and dark castles seeking where to hide,
(13:6-8)

may be wishful thinking, but also refers to their mental states: they are the servants of tyranny and their "anguish" is spiritual and subconscious. See above, p. 18.

Albion's Angel is "enrag'd" at what he probably considers cowardice, and England itself prepares for war. Armed with "diseases of the earth to cast upon the Abyss" from which Orc appeared, and to use against the Americans, Albion's Angel has parallels with the Old Testament Jehovah. In the "eastern sky" Albion's Angel is joined by "all Albion's Angels:" the entire population of England is implicated, and in terms of responsibility is present.

50. Damon, Philosophy and Symbols, p. 338.

The plagues attack with overwhelming force:

Dark is the heaven above, & cold & hard the earth beneath;
And as a plague wind fill'd with insects cuts off man & beast;
And as a sea o'erwhelms a land in the day of an earthquake.
(14:7-9)

The last line may be a veiled reference to Atlantis by which Blake intends a parallel between the two wars. The reference is made more explicit at 14:17-18. England's plagues operate on the levels of earth, air and water, but Orc's fire is the more powerful element. Orc's fires are fed by the "fierce rushing of th' inhabitants together," their united support for their ideal.

Then had America been lost, o'erwhelm'd by the Atlantic,
And Earth had lost another portion of the infinite,
But all rush together in the night in wrath and raging fire.
(14:17-19)

The difference between the American the the Atlantean wars is that the Americans are on the defensive, thus more united in their cause. The Atlantean culture was "a portion of the infinite" because it offered a passage to the "golden world," an escape from the trap of materialism. Materialism includes not only the obsession with wealth or power, but the whole view of the world as a three-dimensional planet, and of history as a linear movement of time, together with the view of life as a quest after "the joys of riches and ease," curtailed only by the dictates of law, by which life is also a social gift, for which it is necessary to abandon one's own independence and development to fit into a role in society, repaying the "debt to society" by contributing to its illusory progress, the Orc cycle. The ideals of materialism are those of Albion's Angel, and of all empire-builders. Their religion, like that of Sparta, is intimately linked with the building and maintaining

of the empire, concerned largely with good behaviour in this world, and concerned with the hereafter only as a threat to discourage disrespect for law. Thus again, the defeat of America would have meant another loss of "a portion of the infinite," and meant another reign of an Ariston.

But the plagues of Albion's Angel are recoiled, and "rolled back with fury" upon Albion's Angels. As Damon points out, "it is a well-known principle in Magic that a curse, warded off, returns upon its author."⁵¹ The "streaks of red" in the east with which the plagues take root on Albion's Angels suggests the dawn alluded to at 6:1. Immediately stricken are the spirits of Bristol and London, major trading ports. Albion's Guardian Prince is deathly ill--England itself may pass into a new age, for the materialistic society, both Church and State, York and London, have been compromised and discredited. The plagues signify the destruction of both prosperity and social cohesion that England wished upon America, and, not surprisingly, the victory of the Americans results in these plagues being driven back to the British Isles themselves:

Driven o'er the Guardians of Ireland and Scotland and Wales
They spotted with plagues forsook the frontiers & their
banners seard
With fires of hell, deform their ancient heavens with shame
& woe.

It is not surprising that poetry and art had also declined under the materialist philosophy. The "Bard of Albion," probably the poet laureate, William Whitehead, is described in terms of a dragon like the Guardian Prince, and as living in caves. His

51. Ibid.

poetry, as Damon describes,

represents Britannia as barely able to suppress the rising tear at her cherished children's attempt at matricide; he claims that they are bringing inevitably upon themselves an unfortunate but well-deserved punishment; that nowhere but under England's rule is to be found true liberty; and that therefore he cannot imagine why those enthusiasts are revolting.⁵²

The Bard and all his Angels "fright their ancient heavens," like the Guardians of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, who disgrace their illustrious past by their support for tyranny. Finally, sexual repressions are exposed as a religious conspiracy against the independence of the individual. Of course these events had small counterpart in literal history, but should have been apparent to the perceptive observer. The defeat of political power by the power which idealized the individual must imply the exposing of institutional society and religion as not all-powerful, totally authoritative bodies. That America survived the wrath of the British Empire indicates that life is eminently possible outside of the world of power politics and the ritual and law of religion. Albion's Guardian, then, is a sick man, like George III; the poetry of political propaganda, such as that of the Bard of Albion, is in fact not poetry at all but the disguise of something else; and the "doors of marriage" are restraining gates promoting individual misery in the interests of imposed social unity. England's leaders, poets and priests are all represented as dragon-like, or at least reptilian, and they are all "souls merged in

52. Ibid.

material nature." Sexual release, too, is one of the gateways to Eternity, to a perception of the infinite in all things, a renewal of the energies of youth, and, because it is a meeting of individuals, it is an escape from selfhood. Blake's Visions contains his views of sex in their most direct form. The social and religious tyrant is a tyrant also in sexual affairs, wishing to exclusively "possess" his partner through external restraint.

Like "Britannia" in Whitehead's poetry, Urizen pities the revolutionaries uncomprehendingly. Urizen is the God of Albion's Guardian Prince, the Old Testament law-giver and creator, whose doctrine is "One Law" for both extremes of temperament, the Lion and Ox. According to Frye, he is the "tendency toward chaos within the human mind."

Urizen is a sky-god, for the remoteness and mystery of heaven is the first principle of his religion. He is old, but his age implies senility rather than wisdom. He is cruel, for he stands for the barring of nature against the desires and hopes of man.... Urizen is a white terror: his white beard, the freezing snows that cover him and the icicles and hoarfrost that stick on him, suggest the "colorless all color of atheism," the nameless chilling fear of the unknown, that Melville depicts in his albino Leviathan. Urizen's associations are with bleached bones, rocks and deserts; but actually, Urizen, being the human belief in the objectivity of nature, is an abstraction, a hazy ghost that is always just going to take definite shape and never quite does.⁵³

Urizen is reason and cold logic, the vague "watchmaker" god of the materialistic world.

Urizen descends from his icy heaven, which has been threatened by Orc, and, although Orc cannot be destroyed, he can be delayed. Urizen obscures him, concealing the truth about the revolution by

53. Frye, pp. 209-10.

cutting off communication:

His stored snows he poured forth, and his icy magazines
 He open'd on the deep, and on the Atlantic sea white shiv'ring.
 Leprous his limbs, all over white, and hoary was his visage.
 Weeping in dismal howlings before the stern Americans
 Hiding the Demon red with clouds & cold mists from the earth;
 Till Angels & weak men twelve years should govern o'er the
 strong:
 And then their end should come, when France reciev'd the
 Demons light. (16:9-15)

The twelve years indicates the interval between the American and French Revolutions. The purpose of the interval is to allow "Angels and weak men" time to reassert their threatened authority, to discredit Orc by watching the American union collapse. But the new nation survives, and the next appearance of revolutionary fervor is to be in France, much closer to home.

A rearguard action takes place in other nations when they see the defeat of England. Taking the warning, they move with further repressive measures to keep the new idealism away: "They slow advance to shut the five gates of their law-built heaven." But it is already too late, for ideas, once articulated, cannot be bound, and the defeat of Albion's Angel is the defeat of all tyranny. The "five gates" are the five senses (cf. "Five Windows light the cavern'd Man..." Europe iii:1), and the attempt to shut these gates amounts to further repressive measures in religion and politics to keep individuals in subjection. But such measures make revolutionary doctrines the more attractive and the more potent.

It is an interesting phenomenon that Orc as a character has gradually disappeared from the poem. Retracing, we find the last reference to him at 12:9-12. There have been, indeed, references

to both the flames and the visions of Orc, but Orc himself has faded from prominence. This is the more surprising in that Orc's revolution is being described as an apocalypse. Surely Orc should appear, and act.

However, the principle of discord cannot itself create the new Eden. In the Norse myths the forces of chaos, the Wolf, the Serpent, and the Giants, will destroy the world but will themselves be annihilated before the world can be recreated. Neither the Lion nor the Wolf can establish the new Eden.

In the same way, insofar as Orc is a spirit of discord, he can only initiate an apocalypse by destroying a corrupt order. He cannot act to create a new order, but simply reacts against existing wrongs.

But Orc is also the spirit of liberty. Though like the Wolf in Norse mythology in many respects, Orc's penchant for chaos and destruction is not motiveless. As his "resurrection" speech makes clear, Orc represents the rights of the individual, liberty and independence. Orc is the "image of God" because his revolution is not motivated by selfish ambition.

All revolution, including that which takes place within an individual, is a process of widening perception, of destroying the gates which are constructed across our awareness and understanding of reality. Thus the poem ends with this interpretation of the ultimate significance of revolution: it is an image of the apocalypse, when the gates of perception will be permanently destroyed.

The five gates were consum'd, & their bolts and hinges melted
And the fierce flames burnt round the heavens, & round the
abodes of men. (16:22-23)

It is only an image of the apocalypse because the "heaven" remains and the five gates can be restored, and freedom curtailed once again in the interests of safety, solidarity, morality or peace. The Stone of Night remains, and although they have been compromised, none of the forces of repression, Albion's Angel, the Guardian Prince, the Kind of England, or Urizen, has been destroyed, for they embody states of mind, which are eternal.

The last two plates underline the transience of Orc's revolution: in the illustrations to these plates, which contain the most apocalyptic passages in the poem, human figures are portrayed as degenerating into trees and becoming rooted in the earth. The apocalypse is for the reader to see and to experience. The drive for liberty inevitably leads to revolution, if only within the individual, and the revolution itself inspires a kind of apocalypse in the mind of the observer. Here the poet/prophet is the observer of historical events, indicating their significance to his reader, and the reader is also expected to participate.

III

Discussion of the last six illustrations has been left to this point because they form a progression, and are best considered together. On plate 11, as the angels of the thirteen colonies fly through the dark night, a man rides a swan across the sky. He is looking behind, as, in Blake's mind, every prophet does, to determine the complete nature of the past. He may be looking back

at the preceding plate, in which Orc rises in flames. Below, and under a waning moon, three figures ride an enormous serpent, which is behaving very tamely indeed. For the passengers on both swan and serpent the world of Experience is under control, a sense of order is emerging. But in these illustrations Blake never allows a positive image complete sway. If the swan and the serpent are moving out of the flames of Orc on plate 10, and are tamed by them, then they are serving as vehicles to move their passengers from plate 10, Orc, to plate 12, "Death's Door."

Beneath a tree, reminiscent of those of plates 1 and 14, an aged man leaves a barren landscape and enters a stone doorway, "Death's Door." But Urizen does not die because he encounters opposition, and in plate 14 the teachings of sexual repression continue from this tree. The tree is linked with the Druidism motif in the poem and is one of the symbolic centres of the poem. It grows above the repressed, self-involved figure on plate 1, and the repressing teachings of the woman on plate 14. The two motifs are united in the concept of a Death's Door beneath the tree, for, as observed above, in Neoplatonic terms to enter a state of death is to be one living in the world of time and space. Entering Death's Door is a kind of Fall, countering the rising of Orc.

Plate 13 is, as Erdman and others have noted, a "quote" from Visions⁵⁴, depicting the world behind Death's Door. An Oothoon-figure lies on the shore while an eagle is about to feed on her.

54. "America: New Expanses," BVFD, p. 110

There are also Promethean overtones implicit in the situation and emphasized by the fact that it is obviously the woman's liver the eagle is about to devour. The "soul" of America, as Oothoon is called in Visions (1:3), is becoming a martyr, as she had been in Visions. At the bottom of this plate, Blake demonstrates what this means. The man, resurrected on plate 6, is here submerged, "o'erwhelm'd by the Atlantic," drowned in the sea that is materialism, the world of experience. He, too, is about to be devoured. The illustrations on this plate demonstrate the torments of man-as-victim in the world of experience. The mollusk shell beside the drowned man emblemizes the defensiveness that characterizes the individual in experience. A serpent approaches this shell, just as one coils about the man's legs. Both man and woman are absolutely passive.

The tree image again recurs in the illustration on plate 14, and it is even more obviously a "stubbed oak." A young man with hands together as if in prayer is listening to the dictates of woman preaching to him. There is a coiled serpent between her legs whose tongue, together with her outstretched arm and the branch of the tree, reach to surround and restrain the youth. This plate portrays the perverse authority that demands martyrs, self-martyrs in fact. The woman is teaching that "Woman's love is Sin," the serpent indicating the evil that the boy's desires may lead him into. This doctrine of restraining desire is basic to the beliefs of the angels in the Marriage, and is one basic repression in the tyrannical society against which Orc rebels.

Flames fill the bottom of plate 15, and in the flames is a group of female figures, huddling together. Up the margin the flames and the women in them degenerate into roots and vines. "Degenerating" may seem too strong a word, for the margin design appears to illustrate the final lines on the plate,

They feel the nerves of youth renew, and desires of
ancient times,

Over their pale limbs as a vine when the tender grape appears.

The woman-vine in the margin may be a humanized vine, with tiny human figures on the end of one branch representing the "tender grape." But there is another huddled, lamenting figure, like that on the title-page to Visions, on the ground above, and the atmosphere of the plate is one of fear rather than joy.

And on the final plate humans are depicted degenerating into trees, and we are reminded of the half-human roots on plate 1. The potentially positive image seen in plate 15 is turned to one of despair.⁵⁵ The human figures are becoming rooted in the earth and a root once again makes its way down the side of the page. A large weeping figure dominates the top of the page. She is crouched in the now-familiar posture, bent double and here with hands in prayer or supplication. Many tiny figures are seated on and around her. Her hair forms a kind of waterfall down the right margin. The primary movement on this plate is down, the falling hair, the bent, almost circular curve of the woman's back, her bowed head, the bent and struggling tree-humans. The woman seems to represent nature, like the shadowy female we will encounter again in Europe. A figure intensely involved with a book is

⁵⁵. See Mitchell, "Blake's Composite Art," p. 71: "The image of evil in Blake's designs ... is not an arbitrary emblem, or simply a devil with horns, but the sight of the human body surrendering its unique form and dissolving into a nonhuman landscape."

seated on her head (the "Stone of Night" perhaps), oblivious to the supplicating hands before him. Two others, on her back, are gazing up, following the direction of her fingers. Sheltered on her thigh is the piper from the title-page to the Songs of Innocence, and the outlines of a tree against which he is leaning. There are evidently some sheep before him, and a shepherd on her leg. But this pastoral, peaceful world is not the reality, and immediately behind the praying woman is a couple attempting to console one another.⁵⁶

⁵⁶. According to Erdman, "America: New Expanses," p. 105, the couple is simply "embracing" and is an indication of Orc's triumph. But they seem to me to be leaning against one another, and too limp to be an emblem of victory of man's energies, or even of the sensual powers.

Chapter Three:

The Orc Cycle in "America" and "Europe"

America contains many echoes of Visions and the Marriage, but, as I have already suggested, it can also be linked with Tiriel. In Tiriel, Blake is concerned with depicting the nature of the tyrant, and in the tyrant's past we discover he was once a rebel. Further, we see that this aspect of Tiriel is by no means incidental: it is one of the critical issues of the plot and, more than any other question, the cycle is thematically central to the poem. Tiriel is an Oedipus or a Lear, a tyrant attempting to impose "One Law" on his environment. To do so is, in terms of Revelation, to establish a "millenium" by binding transgressors of the Law. Tiriel, like Albion's Angel, does so by means of his plagues and curses. Every millenium, however, must face its apocalypse at which the repressed forces will be loosed.¹ Tiriel's curses, like those of Albion's Angel, return upon him.

In America, we are presented with the moment in which the revolution takes place, the moment of apocalypse. In Tiriel, this moment is in the past. As a young man, Tiriel had revolted against the closed world of Har and Heva, and in leaving became

1. Obviously the apocalypse here is not like that in Revelations in that it will end with the destruction of the forces that maintained the millenium. In this case the Edda is closer to Blake's intentions.

a kind of Moses-figure, but again like Moses, his new kingdom became another tyranny. The self-righteousness of the rebel is easily translated into that of the tyrant. The cycle is closed, for because Tiriel wishes to establish order he must inevitably become a tyrant, and must breed rebel sons.

Visions is another poem in which the Orc cycle is evident. George Quasha regards Visions as "foreshadowing and, in a sense, producing"² the action of America. "What is this feminine self-enclosure in complaint but a more insidious form of the self-enjoyings of self-denial?" he asks. "A poetry which deplores the evils of a time, without offering a positive vision of action, is but a disguised version of the basic evil of intellectual passivity."³ Orc, in this case, is the alternative to Oothoon. But Orc is no more practical than Oothoon. He voices some of her ideals, but his actions are in no practical, logical way connected with physically realizing them. When Orc says, "now the Lion and the Wolf shall cease," there is not the slightest grounds to suppose that he has a "positive vision of action" to bring this about, except perhaps by annihilating the Lion, which, as we have seen from the Marriage, is impossible. In fact, Orc is simply the expression of physical revolt that is implicit in Oothoon's laments. The defeat of Oothoon breeds Orc's revolt (literally, in Quasha's view, for he considers the "child of Bromion's rage" to be Orc),⁴ and the failure of Orc's revolt breeds Oothoon's lamentation. This

2. "Orc as a Paradigm of Poetic Torsion," BVFD, p. 270.

3. Ibid., pp. 271-72.

4. Ibid., p. 270.

is the "slave-rebel-slave" cycle, which we will deal with in a moment.

Visions need not be interpreted as a vision of a strictly prerevolutionary America. The slave trade, which is Blake's second major theme, was by no means abated in the approximately fifteen years between the Declaration of Independence and the writing of Blake's poem. It is possible to regard the poem as prerevolutionary, Oothoon as a kind of younger shadowy female, but this is unnecessary, and a somewhat false restriction, for Oothoon is not an earth-figure. She is the "soft soul of America," and she personifies the ideals of the revolution. Her fate is that of the idealist in any social encounter. Theotormon is the American before and after the revolution. He is torn between Oothoon and Bromion, who is the slave-owner, and vested interest in general. Theotormon cannot decide between them, though once he had chosen Oothoon, just as once colonists had set out from England to seek liberty.

The situation in Visions is in one sense an inversion of the final situation in America, in which the woman prays helplessly while Orc consumes the heavens, but it is also an enactment of the "female spirits of the dead" passage in which Orc's influence is demonstrated. But Oothoon does not meet her Orc, for Theotormon, the consort of the soul of America, is all that remains of Orc's revolution, and Theotormon refuses to be anything other than a victim: he is addicted to the "self-enjoyings of self-denial" since it is in his power at least to attempt to end his victim status.

Erdman makes the point that there are two kinds of cycles, the "slave-rebel-tyrant" cycle and the "slave-rebel-slave" cycle.⁵ The difference between them is not simply their degree of success. It centres on the rebel's desire to establish order. Insofar as he wishes to do so, the rebel must become a tyrant: such is Tiriel's fate. In Visions, on the other hand, Oothoon refuses to do so. She leaves Leutha's vale, just as Tiriel leaves Har and Heva, but she does not desire power beyond self-determination. Her catalogues of animals for instance, describe their "holy, eternal, infinite" joys, which are autonomous, and should not be subverted by the joys of others. In short, Oothoon refuses to participate in the power-games that make tyrants in the Orc cycle. But by this refusal, Oothoon is doomed to be unsuccessful in breaking out of the slave-rebel-slave cycle. Her doctrine of freedom appears to have no practical application in the world of experience, and she remains helpless to initiate any change in Theotormon.

At any rate, there are two cycles here. The cycle in which Tiriel is caught is that of the revenge tragedy, in Blake's terms that of the world of time and space, or Experience. The actions of a Tiriel always subvert the ideals of an Oothoon. Oothoon represents the ideals for which ~~revolutions~~ are fought. The slave-rebel-slave cycle is the cycle in which are caught the forces that cannot become controlling factors on the social level: liberty, equality, freedom, and so on. It is only on the individual

5. "A Note on the 'Orc Cycle,'" BVFD, p. 112.

level that such powers can have sway. Visions is not a tragedy insofar as we realize that Oothoon's speech is directed, not at Theotormon, but at the reader. Oothoon is victorious in that she destroys the arguments and excuses of Theotormon and Bromion, but it is for the reader to see and to experience her triumph, for in the social world Oothoon can have no power. We must realize, then, that the slave-rebel-slave cycle is a cycle only from the point of view of the social world. The ideal of liberty, once it revolts, is immediately apocalyptic in impact for the individual who understands its significance. "Truth cannot be told in such a way as to be understood, and not be believed." The Theotormons who refuse to understand Truth, regard its proponents as in a slave-rebel-slave cycle.

As remarked earlier, Orc must be understood on two levels. He is the symbol of revolutionary ardor, eternally crying "The times are ended," the voice of frustrated social classes. His motivation in this case is reaction against external pressures. His desire is simply to end the frustration. As we have seen from Tiriel, the road to self-determination leads at last to another tyranny. Orc's revolution is doomed because he cannot destroy every vestige of law and religion, as he intends (8:5). The Devourer-Prolific, Angel-Devil dichotomy of the Marriage is here demonstrated on its political level. Neither Angel nor Devil can see the other's point of view. Angels through religion attempt to save devils, and devils through imagination attempt to subvert angels. The two classes "should be enemies," as Blake points out, but one cannot destroy the other. In fact, in social terms, the devils cannot become the controlling force without losing their identity: "But the Prolific would cease to be Prolific unless

the Devourer as a sea received the excess of his delights." (Marriage 16) The Marriage here indicates that devils become angels by overthrowing them and gaining control, just as angels can become devils, as in the Fifth Memorable Fancy. In social terms, the successful revolution becomes the established society.⁶

As the spirit of revolutionary ardor, then, Orc is limited in potential. His premature "The times are ended" is balanced and undercut by Albion's Angel's "The times are return'd upon thee" (9:19), which indicates the cycle Albion's Angel's "vision from afar" comprehends. Thus we can draw together some of the images which surround Orc. Orc is a "wedge of iron" heated by the pressures of tyranny, he is a Mars figure, an Antichrist to end the "millenium" over which Albion's Angel presides. He is the serpent of eternal recurrence, the lion of political power, the whale or leviathan, "ruling over all the children of pride" (Job 41:34). One analogue of Orc's revolution that recurs throughout the poem is the Exodus tradition. The young Moses-figure is the Orc who leads a people out of their state of subjection. He leads them to a promised land that is in fact a wilderness in which their ideals become subverted and in the name of the revolution they become victims of another law-bound society. Moses changes from an Orc-figure to a Urizen-figure, and his revolution ultimately changes nothing. The "harlot womb" as Albion's Angel observes, is "oft opened in vain," and now "heaves in enormous circles" (9:18-19). These circles are reminiscent of the cycle of revolution and

6. The devils do not recognize this fact, and in making that remark Blake is distancing himself from them. The devils (like Orc) wish to break out of closure, but do not realize that to do so is to cease to be "Prolific."

repression. Albion's Angel's vision anticipates the shadowy female's lament in the Preludium to Europe. He sees Orc born of the harlot of Revelation, and we realize Orc is the despoiler of a millennial kingdom. We know, however, from his "resurrection" speech that Orc's ambition is to establish his own millenium.

Admittedly, we do not see Orc's "millenium" degenerate in the course of the text of the poem. But we are reading the poem with the wrong attitude and a degree of superficiality if we consider Orc a spotless redeemer on the social level. We must see that Orc has limitations that undercut expectations for an apocalypse.

On one hand, then, Orc is the spirit of revolutionary fervour, and his transcendence in this case is limited. At the same time Orc is the spirit of transcendence. The distinction is between the social and the individual levels. Quasha calls him a "Paradigm of Poetic Torsion," the enormity of potential and the tendency to resist enclosure.⁷ In this case Orc is the archetype for the poet/prophet, refusing to accept the way the world is. Just as Urizen is the tendency to chaotic stasis, Orc is the tendency to expansiveness, outwardly chaotic, but in fact direct and coherent. Orc is life force, and ultimately he is to be identified with the visionary power. Thus in the Song of Los (6:6) his fires are called the "thought provoking fires of Orc," and the account of Orc's appearance in the cancelled plates to America includes this addenda:

7. BVFD, p. 263f.

Leaf 82 omitted
in page numbering.

page 82 does not exist

seen even by mortal men
Who call it Fancy, & shut the gates of sense, & in their
chambers
Sleep like the dead. (c:21-23)

Orc is obviously more than Fancy, his visions more than dreams.

Although it is not alluded to in Europe when the narrative is resumed, America does end with an apocalypse. Until the penultimate plate the poem can be read in terms of historical fact, but the closing plates present the apocalypse, the fulfilment of Orc's ideals. First, the "female spirits of the dead" escape their fetters, just as Orc and the Americans had done. We know from Visions how far this new freedom extends, however. But here it is without limit, and the flames of Orc melt the heavens themselves.

"Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth." It is with this in mind that one must approach the closing passages to America. That is obvious: the events on which the poem is based were, after all, in the past when the poem was written. The "visions of Orc," of which the apocalypse here is an example, are such as to instill extreme fear in tyrants. The visions indicate not what did happen, or even what should have, but what the revolution portends. The sexual rebirth of the female spirits and the destruction of the "heaven" are the logical developments of the success of the revolution against the forces that attempted to keep the spirit locked in a cavern which is presided over by a five-gated, law-built heaven, a heaven that is also the individual body. The "heaven" is only an extension of the individual's cavern,⁸ from which the fallen man regards the universe. The

8. Cf. Marriage 14: "Man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern."

fires of Orc burn "round" these barriers, and it is the individual's choice to break out, as he may do when he wishes, to join Orc's apocalypse.

In the mind of the prophet, the manifestations of error are exposed and cast out. But it remains with the individual to recognize these portents, for the prophecy indicates only possibilities of belief, images of truth. Blake is not interested in historical fact and political wisdom, but in imaginative history. Those who cannot make the imaginative leap to the apocalyptic experience, due to fear, lassitude, or whatever cause, remain, like the woman on the last plate, praying to an empty sky. But to the prophet it is known to be empty.

The only value of the American Revolution, and of Blake's poem, is ~~their~~ significance in terms of the individual who can through them perceive that the abodes of men are not protective, just as Albion's Angel on the social level is not protective. The castle that is man's home is in fact a kind of grave and man must resurrect himself. To recognize that one is a victim is to begin to throw off the burdens of guilt that are meaningless. In America this phenomenon occurs on a large scale, and for this very reason it is doomed, for idealism is a trait of individuals, not societies, and the American revolutionary must become a kind of Theotormon.

II

In essence, then, the point to America is very simple: revolution cannot literally bring about the kind of apocalypse in social terms that is from Blake's point of view necessary. What it can do is indicate to the world the existence of liberty and equality, ideals easily subordinated in the social world, but ideals central to Blake's thought.

In America, the revolution offers a glimpse at apocalypse. In Europe, Blake looks at the revolution from another point of view, and demonstrates the literal reality behind the apocalypse described in America. He ~~also presents a~~ consolation for the failure of the American Revolution. America had described how the American Revolution might have ended, and implied reasons for the failure of this eventuality taking place. Europe takes a wider view, and is the culmination of the "Song of Liberty," Visions and America.

In Europe we see more of the effects of the American Revolution. There is no mention of what might be called "Orc's Apocalypse," the fires of renewal with which the text of America closes. Europe has been termed a "threatening" and "terrible prophecy,"⁹ the dark counterpart to the optimism of America. There is a change in perspective, of course, and a certain change in method, but Europe is in no way a refutation of the apocalypse in America. In fact, Europe serves as another look at Orc's apocalypse. It can be considered a closer examination, an imaginative understanding of

9. M. J. Tolley, "Europe: 'to those ychain'd in sleep,'" BVFD, pp. 120, 145.

the closing passages to America. The moment of Orc's triumph is expanded on. The poem is not a prophecy of doom; rather it is a consolation for the failure of the American Revolution. Orc must be aligned with Los, the revolution must take place within, and the forces of tyranny defined in terms other than the Urizen-power drive complex of America.

Each of the major themes or motifs in America is further developed in Europe, and each interpreted in terms of the individual. Whereas it is possible to read America on the level of the change in consciousness within the individual spectator of the events of the revolution, it is imperative to do so with Europe. Social movements have significance for the prophet only insofar as they can be made to represent universal forces at work between tendencies within the individual consciousness. Hence the importance of Los, and the necessarily vague setting for most of the events of the poem. The point implicit in America is that revolution is apocalyptic only insofar as the poet/prophet can communicate the sense of the transcendence of historical cycles the revolution inspires in him. We have seen that the underlying structural method of America consists of a dialogue of conflicting visions, first between the Guardian Prince and the Americans, then between Albion's Angel and Orc, and finally between Albion's Angel and the combined revolutionary forces. This dialectic method is appropriate to the conflicts the poem describes, and is particularly apt in that it communicates to the reader the sense of prophecy as vision, the poem as statement of Blake's understanding of the significance of the revolution. To him it is not a failure,

for it reveals the power of the individual over the forces of tyranny. Not a physical power, of course, for insofar as Orc represents the drive for dominion, he is demonic. It is mental gifts with which Blake is concerned. Nothing else matters.

Orc must be united with Los, then, for without the prophetic vision, Orc represents mere anarchy, another kind of tyranny. An important theme introduced indirectly in America is that of the role of the poet in a revolutionary society. We have seen the "Bard of Albion," who reveals himself to be identical to Albion's Angel, and the repentant Druidic Bard, who mourns the cycle of violence and tyranny he has initiated through his vision, but who is helpless to terminate it and ends in despair. The "stern, abhorred" Urthona of the opening passages of America becomes in Europe Los, the eternal prophet. The Urthona in America is Urizenic, utilizes repressive measures to attain order. The poet-figures in that poem reflect his mistake. That Albion's Angel falls, that the Bard is reduced to despair, convinces Los/Urthona that passivity, however intentioned, is inadequate. As Blake wrote in Lavater, "Active evil is better than passive good." (E581/K77) Los's appearance at the end of Europe may appear enigmatic, or at least ambiguous if taken out of context, but in terms of America, and the Song of Los, which follows Europe in the Blake canon, there is no ambiguity. We will see that America must be understood as Los's creation, as much as the Song of Los, and Europe his establishing of his credentials, so to speak, or, better, his confession. Blake and Los are closely related, of course, but the relationship is not so immediate as is often implied. It is Los, not Blake, who is the "eternal" prophet. Los is Blake's

concept of the archetypal poet/prophet, and Los's relationship with the revolutionary fervour of Orc is probably the most important theme treated in the three poems. But Blake is not being autobiographical necessarily, and Los's sons are not Blake's poems, as Damon states and Erdman implies.¹⁰ Orc, Rintrah, Palamabron, plus the consorts of Enitharmon's daughters, are all Los's sons, and cannot be so narrowly defined. Los's sons represent manifestations of his role as poet and prophet. There is no evidence to support the notion that Blake himself experienced the indifference to social upheaval that Los demonstrates in the opening lines of Europe. Behind the action of America and Europe there is the equally important drama of Blake's vision of the poetic genius finding its proper role in the world of social unrest.

Virtually every important theme in America is picked up and developed in Europe, and again, the two poems are intended to be read together. The nature of the development of these themes is uniformly in the direction of the individual mind, the realm in which Enitharmon's particular brand of tyranny has its roots, and in which that of Urizen is particularly manifested.

10. Damon, p. 342; BVFD, p. 127n.

Chapter Four: "Europe: A Prophecy"

Europe opens with an introductory plate containing the familiar "Fairy's song." In a sense the plate is beyond the context of this paper, for it is found ~~only~~ in two late copies, but because the Fairy is said to "dictate" Europe, the significance of this plate in relation to the whole of the poem is not to be underestimated, and it is of obvious importance since the Fairy is a kind of poet.

In his song, the Fairy reaffirms the identification made in the Marriage 14 of the senses as the windows out of which man looks from his "cavern" which is the body. The fifth sense, touch, is the one through which man can escape his imprisonment in the material world:

Five windows light the cavern'd Man; thro' one he breathes
the air;
Thro' one, hears music of the spheres; thro' one, the
eternal vine
Flourishes, that he may recieve the grapes; tho' one can look.
And see small portions of the eternal world that ever
groweth;
Thro' one, himself pass out what time he please, but he
will not;
For stolen joys are sweet, & bread eaten in secret pleasant.
(iii:1-6)

In the closing of the song, the "stolen joys" are those taken from the statue-like female figure, whom the man, like Pygmalion, with a stolen kiss awakens, and, in his eyes, owns. The transaction as a whole plays on the egotism of both partners. The laughing Fairy

does not elaborate on the positive side of sexuality: it is championed strongly in Visions. Theotormon is Blake's Everyman, the one who cannot understand that joys are not raised in gardens that must be defended, that they cannot be in any true sense stolen. Bromion is Theotormon's sex drive, that can only manifest itself in violence and bluster, for Theotormon's concept of woman is that she is an object, unattainable except by violence or secrecy, and an object quite immune to the desire he feels and considers sinful and degrading. Oothoon represents the ideal of honesty rather than possessiveness in human relations.

Man is "cavern'd," then, but "small portions" of the eternal world are always perceived as even Bromion admits. Escape is up to the individual.

The fact that it is a fairy singing is interesting, for Blake seldom mentions them. Yet they are important, for they define one kind of perception, self-projection.¹ The Fairy is sitting on a tulip and he is the essence of the flower, or rather, of Blake's perception of it. Blake's hearing the Fairy is the vehicle for his encapsulating a set of ideas, one point of view. By capturing and questioning it, Blake signals a projection of these ideas onto other questions, and a reexamination of the ideas themselves.

It is the themes of the Marriage and Visions that are to be further illuminated. Blake asks two questions of the Fairy, the first of which is answered only in the context of the situation. "How know you this said I small Sir? where did you learn this song,"

1. In a sense all perception is self-projection: "As a man is, so he sees." Here is implied only the more self-conscious activity.

asks Blake, after springing out of the trees (of experience) and capturing it in his hat "as boys knock down a butterfly." Blake was aware of the Psyche-butterfly-soul complex of symbols,² but the Fairy is not Blake's soul. It may be his inspiration, or at least one aspect of his imagination which has exposed itself by singing and, being articulated, is captured by the conscious mind. "My master, I am yours. command me, for I must obey," is the Fairy's reply to his captor. The words are reminiscent of the Arabian Nights, perhaps, but the Fairy does not seem to be owned in any real sense: he is not a slave, but continues to laugh at the world about him. He laughs before answering Blake's second question: "What is the material world, and is it dead?" This is Blake's topic in Europe, and in a sense it is always his topic.

The Fairy proposes to write a book "on leaves of flowers." On one hand this is a playful suggestion, appropriate to a Fairy. But perhaps there is also a buried reference to the leaves of the torn book Orc intends to scatter "to make the deserts blossom" in America 8:5-8. The Fairy's book, then, would be a second revelation, another beginning of the "fiery joy that Urizen perverted to ten commands," a new Exodus, an awakening from the tyranny of belief in a dead material world. Through the vehicle of the flower/blossom image, the Fairy is linked with Orc as well as with Oothoon. Orc is, in America, a fearsome, potent force, and anything but a Fairy. In part, this is because he is acting in his role as the spirit of revolution. In the material world, he is the Fairy inhabiting every flower, corresponding to as well as communicating

2. Irene Chayes, "The Presence of Cupid and Psyche," BVFD, pp. 214-43.

with every individual's animating powers. Reading "nymph" for "Fairy," we have the parallel situation in Visions in which Oothoon champions the ideal that "Every thing that lives is Holy." At this point the Fairy seems far more closely related to Oothoon than Orc, yet the prophecy he is to dictate is as stormy and in one sense as bleak as America, and completely opposite in tone to this rather sunny and playful introductory plate.

The sense of the transience of the world, in which the materialist takes obsessive interest, is the source of humour to the Fairy: when flowers are picked, "he laugh'd aloud to see them whimper because they were plucked." There is no tragedy in the world of the Fairy because there is no finality: "They hover'd round me like a cloud of incense." As for the Marygold in Visions, "the soul of sweet delight can never pass away," and another flower will grow. The Fairy promises to reveal this world where there is no finality if fed on "love-thoughts" and "sparkling poetic fancies." It is an emotional and imaginative world-view, though again, the Fairy's language is intentionally playful and he himself rather trivial. One does not expect the profound from lines such as,

If you will feed me on love-thoughts, & give me now and then
A cup of sparkling poetic fancies; so when I am tipsie,
I'll sing to you. (iii:15-17)

But when the Fairy concludes,

and shew you all alive
The world, when every particle of dust breathes forth its joy,
(iii:17-18)

it is as if another voice were speaking. This Fairy is obviously not simply an elf-like figure as in the notebook poem, "A Fairy

Skipt Upon My Knee" (E473/K188). He is also a muse and an embodiment of Blake's own philosophical stand.

Like Oothoon, Blake plucks flowers at the instigation of this Fairy, and, again like Visions, Europe is concerned with sexual frustration in the social world. That the plucked flowers hover "like a cloud of incense" may be another suggestion of an oriental influence on the poem (cf. "turban" below, 1:12), but this is not necessarily so. It is noteworthy that when outdoors, the perfume of flowers is like a cloud of incense only to one with "enlarged" senses, one who can perceive Fairies on each flower to begin with. Also important is that the nature of the Fairy's "enslavement" to the poet is demonstrated by the fact that he sang "thinking none saw him," as he would do, considering the content of his song. That the poet can leap out of the trees of the forest of experience and capture the Fairy establishes the poet's credentials, so to speak, and gives him the right to be temporary lord of a willing slave. The danger is to suspect that Blake is breaking one of his own precepts by becoming "master."

He who binds to himself a joy
Does the winged life destroy
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in Eternity's sun-rise. (E461/K179)

But ~~like Oothoon,~~ Blake does not seek to own his Fairy: he follows its directions in gathering flowers, and in writing his prophecy. It is the Fairy who calls him master, perhaps misjudging his intentions. The precept quoted does not really apply because it is concerned with intentions. Only a literalist would insist that Blake is

"binding to himself a joy" by taking the Fairy home in his coat (a necessary vehicle to securing pen and paper!).

But this raises the question of the nature of the Fairy. He is a kind of embodiment of Blake's thought to this point, full of hints of what is to come, but he is also a Wordsworthian "spirit in the woods," a "joy" that animates Nature, making everything that lives holy, both a self-projection and a personification of the human power for self-projection. The Fairy's "thinking none saw him," and his calling Blake "my master" represent his misjudging mankind, his errors are a further criticism of the human condition. The Fairy thinks none will see him because none ever stop to do so. He thinks he is enslaved when he is caught because that is what man does to man.

At any rate, in the Fairy's song we have the theme of Europe. The poem is "dictated" in answer to the question, "What is the material world, and is it dead?" The answer is that the world is indeed alive, but that man's capacity to see the infinite in the world has been seriously limited by the virtual closing of the gates on the fifth window.

II

The nature of the material world is the subject of the following two plates, the frontispiece and the title-page. Probably Blake's most famous design is the frontispiece to Europe, in which Urizen reaches down from his sphere with his compasses to inscribe the circle of the universe. This design is often printed alone, but contains several important elements that make it an integral

part of the Europe series of designs. First, the wind which sweeps Urizen's hair and beard off to the left indicates his lack of control over natural forces, and indicates a kind of order to the chaos outside Urizen's sphere, an order to which Urizen appears to be oblivious. The closed sphere out of which Urizen reaches is a recurring motif, seen again in plates 1 and 3. The closed circle indicates the same self-protectiveness, or imposed constraint as is seen in the huddled and chained figures in America. Behind Urizen is a robe, left aside momentarily. The image of the trailing robe or gown is one of the most regularly recurring images in the illustrations here, a motif seen in America only once (plate 4). It seems to indicate the "swaddling bands" and the "sheety waters" of the Preludium: on one hand the social restraints placed on the individual, and on the other the self-imposed restraints, the attempt to achieve oblivion. In the logic of the illustrations, the creative, resurrected man is one without swaddling-band or shroud-like garments. Hence on the final plate, the unconscious woman and the child threatened by the flames of destruction, are both clad in long robes. The strong and alert man rescuing them is nude. In the frontispiece Urizen has put aside his robe in the act of creation. But the wind is blowing and he will reassume the robe and the posture of America 8. He is reaching down into the blackness, and the ends of his compasses are lost in it. Like the robe, the darkness is a recurring image of concealment. Urizen holds his compasses in his left hand, and though it is uncertain whether Blake's left-right symbolism is at all systematic,

there are a great many left-handed figures in the illustrations. The murder on plate 1, the bellman on plate 7 and "War" on plate 5, hold their respective knife, bell and sword in their left hands. Like War, pestilence and malice, Urizen creates a whirlpool by attempting to impose his will and circumscribe the universe. Urizen is the bored, introverted God, creating to increase his power:

In his hand he took the Golden Compasses, prepared
In God's eternal store, to circumscribe
This Universe, and all created things
One foot he center'd, and the other turn'd
Round through the vast profundity obscure
And said, thus far extend, thus far thy bounds
This be thy just circumference, O world.³

Obviously this is the god who would "bind the infinite with an eternal band" and wrap it in the swaddling bands of time (2:13-14), and the trailing band of cloth is serpent-like, and an image of time.

A great serpent appears on the title-page with its head between the lettering and it regards the viewer malignantly. It coils across the front of the plate and up the left side, in parody of the initial "E" of the title. The two large coils in the centre of the plate are reminiscent of those of Leviathan in Marriage 20. They are closed circles, recalling Urizen on the frontispiece with his closed sphere and compasses. The closed, circumscribed world of Urizen is in fact serpentine, coiling in ever-changing patterns: it is obviously not to be controlled.⁴ In one copy (L) there is

3. Paradise Lost, vii, 226-31, the "motto" for the frontispiece. On these "mottoes," see below, pp. 105-6.

4. In one copy, Urizen is pictured astride the serpent attempting to do so, but unlike that ridden by children in America 11, this serpent is not easily tameable. There is also a proof plate in which a man is shown wrestling ineffectually against this serpent. See Keynes, Bibliography of William Blake (New York: Grolier, 1921; rpt., Kraus, 1969), pl. 17.

a sea in the background, and a cave mouth, like that in the frontispiece to Visions, in the foreground. In most copies there are hills of varying shape, rather indefinite behind the colourful but threatening serpent. The serpent is generally identified as Orc or the serpent of materialism but, in the largest sense, this is the serpent of time and space, the forces Urizen attempts to circumscribe in the frontispiece. The poem to follow is to deal with the Urizen-Orc conflict the outward bound and circumference of the universe and the energy within it attempting to escape.

III

Like America, Europe begins with a Preludium in which a "shadowy female" appears. In America, the "shadowy daughter" appeared to be a personification of Nature in the western hemisphere. Here the "shadowy female" seems to be a more universal figure, though of the same order. She is not identified with any specific compass point, and her appearance is changed to the point of being unrecognizable. As the poem opens, however, she is separating herself from Orc, and she is thus obviously related to the shadowy daughter of Urthona:

The nameless shadowy female rose from out the breast of Orc:
Her snaky hair brandishing in the winds of Enitharmon. (1:1-2)

In America, the daughter is bound in an iron helmet: here she appears as a kind of Gorgon figure, and as helpless as before. The confining helmet is exchanged for "snaky hair," indicating a continued mental bondage. As Damon points out, her snaky hair

is reminiscent of that of Hela, the youngest daughter in Tiriel.⁴
 Hela, like Medusa, is a spirit of sex or sensuality, guilty of
 refusing to be restrained by reason or temperance.⁵

The shadowy female is soon revealed to be a kind of personification of Nature, and she seems to be close to the "Nature" of Milton's "Nativity Ode:"

Only with speeches fair
 She woos the gentle Air
 To hide her guilty front with innocent snow. (ll. 37-39)

Blake is treating Milton's poem with irony of course, for it is Orc who is hidden by snows, and the "Sainly Veil" of snow is an instrument of repression. The fair speeches are a despairing lament, and the "gentle Air" becomes the "winds of Enitharmon," which, like the breeze in the frontispiece to America, is the only motion after the battle.

The specific character of the tormentor of the shadowy female is not clear at this point, but by her similarity to Earth in the Songs of Experience, it seems likely that many of her woes are self-imposed: her own narrow vision is the cause of her despair. She curses Enitharmon for bringing her into life, and the kind of life Enitharmon breeds becomes very clear in the prophecy itself: the repression Enitharmon comes to represent may well be sufficient cause for her daughter's despair. The shadowy female is caught between the liberating energy of Orc and the restraining forces of Urizen and Enitharmon. But the essential nature of her trap, like that of Thel, Earth and Theotormon, is self-pity. In this

4. Damon, William Blake, p. 342.

5. Ibid., p. 308: "Medusa suffered the same fate for the same sin under the same deity: Athena, goddess of Logic, like Tiriel, also tried to enforce asceticism by power of the curse."

state, she separates herself from Orc and commences her lamentation:

O mother Enitharmon wilt thou bring forth other sons?
 To cause my name to vanish, that my place may not be found.
 For I am faint with travel!
 Like the dark cloud disburdend in the day of dismal thunder.
 (1:4-7)

Like Thel, she is in despair over her loss of identity and she compares herself to a cloud. Like Earth in Songs of Experience, she cannot see that "Every thing that lives is Holy," and she sees her fruitfulness as a division of her identity into oblivion. That Nature herself should regard creation in this way is a symptom of the Norse concept of the continual wearying and ultimate stagnation of nature. However, the ongoing division into disunity cannot be halted, and her lament is misguided.

The nature of her child is somewhat vague, and will be dealt with more completely later. Its father is obviously Orc and his revolution and the implication is that another revolution is impending. In the prophecy itself he appears to be identified with Christ. The child seems to be an archetypal saviour-figure whose mother is earth, all mothers. But his advent is somewhat sinister, and we are not invited to celebrate the coming birth.

The shadowy female proceeds to identify herself with a tree, the nature of which is not entirely clear:

My roots are brandish'd in the heavens. my fruits in earth
 beneath
 Surge, foam, and labour into life, first born & first
 consum'd!
 Consumed and consuming! (1:8-10)

Once again, she warns us indirectly not to anticipate any transcendence in her offspring, a warning tempered with our awareness of her fallen condition. She is comparing herself with a fallen tree,

generating new life in her own destruction. The tree with roots "brandished in the heavens," suggests the Hindu Aswattha and the Norse Yggdrasil. The uprooting of the latter indicates the succumbing of the world to entropy, and the release of the forces of chaos, which initiates Armageddon.⁶

As a stay against her despair, she attempts to attain a state of oblivion:

I wrap my turban of thick clouds around my lab'ring head;
And fold the sheety waters as a mantle round my limbs.
Yet the red sun and moon,
And all the overflowing stars rain down prolific pains.
(1:12-15)

Again, as for the Neoplatonists, clouds and waters are often for Blake symbols of materialism, the chaotic material world. Yet the shadowy female's state of entropy cannot be sustained. Forces outside her torment her, the "red sun," moon, and stars. The red sun suggests the sun of the closing lines of the prophecy, the dawn of revolution. The moon is associated with Enitharmon's dominion, and the stars with Urizen's sons. The imagery used in this stanza is consistently related to symbols of materialism. Beyond the "clouds" and "sheety waters" are "overflowing" stars, which "rain" on her. Even the tree itself, according to Taylor, symbolizes a life merged in generation,⁷ and we are reminded of the human forms degenerating into trees in the illustrations to America.

The following stanza emphasizes the differences between the shadowy female and the shadowy daughter of America.

6. Mallet, Northern Antiquities, tr. T. Percy (London, 1770; rpt. 2 vols., 1793) II, 35-36.

7. See Damon, William Blake, p. 341.

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.
 (2:1-4)

Here there is no trace of the innocence or naivete of the daughter of Urthona. The shadowy female has seen many Orc-figures rise and fall. The revolution in America was presumably the first on that continent, and this fact makes understandable her exclamation of sudden insight: "This is eternal death and this the torment long foretold." The shadowy female of Europe, however, is very aware of the "eternal death" the cycles of history imply.

Even in the abyss of her shrine, the shadowy female can reach the stars, which, as in America, perhaps, "art fallen to give me life." The stars for her are not the mathematically ordered and distant symbols of a structurally fixed, Urizenic universe. Rather they are images of a liberating power to which she has access, but which lack the ability to free her ultimately or completely. It is obviously Orc-figures to whom she refers, "howling terrors, all devouring fiery kings." The word "kings" here may seem out of place, but the following stanza makes clear the Orc cycle is foremost in her mind. She is unwilling to number the stars, for each seems to her a potential Orc, another historical cycle, another round of torment between hope and frustration. Like the fruit "consumed and consuming" in stanza three, the "fiery kings" are "devouring & devoured." One revolutionary figure or ideal which sweeps all before it is ultimately swept away by another. In social terms there is no solution to the situation, but it is on these terms that she persists in viewing the problem. Implicit in the

phrase "devouring & devoured" is a reworking of the Prolific and Devourer division of man in the Marriage (16-17). Orc may at first be considered among the Prolific: the fire with which he is always surrounded is emblematic of hell and of creativity. But it is also a devourer, for fire that destroys the dried and rotten will also turn upon the living. Hence in both America and Europe there are illustrations of families fleeing, like Aeneas, from the conflagration. In terms of the Marriage, Orc changes from Prolific to Devourer, Devil to Angel. The shadowy female sees only this cycle, and sees nothing of Orc's transcendence:

Devouring & devoured roaming on dark and desolate mountains
In forests of eternal death, shrieking in hollow trees.(2:5-6)

The "hollow trees" is a curious image. It recalls the barren tree that recurs in the illustrations to Experience and elsewhere to indicate desolation of spirit. What was once a living ideal has become mere fuel. If the shrieking comes from within the hollow tree, it suggests again the humans degenerating into trees depicted in the closing plate of America. If the situation is that one is shrieking into a hollow tree, it indicates that the once influential, vital spirit is now reduced to "shrieking" threats and warnings to a dead, unhearing audience. As well, we recall the shadowy female has compared herself to a fallen tree, and these lines remind us particularly of her plight. She hears no voice of consolation or hope.

She protests against this cycle, but her alternative is the wrong one. She is rather like Theotormon at this point, approaching the state of entropy or helplessness which is the

state of Ulro. "Stamp not with solid form this vig'rous progeny of fires," she says, addressing Enitharmon, seeking an end to the cycles. What follows in the prophecy is in part an explanation of why Enitharmon cannot do this, and why the cycles cannot end in despair.

As the shadowy female defines her plight, we are given a clearer picture of the cycles:

I bring forth from my teeming bosom myriads of flames.
And thou dost stamp them with a signet, then they roam abroad
And leave me void as death:
Ah! I am drown'd in shady woe, and visionary joy. (2:9-12)

Like Bromion, Enitharmon is cast as the slave-owner,⁸ but in this process of identification is the process by which Orc fails, by being defined in social terms. That is, by gaining social sanction, Orc immediately loses his liberating character. In the final line the shadowy female characterizes her situation as one between "shady woe" and "visionary joy." By the latter she does not mean the same thing Blake himself means. For her "visionary" suggests the insubstantial or illusory: there have been no hints in her speech that she sees any real hope of liberation from her "vig'rous progeny of fires." Her joy is always tempered by the awareness of the cyclic character of natural and human existence.

Abruptly she changes tone, and begins to question creation and her own identity.

And who shall bind the infinite with an eternal band?
To compass it with swaddling bands? and who shall cherish it
With milk and honey? (2:13-15)

To the first question one answer has already been provided in the

8. Cf. Bromion's "Stamp't with my signet are the swarthy children of the sun." Visions (1:21).

preceding stanzas: Enitharmon, who "stamps with solid form" the myriads of flames" is one creator. The other is Urizen, of course, as he is portrayed in the frontispiece, in the final plate to There is No Natural Religion, and in the notebook sketch "God Creating the Universe."⁹ The shrine of the shadowy female is a closed circle inscribed by reason in a defensive state, and further wrapped in "swaddling bands" by the Female Will, which seeks to control forces which would disrupt the closed circle.

The answer to the second question is obviously the shadowy female herself: like the clod of clay in Thel, she does what she can to nurture liberating spirits, always motivated by hope and love, "visionary joy," and maternal instinct. But always, as she has suggested, she is aware of the inevitable outcome. As the Preludium ends, another cycle is about to begin, but at a different point than that in America. Rather than suddenly becoming articulate, here the Earth-figure becomes silent, as if she had become articulate only to mourn her plight: "I see it smile & I roll inward & my voice is past." And once more she assumes the appearance of the shadowy daughter in America:

She ceast & rolld her shady clouds
Into the secret place.

The Preludium closes with the fading of this tortured Earth-figure, who, it must not be forgotten, is also a serpent-haired Medusa, albeit a reluctant one.

9. Keynes, The Drawings of William Blake (New York: Dover, 1970), pl. 6.

The sense of a cycle, the awareness of a return, is particularly strong in these closing lines. The situation returns to that previous to the opening of the Preludium to America, and we become aware of the nature of "eternal death" that the shadowy daughter senses in America. Despite the apparent closure of the world-view depicted in the Preludiums, from the context of the prophecy itself we can see the shadowy female's lament from a broader perspective, and we can see its flaw. But it is important that the shadowy female's sense of the evanescence of the significance of historical events underlies the prophecy to follow and is the starting-point for Blake's vision of the history of Europe, and the poet's role in that history.

IV

Many of the illustrations to Europe have "mottoes" written in one copy. The value of these mottoes may well be questioned, for they are not in Blake's handwriting. The handwriting is that of George Cumberland,¹⁰ "Blake's most faithful friend for over thirty years" (K926). "The majority of these quotations are obviously taken from Bysshe's Art of English Poetry, since the poems follow Bysshe's misquotations, a book which we know Blake possessed."¹¹ It seems likely that these mottoes were inspired by Blake himself.

10. Keynes, Census, p. 80.

11. Damon, William Blake, p. 347. See K440-1. Most of the mottoes are quoted in Damon, pp. 348-51.

It is inconceivable that Blake's friends would buy copies of his works and not ask for explanations.

The Preludium is illustrated with the figure of a pilgrim about to encounter an assassin who waits with dagger poised. The motto to this plate is Ann Radcliffe's "The Pilgrim," from her Mysteries of Udolpho, III. It is a duly melancholy poem about a pilgrim who is attacked and killed by a thief, but who, with his dying breath, forgives his assailant. "The cut worm forgives the plow," as Blake says. But here the "plow" is not indifferent, and it is not necessarily beyond the pilgrim's power to save himself. Blake's pilgrim is looking about alertly, and may be able to defend himself. The assassin hides in a small cave, half smiling in anticipation. He is crouching with legs crossed.

Within the text of this plate are the first of dozens of spiders, flies and other insects that will reappear in the course of the poem. They imply the decay of the old, and the plagues of Egypt. They represent earth and the earthly, the antithesis of Enitharmon's "crystal house," which is aloof, and as we will see, somewhat sterile. At the bottom of the plate there is a figure falling headfirst with a weight attached to him, and a bat-winged figure beside him is inside a closed circle with trails of cloth issuing from behind and from one side. Its hands encircle its head, like Urizen on the title-page to Visions, the Satanic creator in whose world the hiding and cunning are the image of God.

On the second Preludium plate three figures wrestle in the darkness below the clouds on which the text appears, while a fourth flees upwards, a mirror image of one of the trumpeters on plate 9. The mottoes in Cumberland's copy indicate these figures

are personifications of storms, lending intensity to the "winds of Enitharmon," the only motion after the battle. The implication is that the wind on the Frontispiece to Europe as well as that to America, like the cloud which follows Albion's Angel later in the poem, is filled with "demons of futurity:" though the fighting has ceased on the earthly level, the winds of change are not gentle and do not mean an end to strife. They are in fact related to the "winds of pestilence" described in Lowth.¹² The two mottoes read:

He views with horror next the noisy cave
Where with hoarse dins imprisoned tempests rave,
Whose clam'rous Hurricanes attempt their flight
Or whirling in tumultuous Eddies fight

Garth: "The Dispensary," vii,
104-7.

This orb's wide frame with the convulsion shakes
Oft opens in the storm and often cracks
Horror, Amazement and Despair appear
In all the hideous forms that mortals fear.

Blackmore: Prince Arthur, vi.

As the shadowy female lapses into silence and stillness, the natural forces continue to strive against one another. "Horror, Amazement and Despair," the three personifications, are underlined in the motto, and represent human reactions to revolution. The first two are immediately incapacitating, and neither of the two figures below is fighting very effectively. The third, more insidious, manages to escape but becomes a bearer of pestilence on plate 9.

The trailing band of cloth seen on the bat-winged figure on plate 1 reappears on plates 3 and 4. The trailing garment here, like the overlong gowns throughout the designs to Europe, bears, as we have seen, the same connotations as the serpent-entwined bodies in Urizen 6, America 13 and so on. It represents the "turban,"

12. Lowth, Lectures, II, 193.

the "sheety mantle," and the "swaddling bands" of the Preludium, and indicates the body bound by restraints. And the trailing sheet, like the serpent, may indicate time, or more specifically, memory of past time.¹³ The winged figure, then, who dominates the centre of this plate, would seem to be the shadowy female mourning her plight. The figure below her, enclosed in a fiery circle and hiding its face, would then be one of the "myriads of flames," the "vig'rous progeny of fires," in short, an Orc figure. The mottoes all speak of comets or "malignant planets," to which Orc is compared in America 5:2.¹⁴ The illustrations in the clouds above depict a female figure, also with a trailing cloth, resisting the embrace of a male figure. On the right two winged figures embrace. Within the letters of the word "Prophecy" are several very tiny figures with various occupations: reading, climbing, tending sheep, and so on. Above them is the tiny huddled figure from the Visions title-page. Two flying figures are looking back and pointing over the page. In the clouds below are two figures riding serpentine tendrils, various flying birds and human figures, including a trumpeter. There are two figures near the bottom in attitudes of despair. The entire plate is ambiguous, with confused representations of hope and despair, delight and sorrow.

The two central figures are enigmatic to say the least. The winged figure may indeed be shaking the "sparkles" of "change" or of "pestilence and War" from her hair, as the mottoes imply. And again, since Orc is associated with comets, this indeed is not an auspicious introduction. He is within a sphere, like Urizen

13. In fact, the trail rising behind the bat-winged figure on plate 1 might be a serpent.

14. Damon, 349.

in the frontispiece, flaming, but also huddled in a repressed attitude. Just as in America 8 and 10, Orc and Urizen are again compared.

As Tolley indicates, to call the winged figure the shadowy female rather than a comet as the mottoes suggest does not really change her role.¹⁵ She remains the mother of the Orc figure below her, who is already bound in his tiny sphere. She may be clasping her head, afraid, not of decapitation, as Erdman suggests,¹⁶ but of the "prolific pains" pouring down on her from the stars, sun and moon (1:14-15).

The prophecy opens with another echo of Milton's "Nativity Ode:"

The deep of winter came;
What time the secret child,
Descended thro' the orient gates of the eternal day:
War ceas'd, & all the troops like shadows fled to their
abodes. (3:1-4)¹⁷

"The deep of winter" is a standard expression, but "deep" also suggests the "fathomless abyss" of the Preludium, and, perhaps, anticipates Orc's "deep den." The implication is that this winter is particularly "deep," as the tone of the Preludium reflects. It is clear that Blake did not see the season at the time of Christ's birth in the same terms as Milton did. The winter is not Nature having "doff't her gaudy trim / With her great Master so to sympathize." Nature's sterility is not voluntary, but a kind of despair.

15. "Europe: 'to those ychain'd in sleep,'" BVFD, p. 125.

16. Erdman, Prophet Against Empire, 188-89.

17. Cf. sts. I, IV-V.

Blake's tone is closer to the Edda than to Milton's poem. In the Norse myths, nature is portrayed as gradually weakening, and the world-ash Yggdrasil is victimized by several forces: stags that feed on its bark, a serpent that gnaws on one root, and so on. At the "Twilight of the Gods," prefiguring the fiery apocalypse, "the great Ash, that Ash sublime and fruitful, is violently shaken, and sends forth a groan," a groan that is not heard:

The philosophers of the north considered nature in a state of perpetual labour and warfare. Her strength was thus continually wasting away by little and little; and her approaching dissolution could not be become every day more perceptible. At last, a confusion of the season, a long and preternatural winter, were to be the final marks of her decay. The moral world is to be no less disturbed and troubled than the natural. The voice of dying nature will be no longer heard by man.¹⁸

To this concept of the gradual decay of nature, Blake adds the temporary invigoration of nature through forces of energy. That is, Blake gives the Norse myths a kind of historical realism, since history is cyclic, not linear. Blake makes the giants his heroes of energy, and to that extent, he is inverting the Norse tradition.

As in Milton's poem, peace descends: it is the peace of power in the form of the Roman army in firm control. In Blake even the troops are disbanded. This of course is not historically accurate, but in terms of mental states the troops who were created to conquer now are no longer needed, and become once again a mass of individuals. That they "fled" to their abodes suggests the withdrawal of restraint, the empire successfully established, a tyranny in firm control.

18. Northern Antiquities, II, 124-25.

The child that appears, then, must be secret. In terms of Christ this is quite literal, for he was hidden from Herod: the child is secret because subversive. Christ, like Orc, is repressed, because he is a threat to the "peace" that heralded his appearance. This is ironic, of course, for the peace is not productive: it is a submission to tyranny. Christ appears through the "orient" gates: again a reference to the east. Bethlehem is in the east quite literally, of course, but the east for Blake is also the region of the passions. In the Edda it is the abode of the giants, hostile to the gods who defend the world against change. The giants, as is pointed out in the notes to the Edda, are the Titans.¹⁹ Again the familiar Titan-sky gods conflict is set up.

Though the child has "descended" from the regions of "eternal day," Christ is not totally different in kind from Orc. The religious upheaval Christ initiated and represents, like political revolution, is victim to historical cycles.²⁰ The individual private revelation, a revolution in consciousness, is followed by the gaining of followers and ultimately the creating of an institution, which soon develops a life of its own, becomes demanding and at last oppressive and requires the obedience of its adherents. In Greece, according to Taylor, the gods were originally worshipped as intellectual forms, but this being too sublime for the populace, the gods soon became aloof tyrants. In Christian terms, the life of Christ is followed by a dark age, the "sleep of Enitharmon," in

19. Ibid., II, 22.

20. For a twentieth-century view of these religious cycles, see Russell, A History of Medieval Christianity: Prophecy and Order, (New York: Crowell, 1965).

which the institution becomes the religion,

The Vision of Christ that thou dost see
Is my Vision's Greatest Enemy,

as Blake wrote about 1818. Order and humility replace forgiveness as the basis of the religion, and the Female Will in its various forms becomes the controlling force. Cunning and apparent humility become the social graces and the basis for moral virtue. This sleep is occasionally disturbed, but always resumes, for in its wider context it incorporates the many individual cycles, such as those of St. Francis, Luther, Swedenborg, and so on.

Seemingly aloof from the closed cycles that are wearying Nature, Enitharmon is introduced in the "crystal house," a fragile but beautiful and sheltered world. Her children surround her "like pearly clouds," clouds of energy perhaps, as in Thel, but also of oblivion, like the "turban of thick clouds" in which the shadowy female wraps herself. Los is introduced as the "possessor of the moon," but the location of the crystal house is intentionally vague. It is a kind of Olympus or Valhalla. Because Los is firmly in control, he is also "possessor" of Enitharmon, and this is an anticipation of trouble. In the context of the Fairy's song, and of Blake's thought from Visions, possession presages revolution. In at least this respect Enitharmon is the antithesis of Oothoon: both are subject to their partners, but Oothoon seeks to enlighten Theotormon, whereas Enitharmon commences a rebellion that plays upon male insecurity, and ultimately becomes the tyrant.

The "peaceful night" celebrated in Milton's poem is echoed here,
as

Again the night is come
That strong Urthona takes his rest. (3:9-10)

But this peace is temporary. Los considers himself "strong Urthona," the united Los, Enitharmon and children, but this union is not to last. Nor can it be said to be fully true even at this point, for Los's sons are already separate from him, though they evidently maintain, or have achieved, a degree of solidarity with him.

Textual problems arise with Los's speech (3:9-4:14), which falls into three stanzas. Keynes seems to assign the entire passage to Los, with the exception of 4:1-2, which, placed outside of his editorial quotation marks, is to be understood as unspoken. Bloom agrees, with the addition that the sons of Urizen are "dramatically depicted" in the passage as speaking 4:3-9. Erdman detects three speakers: Los (3:9-14), the sons of Urizen (4:3-9), and Enitharmon (4:10-14).²¹ The ambiguity is real, and surprising, for Blake is generally careful to indicate the speaker of a given passage, and to indicate changes in speakers.²² Internal evidence that the second stanza (4:1-9) is spoken by the sons of Urizen includes the use

21. E817: see also E725. Erdman notes that the lines are "all treated by Keynes as the speech of Los," but Keynes (K239) merely puts quotation marks around each stanza of the passage (excepting 4:1-2), which is as ambiguous as no punctuation. See Prophet Against Empire, p. 246n5; Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, pp. 149-50.

22. There are few examples of this kind of ambiguity despite the fact Blake never used quotation marks. Speakers are indicated either explicitly, at the beginning of a passage, as in the Preludium above, or at the end of a speech, as in America 10:1, or they are indicated implicitly, as in the "Argument" to Visions.

of the plural "us" (which may also refer to Los and his sons), and the sentiment, "Seize all the spirits of life" and so on. But the "elemental strings" in the context of the first stanza seem clearly to refer to Los's "four harps" at the "tables of Eternity" as in the Song of Los. Nonetheless, it is impossible to say with certainty whether or not Blake intends us to understand the second stanza as that of Los or of the sons of Urizen. Logically, Los is the more likely speaker, for the sons of Urizen do not reappear in the poem, and Los seems to be in a state suitable to be the speaker of these lines.

The evidence for attributing the third stanza (4:10-14) to Enitharmon is less persuasive. It is based on the naming of Orc as the "first born of Enitharmon," which, presumably, Los would not say, since he is the father of Orc. The term "bliss" (4:14) is later made much of by Enitharmon, but it is also used in the second stanza by the speaker there, who is certainly not Enitharmon. To conclude, then, the three stanzas are almost certainly spoken by Los, who may in the second be paraphrasing the sons of Urizen.²³ It is a moot point whether the first two lines of the second stanza are spoken by Los. It seems likely that they are, and they emphasize Los's delusions, rather than giving grounds for them, as they would do if not spoken by Los.²⁴

23. For a reading of the poem in which it is assumed that the sons of Urizen do speak, see Bloom, pp. 149-50.

24. See Tolley, p. 126n, on this question, and a summary. Tolley does not commit himself. The possibility that Enitharmon delivers the entire speech is considered, and dropped, pp. 126-27n

Los's song moves in three stages: first he considers himself "strong Urthona," then the rival and victor over Urizen, and finally the consort of Enitharmon. There is a gradual decline in his self-estimation, and the tone of the third stanza is somewhat effeminate, especially in comparison with the first.

In the first stanza, Los sees that

Urizen unloos'd from chains
Glow's like a meteor in the distant north. (3:11-12)

The Star of Bethlehem here becomes Urizen, presaging evil. On one hand, Los is simply misinterpreting the nature of the star or meteor: Biblically it is a symbol of Christ's advent. On the other hand, Blake is inverting Milton's Hymn, in which the pagan gods are defeated seemingly without a battle:

Th' old Dragon under ground,
In straiter limits bound,
Nor half so far casts his usurped sway,
And wroth to see his Kingdom fail,
Swings the scaly Horror of his folded tail. (11. 168-72)

Urizen is evidently descending, like a meteor, (and like the angels who appeared to the shepherds), but it is in the "distant north," rather than the east, and though associated with the appearance of Christ, he is obviously not a Christ figure. That he is "unchained" has no parallel in Milton's poem, but suggests that Urizen is here a kind of Satan, as in Revelation, unchained "only that he may gather the nations together for Armageddon."²⁵ Thus Blake sees the Birth of Christ and the rising of Urizen/Satan as occurring almost simultaneously. Los sees only the rising of Urizen. "Again the night is come" in which peace is established, as peace intermittently settles on earth throughout history.

²⁵. Tolley, BVFD, p. 127. The passage in Revelation cited by Tolley is 21:7ff.

Stretch forth your hands and strike the elemental strings!
Awake the thunders of the deep, (3:13-14)

The song here is a kind of parody of the "music sweet" of the angels' song in the "Nativity Ode" IX. It is a parody in that it is here not a song of celebration so much as one of challenge. Los is glorying in his power, and, seeing Urizen, is attempting to subdue him through a demonstration of power. The first lines of the second stanza can be read as a continuation of the final lines of the first.

The shrill winds wake!

Till all the sons of Urizen look out and envy Los. (4:1-2)

These lines may be narrative, but also, and it seems more likely, they are a continuation of the admonition closing the first stanza, "Awake the thunders of the deep." That is, the passage may be paraphrased: "awake the thunders and awake the shrill winds."²⁶

Los's motive is revealed again in the second line above: by obtaining the envy of the "sons of Urizen," the threat Urizen poses is undercut, just as the appearance of Christ undermines the authority of the pagan gods in Milton's poem, by removing their followers. In this context, Urizen is a kind of Rome, and Los a kind of Apostle. That is, Urizen, in his role as political power, is being subverted by Los, the poet-figure in his role as religious leader. It must not be forgotten, however, that this is the night in which Urthona "takes his rest." In a sense, what Los forgets is that Christ did not arrive to overthrow Rome.

Los continues with his admonitions:

26. The reading followed by Tolley, pp. 126-27.

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.
 (4:3-6)

This passage has relevance in terms of both the Introduction and the Preludium. In the Introduction the Fairy mocked those who believed "stolen joys" are all the joys possible, and Los is obviously falling into this trap. He is becoming a tyrant. Similarly, in the Preludium the shadowy female asks, "who shall bind the infinite," and we have one answer here. Not only the rational Urizenic creator, but also those who would enforce one perspective on the world, those who, like Los, would court the envy of all. "And let us laugh at war," he concludes, because he is confident in his power, and because he does not feel threatened by anyone more powerful than himself.

Despising toil and care,
 Because the days and nights of joy, in lucky hours renew.
 (4:8-9)

The "lucky hours" of peace, we are reminded, are transitory, but Los does not seem to fully comprehend what he is saying. The entire passage reads like a macabre parody of the angels' song in Luke 4. Los does not understand anything of the significance of Christ's birth. The attitude of Los here is close to that of Enitharmon in the closing passages of the prophecy.

In his confidence, and in a spirit of forgiveness, perhaps, Los calls up Orc. "We will crown thy head with garlands of the ruddy vine," he says, in another parody, here of the Crucifixion. There follows a piece of stage direction, "for now thou art bound," though it is also a reference to the "swaddling bands" of the Preludium.

Accordingly, Orc appears, and having been conjured up in these terms, it is not surprising to see him thus depicted:

The horrent Demon rose, surrounded with red stars of fire,
Whirling about in furious circles round the immortal fiend.
(4:15-16)

The gesture recoils on Los, because the spirit of revolt, which he he had perhaps hoped to appease, induces conflict within the self. "Then Enitharmon down descended into his red light," as the process of disintegration begins. Though she begins in the spirit of a rebel, her intentions are soon made very clear as she sets about to establish her own tyranny.

Plate 4 depicts Enitharmon lifting a sheet from Orc, who is sleeping. She wishes to toy with him, "as the Philistines played with Samson," or there may be a Cupid-Psyche suggestion.²⁷ On awakening, however, Orc can only be destructive. The manner in which Enitharmon is holding the blanket suggests also that she is trying to cover him. This is indeed her underlying motive in the text, and to cover Orc, to immerse him in generation, like the tiny figure on America 9, would be to tame him, to establish her dominion. For Enitharmon is not interested in Orc's ideals as he sets them forth in America. Her interest is only in her own power. Hence the sea beside which Orc is sleeping, and the blanket (again the "sheety waters as a mantle"), both images of the flux of the natural and political worlds.²⁸ The motto underlines Enitharmon's aims:

27. Ibid., p. 128&n.

28. Cf. Boston's Angel's rending off his robe, as symbol for refusing tyranny.

Forms without body and impassive air ...
Thin shades the sports of wind are tossed
O'er dreary plains, or tread the burning coast.

Behind Enitharmon and Orc are several shadow-figures, tossed in the "winds of Enitharmon" perhaps. They are reminiscent of figures in Visions 1, and represent "joys" perhaps, threatened by Enitharmon's winds.

Like Urizen, Enitharmon bases her dominion on war and conquest and Rintrah, or "War," is depicted on plate 5, standing between two angels. He is covered with scales, like the figure of "Fire" in the Gates of Paradise. The motto reads,

O War! Thou son of Hell
Whom angry heavens do make their minister.

Obviously this is a repressive figure: Orc is never aligned with angels. The effects of this kind of war are immediately and vividly reflected in the following two plates, "Plague" and "Famine."

Like Los, Enitharmon ignores Orc's implications and soon forgets him, calling Rintrah "eldest born." Out of Orc's disintegrating influence, she immediately builds her own power structure:

Now comes the night of Enitharmons joy!
Who shall I call? Who shall I send?
That Woman, lovely Woman! may have dominion? (6:1-3)

She calls on Rintrah and Palamabron, who will be dealt with in a moment. Her first tenets are familiar:

Go! tell the Human race that Womans love is Sin!
That an Eternal life awaits the worms of sixty winters
In an allegorical abode where existence hath never come:
Forbid all Joy, & from her childhood shall the little female
Spread nets in every secret path. (6:5-9)

First, she establishes that "Woman's love is Sin," the inhibiting doctrine at which the Fairy is so amused in the Introduction. Secondly, and as important, she creates the notion that an "allegorical abode" exists in which the sinners will be tormented, and the virtuous praised. Thus her doctrine of guilt is maintained by fear. Again, secrecy is important, and, as Enitharmon knows, this secrecy becomes perversely attractive, an unconscious and masochistic playing of roles. The object of her tyranny, of course, is the satisfaction of her drive for power, but also it is her need for security: "My weary eyelids draw towards the evening; my bliss is yet but new," she says, sleep here being what it is in Visions, a rest from full consciousness, an escape from full awareness in the interests of peace or security. (cf. Visions 6:7, 9). Similarly, in Milton's poem, "those ychain'd in sleep" are the dead, and, in Blake's terms those who must be awakened. Enitharmon's bliss also recalls another stanza from Milton: in anticipating the Last Judgment, Milton says,

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
But now begins; for from this happy day
Th' old Dragon under ground
In straiter limits bound (ll. 165-69)

and so on. Even without the allusion to Milton, it is obvious that Enitharmon's attempt is to repress one half of the psyche. The "horrent Demon," through which her empire was established, will eventually reappear to destroy it. The cult of the female has already been mentioned, but since the implication here is that it was established with the Christian era, notice should be taken of a passage in Mallet's Northern Antiquities:

It has been commonly supposed, that we owe to the Laws of Chivalry, (ie. to an institution so late as the eleventh century) that spirit of generosity, that formerly rendered the ladies the umpires of the glory and honour of the male sex; which made their favours the object and the reward of virtuous and gallant actions; which ~~caused the care of~~ serving, defending and pleasing them, to be considered as the sweetest and most noble of all duties; and which hath, even to this day, entailed on them a respect and deference, of which there is not the least idea in other climates. But it is certain, that long before the eleventh century, this manner of thinking had been familiar, and, as it were, naturalized among the Germans and Scandinavians. ... Whence comes it then, that after the fall of the Roman Empire, we find this spirit of gallantry all of a sudden spread so wide? We see it plainly, that their spirit, so peculiar to the northern nations, could only be spread and diffused by themselves. Formed and cherished by their religious prejudices, by their passion for war, and the chastity natural to their women, at the same time intimately connected with their customs and manners, it could not but follow them into all their settlements....²⁹

Blake certainly did not need Mallet to point out that women were held in high esteem in Europe and not so much elsewhere, but the fact that this was not only a product of the Renaissance may well have been new to him, and the rather intensely chivalric tone of the selections of "Runic Poetry" Percy includes would have impressed him. ~~Further~~

Enitharmon calls up Rintrah and Palamabron to aid in establishing and maintaining her dominion.

Arise O Rintrah eldest born: second to none but Orc:
O lion Rintrah raise thy fury from thy forests black. (8:1-2)

Of the two, Rintrah is eldest, and in this sense there is no ambiguity in these lines. As already mentioned, however, Damon regards this passage as "a typical inconsistency of Blake's,"³⁰ since it has already been indicated that Orc was first-born. Rintrah is

29. Northern Antiquities, II, 176-77.

30. Damon, William Blake, p. 343.

"prophetic wrath," or in this context, the drive for power that is always the motive behind wrath in political terms, that active emotional reaction to feelings of helplessness. He is the "furious king" reminiscent of the "all devouring fiery kings / First born and first consumed" of the Preludium. Rintrah is here the archetype of kings, servant of Enitharmon's doctrine (as were the chivalric kings), associated with black forests, the lion, and fire. Like all war-like kings, his eyes "rejoice because of strength," thriving on demonstrations of power. And, as a final touch, he has a "lovely, jealous" bride who is alienated from him. He is a representative northern European king in the Christian era. Orc and Rintrah are, in a sense, mirror images of one another, since both are domineering, aggressively powerful and threatening. Continuing the motif in America, they represent the lion and the wolf contending for custody of the sheep.

Bring Palamabron horned priest, skipping upon the mountains:
And silent Elynittria the silver bowed queen. (8:3-4)

Palamabron is "horned," as is a devil, and as is Moses in the Vulgate, "springing from an ambiguity in the Hebrew."³¹ In regard to the second half of that line, Tolley cites the Song of Solomon 2:8, "The voice of my beloved! behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills."³² The horns suggest the hart or roe, to which the bridegroom is compared in the verse following.

31. Tolley, p. 129n.

32. Ibid., p. 129.

But if the bride, following Enitharmon's thinking, becomes the worshipped object, then the bridegroom must become the church. Like so much else Blake touches, the Song of Solomon becomes inverted. Palamabron is the "horned priest," a sheep, to borrow another recurring image from the Song.

The nature of Elynittria, "the silver bowed queen," is similarly difficult to establish. Damon sees her as a kind of Diana, "the goddess of natural purity," symbolizing "the correct feminine attitude towards sex."³³ On the basis of her silver bow, the identification with Diana seems fair. She is thus silent, since Diana abhorred the conversation of men. The encounter of Diana and Actaeon will be remembered, especially in connection with the identification of Palamabron with a roe or hart. Surely this Diana-figure is not, in Blake's terms, "the correct feminine attitude towards sex." Rather she is one kind of the dominating female, as Rintrah's jealous, perhaps self-pitying bride is another. Enitharmon's two agents, then, are both dominated by their "wives" or emanations. On one hand is Ocalythron, the "love that drinks another as a sponge drinks water," "the self-love that envies all," and on the other, Elynittria, "the crafty slave of selfish holiness," "the self-enjoyings of self-denial:" together they represent two perversions of love depicted in Visions.³⁴

Thus Palamabron and Rintrah, who both are themselves victims, in the roles of church and state propagate the evils by which others are bound. Together they are embodied in the figure of the

33. Damon, p. 344.
34. 7:17, 21; 6:20, 7:9.

priest-king: pharaoh, the Spartan rulers, the Druids, and Albion's Angel. As sons of Los they also embody church and state poetry. The church's muse is an aloof and cold goddess figure, and the state's muse is alienated, jealous and self-centred, the motherland.

With these followers, Enitharmon is content and secure, and her dream begins. The combination of secure if frustrating role-playing and an induced guilt and fear to sustain the illusion keeps an entire era in subjection.

Enitharmon slept,
Eighteen hundred years: Man was a Dream!
The night of Nature and their harps unstrung:
She slept in middle of her nightly song,
Eighteen hundred years, a female dream! (9:1-5)

Her song is a "nightly song," a recurring song of triumph. As the political situation stabilizes into one form of tyranny or another, Enitharmon's power begins to grow, and woman gains authority. It is the "night of Nature," as we have seen, while the shadowy female anticipates the dawn that will herald Orc's reappearance. And that the harps of the ages are "unstrung" recalls Blake's earlier "To the Muses," and serves as a reminder that the poetry of bardism has declined in the Christian era, and that the thematic centre of Europe is on the role of the poet in history.

That "man was a dream" is another concept that has been haunting the background of Blake's writings to this point and here is a central motif.³⁵ In one sense, man becomes a woman's ideal, and to say that man was a dream is to restate the role playing described above. At the same time, Blake would learn from Taylor of the

35. Probably the best example of this is the fragment, "As when a dream of Thirialatha flies..." (E58/K206), in which the loss of the "British Colonies" is described in terms of an awakening and a forgetting of a dream. See also Visions 6:7, "Song of Liberty," 14, Thel, 1:10, 12-13.

Neoplatonic concept of mortal life as a sleep. Here this concept is translated into different terms: man is a dream of Enitharmon, but not in the sense that if she awakens creation will be destroyed. Enitharmon is no Albion, and she does not contain the individuals in her dream. Significantly her will is not in operation as she dreams. She initiates her dogma and then sleeps, to become a spectator. She is thus a parody of the clockmaker-god who creates the world then evidently loses interest. As in Visions the plot of Europe is enclosed in a frame. But where in Visions the Daughters of Albion are vague and unobtrusive, the sleep of Enitharmon is elaborately staged.

V

Eighteen hundred years are dispensed with in two lines:

Shadows of men in fleeting bands upon the winds:
Divide the heavens of Europe. (9:6-7)

These lines anticipate Arnold's "confused alarums" of "ignorant armies" in "Dover Beach," with the sense of history as a flowing series of military encounters of no ultimate significance.

Plate 8 is an echo of Tiriel, drawing 8,³⁶ in which Tiriel curses his sons for their rebelliousness. A similar conflict is being developed here, in which the aged man is attempting to ward off some unseen threat to him with his outstretched hands.

The motto,

³⁶. G. E. Bentley Jr., (ed., Tiriel (Oxford, 1967), pl. 6. See also Keynes, Drawings of William Blake, pl. 8.

Thus Deluges descending on the Plains
Sweep o'er the yellow year,

indicates that the man represents the autumn, the fading era, facing the onset of winter. Perhaps he is attempting to arrest the setting sun, and hence the red-tinged clouds, or he may be attempting, like Albion's Angel, to ward off his curses returning upon him. A woman in another long trailing gown is begging for protection perhaps, but without much hope, for her head, like that of several figures in the designs to this point, is bent in despair. This motto, with its natural imagery, leads us to regard the defeat of Albion's Angel in terms of natural cycles.

Attention quickly centres on the most recent of the recurring military encounters:

Till Albion's Angel smitten with his own plagues fled with
his bands
The cloud bears hard on Albion's shore:
Fill'd with immortal demons of futurity. (9:8-10)

The narrative here begins where that of America ended, and is concerned with the fires of Apocalypse that ended the earlier poem. The "plagues" ~~are those reflected back on Albion's Angel,~~ and are depicted on plate 9 as two glorious trumpeters spreading blight on stalks of grain. The cloud is that in which Urizen had hidden Orc as a defensive measure (America 10:13), and the "demons of futurity" it contains represent Orc and his followers taking the offensive, and they reflect the extravagant fears in minds not comprehending the nature of Orc, or of the American Revolution, those minds victimized by the tactics of Urizen to the point that they can only panic in the presence of the unknown or the unexpected.

The destruction of the council house, an incident in the cancelled plates to America, is the starting point here.

The cloud bears hard upon the council house; down rushing
On the heads of Albions Angels.
One hour they lay buried beneath the ruins of that hall;
But as stars rise from the salt lake they arise in pain,
In troubled mists o'erclouded by the terrors of struggling times.
(9:12-16)

The immediate echo is, of course, the fallen angels in Paradise Lost I, stretched upon the fiery lake. The situation is parallel, but the imagery is quite different, more closely related to the catastrophe in Samson Agonistes. The closest precedent in Blake is a passage in "A Song of Liberty:"

Down rush'd, beating his wings in vain, the jealous king;
his grey brow'd councillors, thunderous warriors,
curl'd veterans, among helms, and shields, and chariots,
horses, elephants, banners, castles, slings, and tocks,
Falling, rushing, ruining! buried in the ruins, on Urthona's
dens;
All night beneath the ruins; then, their sullen flames faded,
emerge round the gloomy King. (15-17)

But probably the most important ruined city in the Bible is Babylon, of which the destruction of the Philistine temple of Dagon is a type. The "one hour" suggests the fall of Babylon in Revelation (18:10, 17, 19), and the "cloud" that pursues Albion's Angel is similarly associated with divine vengeance (Rev. 1:7, 10:1, 14:14-16). At no point in Milton are the fallen angels compared to stars, as in Europe 9:15: "As the stars rise from the salt lake." The image seems rather to have originated in the portrayal of Urizen as a meteor, the stars the shadowy female was unwilling to count, and the third of the stars of heaven the red dragon of Revelation 12:4 cast to the earth. And the salt lake is of course the significantly named Dead Sea. Damon interprets the whole passage as describing the reason emerging from materialism.³⁷ But it is important to

structure unrecognized in the middle of England and on which a city was thriving and farms being cultivated would undoubtedly be interesting to Blake. And just as the Druid religion had once been unfaillen, a religion of revelation, in which the poets were the law-givers, so its symbol modulates from the fiery serpent, Orc, to the petrified stone serpent of the temple. As Albion's Angel proceeds to the temple, "round him roll'd his clouds of war," just as Orc's revolution is a cloud that "bears hard on Albion's shore." Again Albion's Angel and Orc are linked, and perhaps we are to view the "immortal demons of futurity" that fill Orc's cloud as sinister: they are after all the products of war, on which Albion's Angel thrives.

The temple is located at "golden Verulam," the seat of Bacon, and the St. Alban's cathedral. Alban, the first Christian martyr in England, is to be identified with Albion, England and Everyman.

There stand the venerable porches that high-towering rear
Their oak-surrounded pillars, form'd of massy stones, uncut
With tool. (10:6-8)

In this description is a blend of the architecture of the conventional church and the Druid circles of stones, identifying the nature and origin of the church, not with the teachings of Christ, but with man's perverse desire to be a slave to arbitrary law. The establishment of these temples, to which Stukeley ascribes great antiquity, is for Blake a symptom of the fall, which is also the flood:

stones precious; such eternal in the heavens,
Of colours twelve, few known on earth, give light in the opake,
Plac'd in the order of the stars, when the five senses
 whelm'd
In deluge o'er the earth-born man; then turn'd the fluxile eyes
Into two stationary orbs, concentrating all things.
The ever-varying spiral ascents to the heavens of heavens
Were bended downward; and the nostrils golden gates shut
Turn'd outward, barr'd and petrify'd against the infinite. (10:
8-15)

"Light in the opake" is a curious expression, suggesting the "darkness visible" in Milton's hell. Blake was aware of the astronomical significance of the placement of the Druid monuments, but this only compounded their evil. The senses become "petrified," "turned outward," "concentrating all things," and the external world becomes an absolute. This is the folly as depicted in the Fairy's song in the Introduction. Blake is not only alluding to the creation of the physical human form but also, and more importantly, to the creation of a widely spread and contagious state of mind. As in Songs of Experience, the individual becomes "barr'd and petrify'd against the infinite," so that at last he becomes comfortable in a mental world of fears and guilt and remorse in unending cycles. Thus,

Thought chang'd the infinite to a serpent; that which pitieth:
 To a devouring flame; and man fled from its face and hid
 In forests of night; then all the eternal forests were divided
 Into earths rolling in circles of space, that like an ocean
 rush'd
 And overwhelmed all except this finite wall of flesh.
(10:16-20)

The infinite, the expanding worlds of imagination, are transformed
 ? by logistics and dogma into a kind of eternal recurrence, the
 serpent with tail in mouth, that on the political level Orc's
 revolution represents, and that on the religious level is represented
 by Albion's Angel's dogmatic and narrowed concept of God and Satan.
 Pity, the passive reaction to what man has made of man, like the
 self-righteous and condescending motives for charity that
 characterize Urizen, has become an object of fear, and is all that
 Urizen's religion is based on, the consuming flame that destroys

both giver and receiver. From this God men flee, but only to forests of experience, guilt and despair. The serpent remains the "image" of the infinite. It is still the archetype of energy, but it has been perverted, turned to stone, and made the symbol of limited and rigid abstract laws.

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. (10:21-23)

Heaven's mighty circle, the finite possibilities of life, are the bases of Urizen's religion. The design on this plate depicts a serpent rampant, an indication of what the infinite has become. With these lines and the Orc-like halo around the serpent's head (cf. plate 3), we see not only the limitation of the Orc cycle, but the necessity to transcend it. In other words, Los must become involved, to indicate the "image of infinite" the "finite revolutions" imply.

In the passages quoted above are most of the major images of Urizenic repression: the "devouring" flame, the forests of night, the turning, distant circles of space, the deluge, the temple, the Angel and the crown. Another, the stone of Night, reappears in the following lines. Tolley with Frye considers it as Jacob's stone, on which he dreamed of the ladder to heaven.³⁹ Damon identifies the stone of Night with the stone of the ten commandments.⁴⁰ As we have seen, Blake would also be aware of the Druid stones, particularly in Ossian, which served a similar function as sacred object for

39. Tolley, p. 138; Frye, p. 224.

40. Damon, p. 345.

a war-like people (see above, p. 47). Finally, the stone of Scone, on which English monarchs were crowned, might have been read by Blake as a pun on stone of sconce (skull), for the stone of Night is to be later linked with the skull, and the confining of man's mental powers.

Now arriv'd the ancient Guardian at the southern porch,
That planted thick with trees of blackest leaf, & in a vale
Obscure, enclos'd the Stone of Night; oblique it stood, o'erhung
With purple flowers and berries red; image of that sweet south,
Once open to the heavens and elevated on the human neck,
Now overgrown with hair and coverd with a stony roof.
(10:24-29)

The obscurity and secrecy of the stone are emphasized: It is standing "oblique," about to fall perhaps, or like the end of Urizen's compasses.⁴¹ The stone is hidden from the multitude, who do not know precisely what they are ruled by. In one sense they are controlled by their own self-imposed limitations and the secrecy of the stone also lends it mystery and induces awe. The image of the skull is made to suggest imposed and self-imposed limitations on freedom, thought and imagination.

The Angel enters through the southern gate, which

Downward 'tis sunk beneath th' attractive north, that round
the feet
A raging whirlpool draws the dizzy enquirer to his grave.
(10:30-31)

Tolley paraphrases this passage thus: "the fall is described as a movement of the south, once on top of the north, down through the whirlpool of the magnetic north to its sunken position in the present world."⁴² The whirlpool, a descending gyre, like the serpent on America 5, eventually captures and buries in the sea of time and

41. The allusion here is to the frontispiece and its motto. The end of the compasses is man's only link with the God Urizen.

42. Tolley, p. 139.

space those who attempt to reason without imagination or emotion.

Just as Columbus and his Angel, in Barlow's Vision of Columbus, ascend the Mount of Vision,⁴³ here Albion's Angel "rose upon the Stone of Night," and is similarly enabled to view America and the Atlantic. But unlike Columbus he does not see bittersweet visions of future history. Instead,

He saw Urizen on the Atlantic;
And his brazen Book,
That Kings & Priests had copied on Earth
Expanded from North to South. (11:2-5)

The situation parallels the passage in Revelation in which the sky opens like a scroll rolled together (6:14).⁴⁴ In this passage, however, the image is in fact reversed, for the book opens, and the opening book-sky carries connotations of oppression rather than the illumination of a revelation of the reality beyond the natural world. And in the illustration to this plate, two angels bow before a bat-winged pope. The structure of the plate is a V-shape, originating in the crossed wands and ending at the wing-tips of the two angels. This is an inversion of Urizen's compasses.

There follows the description of the "youth of England," who appear as principal victims of the social situation.

The youth of England hid in gloom curse the pain'd heavens;
compell'd
Into the deadly night to see the form of Albions Angel.
(12:5-6)

The imagery of "night" and "gloom" here is the culmination of the clouds, pale fires, smoke and mists that have surrounded Albion's Angel and England throughout the poem. The nature of this

⁴³. Erdman, Prophet Against Empire, pp. 25, 55, *passim*.

⁴⁴. Of course, in these and the following lines (12:1-4), there is also a parallel to the opening of the book with seven seals (5-8).

deadly night is reflected in the design on this plate. It includes dozens of predatory insects, and one figure bound in a spider's web, praying helplessly. The doors of perception have been literally "woven over."

Paradoxically, the intensification of these clouds of mystery, tyranny and reasoning doubts of narrow vision or limited consciousness, compells its victims into "the deadly night" of oppression in both social and intellectual terms, but also compells them to "see the form of Albion's Angel." That is, the significance of the American Revolution is that it causes the forces of restraint to redouble their efforts to retain control, and thus become more clearly defined since their adversary, Orc, and the upheaval he inspires, becomes stronger and is identified as an alternative. Thus conflict reveals the essential nature of the combatants, and thus Blake could say, "Opposition is true Friendship," for the requisite to change is "to give a body to error, that it may be cast out." As long as the forces of repression go unquestioned, that is, so long as Orc is bound, their true nature is unknown, hidden behind clouds of rhetoric and ritualized belief. Orc appears to upset this standardization and to reveal its true form. As noted earlier, the purpose of "prophecy" in Blake's terms is to reveal the significance of historical event for the individual, and the "youth of England" here are to some extent idealized, for it is all too easy to refuse to comprehend the significance of events. The nature of the night in which youth finds itself is elaborated on in the following lines:

Their parents brought them forth & aged ignorance preaches
 canting,
 On a vast rock, perciev'd by those senses that are clos'd
 from thought:
 Bleak, dark, abrupt, it stands & overshadows London city
 They saw his boney feet on the rock, the flesh consum'd in
 flames:
 They saw the Serpent temple lifted above, shadowing the Island
 white:
 They heard the voice of Albions Angel howling in flames of Orc,
 Seeking the trump of the last doom. (12:7-13)

The "aged ignorance" suggests the eleventh emblem of the Gates of Paradise (E262/K767) in which an aged, blind and stupidly smiling figure is about to cut the wings of a young, cupid-like figure reaching for the sunrise. The preaching and canting suggests the the illustration on plate 14 of America, in which youth is once again misguided. At any rate, here the youth of England recognize that the rhetoric of imperialists is in fact the howlings of Albion's Angel in the flames of Orc.

The "senses that are clos'd from thought" ~~are~~ those by which the stone of Night is seen overshadowing London, by which the Serpent temple is similarly seen as "lifted above, shadowing the Island white," and through which the howlings of Albion's Angel are heard, and in fact, those by which the poem is written. They are the senses that reason does not trust, the senses utilized under the influence of the imagination.

Albion's Angel is seeking the "trump of the last doom," which Damon equates with knowledge of man.⁴⁵ But perhaps it is not so absolute. Both Orc and Albion's Angel cast themselves as God or Christ, and they appear to one another as Antichrist. Both want no more than to destroy the other. Thus Albion's Angel is

45. Damon, p. 345.

seeking the trumpet of judgment as a means of destroying Orc. As Blake noted in the Marriage 5, "this history has been adopted by both parties," since both parties believe they hold the keys to salvation, and hence the inversions and parodies in Blake's borrowings from the Bible, and, particularly Revelation.

The horrific aspect of Albion's Angel is underscored here, and that he is seeking the last trumpet is more sinister than ironic. If the preceeding 1800 years has been a kind of millenium, then this "last judgment" is sinister indeed. It is too easy for readers to distance themselves from this aspect of the poem by considering the fearsome nature of Albion's Angel as simply ironic. Orc has no further easy and immediate victory here, and in atmosphere the poem shares to a large extent the gloom of Tiriel and the helplessness of Visions.

"The Guardian of the secret codes" is next introduced, and Erdman identifies him with Lord Chancellor Thurlow.⁴⁶

The Guardian of the secret codes forsook his ancient mansion,
Driven out by the flames of Orc; his furr'd robes & false
locks
Adhered and grew one with his flesh, and nerves & veins shot
thro' them
With dismal torment sick, hanging upon the wind: he fled
Groveling along Great George Street thro' the Park gate; all
the soldiers
Fled from his sight: he drag'd his torments to the wilderness.
(12:15-20)

But more important in this passage are points the identification with Thurlow does not account for. That the robes and wig "adhered and grew one with his flesh," dramatically portrays the process of

46. Erdman, pp. 216-18.

identity being swallowed in roles: the Guardian's robes become part of him. His plight is an explanation of that of the Bard of Albion and the others at the closing of America. In the presence of Orc the Guardian's roles become his identity, and this becomes widely recognized. Orc is the power by which, through conflict, the nature of other forces is revealed.⁴⁷ In most general terms, the Guardian is the archetype of English Toryism in this period and, more important, as his full title indicates, he is the protector of the secrecy which shrouds the codes of law on which the power of Albion's Angel is based. Once Albion's Angel has been recognized for what he has become, all his deputies and followers fall under suspicion. "All the soldiers / Fled from his sight," just as a 3:4 "War ceased and all the troops like shadows fled to their abodes." As at the opening of the poem peace is established, but here it is not so secure, and the unrest in England is growing. In torment, the Guardian flees to the "wilderness," a parody of any number of saints and prophets.

The chaos and strife is not confined to England, of course:

Thus was the howl thro Europe!
 For Orc rejoic'd to hear the howling shadows
 But Palamabron shot his lightnings trenching down his wide back
 And Rintrah hung with all his legions in the nether deep.
 (12:21-4)

In general terms, it is evident that Palamabron, the "horned priest," by "shooting lightnings" is a kind of Zeus, and that he remains reactionary but nonetheless powerless against Orc. Rintrah, bat-like

47. Also, the adhering of the robes to the flesh reflects the many trailing robes in the illustration and indicates a life merged in the material world in the same way as the human figures degenerating into trees indicates narrowing awareness.

or serpent-like,⁴⁹ hangs "with all his legions in the nether deep," and has modulated into a dark, threatening force. He remains the archetype of military power, or at least of physical, social power in the abstract. That he "hangs upon" the nether deep links him with Albion's Guardian, who is described as "hanging upon the wind." But Rintrah is passive here, as opposed to Palamabron's active "lightnings." Physical war has ceased, and Rintrah is still, but in religious or philosophical terms it continues unabated. The "nether deep" may simply refer to the sky, or in terms of the individual and of the Marriage, where

Rintrah roars and shakes his fires in the burden'd air
Hungry clouds swag on the deep,

the "deep" is also the depths of the unconscious, where forces like Rintrah instill the fear of change and adventure that supports Enitharmon's mental empire. Rintrah's passivity in this case, then, indicates that he is presiding and in control.

Enitharmon laugh'd in her sleep to see (O womans triumph)
Every house a den, every man bound; the shadows are fill'd
With spectres, and the windows wove over with curses of iron:
Over the doors Thou shalt not; & over the chimneys Fear is
written. (12:25-28)

Again as in Visions, the world is shadow-filled and spectre-haunted, the decalogue and mind-forged manacles conspire to "weave over" the windows of perception, and make every house, or body, a closed den. This situation, recurring throughout Blake's writings, is here ascribed to the "Female Will," as embodied by Enitharmon. This "weaving over" of the senses reminds us again of the illustration to this plate, representing a figure bound in spiders' webs, and to

⁴⁹. Pythons, but "nether deep" also suggests Midgard, the world serpent of Norse myth.

emphasize the motif, the following plate presents a figure in a literal prison, gazing back in horror as his jailor leaves him.⁵⁰

With bands of iron round their necks fasten'd into the walls
The citizens: in leaden gyves the inhabitants of suburbs
Walk heavy: soft and bent are the bones of villagers. (12:29-31)

There has been little agreement as to the identity of the

"red limb'd Angel" who attempts to sound the last trumpet:

Between the clouds of Urizen the flames of Orc roll heavy
Around the limbs of Albions Guardian, his flesh consuming.
Howlings & hissings, shrieks & groans, & voices of despair
Arise around him in the cloudy
Heavens of Albion, Furious
The red limb'd Angel siez'd, in horror and torment;
The Trump of the last doom (12:32-13:2)

To Sloss and Wallis, it is Orc; to Bloom, one motivated by Orc;
to Erdman, William Pitt.⁵¹ It seems evident that the red limbed
Angel is Albion's Guardian, since Albion's Guardian is mentioned in
the same passage.⁵² Orc last appeared "rejoicing" in the chaos
he has perpetrated. "Furious" would more logically apply to Albion's
Guardian, though it could apply to Orc, but "horror and torment"
cannot apply to Orc at this point, even after the description of
Enitharmon's conquest. Albion's Guardian may be identified with
the "Guardian of the secret codes," who appeared earlier, or with
"the Guardian Prince of Albion," of America, or all three may be

50. The mottoes to these plates read as follows:

Plate 12: Them to a Dungeon's depth I sent, fast bound,
Where stow'd with snakes and adders now they lodge
The rats brush oer their faces with their tails,
And croaking Paddocks crawl upon their limbs.

Plate 13: Imprisonment
This is all my world--I shall nothing know,
Nothing hear, but the Clock that tells my woes,
The Vine shall grow, but I shall never see it,
Summer shall come, and with her all delights,
But Dead cold Winter still inhabits here.

These passages--particularly the second--reflect Blake's concern with psychological as well as physical "imprisonment." See Damon, pp. 350-51.

51. Tolley, 142n

52. Ibid.

separate entities. It is not likely, however, that they are separate entities: ~~The~~ word "guardian" in the three names implies their common occupation and in Blake's terms their identities, like their roles, are the same. As noted above, Albion's Angel is a kind of Palamabron, and Albion's Guardian is a kind of Rintrah. The Guardian is called a "prince" in America, here Rintrah is called a "king," and the sense of the royal, the tyrant, is strong in both figures. Albion's Guardian and Albion's Angel are very close, of course. They ~~may be~~ thought of as fragments of Urizen. Thus when Albion's Guardian approaches the trump of the last doom, he becomes an "Angel." Albion's Guardian modulates into Albion's Guardian Angel. A basically political force reveals itself to be a religious one and uses religious authority and terminology to attempt to sound the trumpet for a politically-motivated last judgment. He cannot do so, for his motive, fury, horror and torment, are not persuasive. They are emblematic of weakness and ruined authority.

Newton, on the other hand, has real power over the minds of men. He influences their minds rather than their emotions, and his clockmaker god and clock universe are basic to Urizen's regime. Newton maintains his power because his logic is ever triumphant.

A mighty Spirit leap'd from the land of Albion,
 Nam'd Newton; he siez'd the Trump, & blow'd the enormous blast!
 Yellow as leaves of Autumn the myriads of Angelic hosts,
 Fell thro' the wintry skies seeking their graves;
 Rattling their hollow bones in howling and lamentation.
 (13:4-8)

Newton's influence on the political world is both to justify and to demonstrate the basis of the errors of Albion's Angel. Again by demonstrating its basis, error is given a body and can be cast off.

It is in ~~one~~ sense from this prophetic perspective that the fall of the Angelic hosts is to be understood. In another sense, the "last judgment" affects the Angels so because Newton's apocalypse destroys the imaginary: even the construct of "Angel" is supernatural and hence nonexistent. This, of course, was not Newton's intention, but it is the logical development of his thinking.⁵³

VI

At this point the dream of Enitharmon ends and her song resumes. ~~The American~~ the emphasis is on the political sense of history by which tyranny is disguised, exposed, overthrown (if not in fact at least in terms of the moral necessity for allegiance) and re-established and redisplayed. History is there viewed from a basically political perspective, the religious and philosophical trends are bases for the disguise, or the foundations for its exposure. In Europe, obviously, the emphasis is primarily on the philosophical history of man. The past score of centuries are seen as preoccupied by an overriding philosophy of social morality, which became in fact both a religious and political frame of reference. The bonds of a narrow frame of reference imposed on the individual implies a narrowing of awareness, a kind of sleep. But the dream of life in Europe is different in kind from that of America and it is seen from a wider perspective. If mankind is a dream, it means that man identifies himself with the dream about him, the illusions of social morality, and becomes the dream, comes to believe the mind-forged manacles are not only right, but have

53. See Frye, pp. 187-78, 254-55, 262.

always been, and are part of nature. The surprise of the "redeemed captives" of America, who "look behind at every step and believe it is a dream," is in fact a symptom of awakening from a dream. A "last judgment" has occurred, "last" because the dream cannot be returned to in that form, though inevitably it will be ~~redisguised~~.

Once Newton appears supporting narrow vision in his discoveries, error becomes consolidated in one doctrine, which is secure only until it is questioned. His appearance awakens Enitharmon to the "last judgment" that will end in the shattering of her schemes.

In Blake's eyes, the "Miltonic-Newtonic creator" is Urizen, the distant, implacable sky-god and cosmic judge, an abstraction of our own "guilty fears."⁵⁴ He is thus the very god Enitharmon's dream and Newton's discoveries are based on. Newton blows the trumpet to end the threats of Orc, in a defensive move against the forces of chaos. But in doing so he begins the destruction of the order he sought to maintain: it is Urizen and the "Angelic hosts" who fall victim. The prophetic vision perceives the self-destructive ~~results of manoeuvres~~ of manoeuvres such as this. Orc does not really participate in this awareness, and this is the reason he is limited in Blake's eyes. Orc initiates a movement to overthrow an establishment, but does not recognize his own success.

It is important that Enitharmon does not realize she has been sleeping:

Then Enitharmon woke, nor knew that she had slept
And eighteen hundred years were fled
As if they had not been. (13:9-11)

54. Tolley, p. 117.

That she does not realize she has been sleeping, of course, indicates that she does not realize she has been dreaming. This implies that the vision had been too clear and appeared to her as reality. We are told that she laughed in her sleep (12:25), so we know she had a detailed awareness of the events described in her dream. It is also implied that Enitharmon does not comprehend the transitory nature of her empire. She believes she has established a world without end, without change. All she in fact has established is a dream-state in which years pass without significance, "as if they had not been." Blake's point is that security and peace are sterile, incapacitating.⁵⁵

As Enitharmon resumes calling up her children, the illustration presents even more insects and other earthbound vermin. The aloof, sanitized world the crystal house implies is thus undercut. Nonetheless, Enitharmon proceeds:

Arise Ethinthus! tho' the earth-worm call;
 Let him call in vain;
 Till the night of holy shadows
 And human solitude is past!

The second pair of lines here do not imply that Enitharmon is after all aware of the action of her dream. She does not realize that the night is almost over, or even that it is threatened. But that she does realize her night will have an end, however remote to her, is significant. Her role is after all temporary, though by now perhaps she has forgotten her past identity. More interesting is the reference to the earth-worm, which is probably an echo of

⁵⁵. Cf. Marriage 9, "Expect poison from standing water;" and 19, "The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water and breeds reptiles of the mind."

the "worm of sixty winters," Man.⁵⁶ The worm in Thel does not speak (though the Cloud tells Thel "Thou shalt hear its voice") and is a helpless infant, much different from that in Visions, who erects "a pillar in the mouldering church yard / And a palace of eternity in the jaws of the hungry grave." (5:41-6:1) The worm is an "image of weakness"⁵⁷ and also an image of mortality: it is a symbol of human self-depreciation against which Oothoon protests.

Ethinthus queen of waters, how thou shinest in the sky:
My daughter how do I rejoice! for thy children flock around
Like the gay fishes on the wave, when the cold moon drinks
the dew.

Ethinthus! thou art sweet as comforts to my fainting soul:
For now thy waters warble round the feet of Enitharmon. (14:1-5)

Ethinthus is associated with water, an emblem of the material world. The waters are peaceful, and nothing violent is implied. Ethinthus represents, it seems, a variation on the Beulah state of tranquil sexuality, a variation in that she is clearly in control of her consort, and since she hears the "earth-worm" calling and is aware of "the night of holy shadows and human solitude." Her consort, Manathu-Vorcyon, is a strange figure:

Manathu-Vorcyon! I behold thee flaming in my halls,
Light of thy mothers soul! I see thy lovely eagles round;
Thy golden wings are my delight, & thy flames of soft delusion.
(14:6-8)

These flames are, of course, very different from those of Orc, and it is an irony that Orc's name is hidden inside "Manathu-Vorcyon." Since he is the light of his mother's soul, we are not surprised to find his flames are of "soft delusion" and for the same reason, it seems, Manathu-Vorcyon is completely dominated by Enitharmon: he

56. Cf. the final illustration in the Gates of Paradise (E265/K770)

57. Thel 4:2. Note Thel says, "Image of weakness, art thou but a worm!" which may imply not only the standard reading (not only a worm but also perhaps an infant), but also that she was expecting something else from the worm, something fearful to her, an image of mortality.

is no rebel, and his "soft delusions" are also self-delusions. Ethinthus is outwardly the gentlest of the daughters of Enitharmon. The aloof "queen," who, like Venus, remotely "shinest in the sky," is as "sweet as comfort" to Enitharmon.

If Ethinthus is a kind of Venus, Leutha is certainly a kind of Diana:

Where is my lureing bird of Eden! Leutha silent love!
 Leutha, the many coloured bow delights upon thy wings:
 Soft soul of flowers Leutha!
 Sweet smiling pestilence! I see thy blushing light:
 Thy daughters many changing,
 Revolve like sweet perfumes ascending O leutha silken queen!
 (14:9-14)

At first, Leutha appears more a Calypso than a Diana: she is after all the "lureing bird of Eden." But although she is also a queen, her light is a "blushing light," of coyness. The "many coloured bow" is the rainbow, but also the bow of Diana, and as well recalls the rainbow on the title-page of Visions in which figures dance, and the archers on plate 1 of that poem. Leutha is not only the soul of flowers, or passive beauty, but also the active, "sweet smiling pestilence," which corrupts the honesty of human relations. The nature of this corruption is pointed out a few lines later where the "seven churches of Leutha" are mentioned. As Damon notes, she is "the regent of sex under the law,"⁵⁸ attracting through sensuality and aloofness and instilling the sense of moral guilt associated throughout Visions with pestilence and sickness.

Leutha's consort, Antamon, is clearly a rebel, but his mental state is fragile:

58. Damon, Blake Dictionary, p. 237.

Where is the youthful Antamon. prince of the pearly dew,
 O Antamon, why wilt thou leave thy mother Enitharmon?
 Alone I see thee crystal form,
 Floting upon the bosomd air:
 With lineaments of gratified desire.
 My Antamon the seven churches of Leutha seek thy love.
 (14:15-20)

Antamon, whose name implies "antinomian," refuses the love of Leutha, leaves Enitharmon, and achieves the "lineaments of gratified desire." His form is "crystal," however, like Leutha's house, and is similarly fragile and transitory. Though he escapes the clutches of the seven churches, even the air is described in female terms, and he is victim to his environment.

I hear the soft Oothoon in Enitharmons tents:
 Why wilt thou give up womans secrecy my melancholy child?
 Between two moments bliss is ripe:
 O Theotormon robb'd of joy, I see thy salt tears flow
 Down the steps of my crystal house. (14:21-25)

Oothoon is mocked particularly for her honesty and openness. The line, "Between two moments bliss is ripe," seems particularly ironic, for to Oothoon it implies that the present is more important than a hazy future, but to Enitharmon it emphasizes the transitory nature of happiness, and she attempts to contol and prolong it.

Sotha & Thiralatha, secret dwellers of dreamful caves,
 Arise and please the horrent fiend with your melodious songs.
 Still all your thunders golden hoofd, & bind your horses black.
 (14:26-28)

Sotha and Thiralatha are associated with Norse mythology, particularly in "Africa:"

But in the North, to Oden, Sotha gave a Code of War,
 Because of Diralada, thinking to reclaim his joy. (3:30-31)

Though "Thiralatha" has modulated into "Diralada," this is obviously the same couple. Their "melodious songs" are the war-songs of the Norse writers, which, Enitharmon hopes, will win Orc over. The code of war, the faith in simple physical prowess, together with

~~the ideals of~~ honour and duty that implies, seem far removed from both the nature of the preceding children of Enitharmon, and the description of Sotha and Thiralatha as "secret dwellers of dreamful caves." The former is not necessarily the case, as in the Norse tradition, women, though not admitted to Valhalla, are nonetheless respected as doctors and as prophets. By being exempt from the code of war they are aloof, like Ethinthus, from the suffering of men and thus enjoy a privileged position. As Percy notes in his edition of Mallet, the laws of Chivalry originate in the Norse religious and social structures (see above, p. 121). Sotha is evidently a musician and it is not surprising to find Percy wondering at "the amazing fondness for poetry" among those who sacked Rome.⁵⁹ The odes Percy includes, however, are uniformly concerned with violence and terror, as well as with chivalry. Chivalry implies an alienation of the sexes: hence in "Africa" the code of war is delivered by Sotha "thinking to reclaim his joy."

The reason for the description of Sotha and Thiralatha as "secret dwellers of dreamful caves" remains obscure until one recalls the "Fragment, Probably Intended for America:" (E58/K206)

As when a dream of Thiralatha flies the midnight hour:
In vain the dreamer grasps the joyful images, they fly
Seen in obscured traces in the Vale of Leutha, So
The British Colonies beneath the woful Princes fade.

In this stanza the fading dream of Thiralatha is linked with the fading British Colonies. That is, the desire for closer relations between the sexes is seen in terms of the drive for consolidation of political states into a unified empire. The dream is a dream of power and conquest by which the worth of both an individual and a nation are measured. But it is illusory, and the "joyful images"

59. Northern Antiquities, II, 281

of the dream become only "obscured traces" in the Vale of Leutha, law-bound sexuality. Conformity to roles, both masculine and feminine, does nothing to close the gulf between individuals.

Sotha and Thiralatha are living a dream in that they are attempting to achieve a peace by establishing a secure hierarchy. They are, in fact, justifying empire-building in Urizenic terms, and we can see from their ideal of Chivalric warfare why Enitharmon welcomes Orc. She does not realize the chivalric code, based on the illusion of physical power as the means to achieving individual and social security, and deference to women as the ultimate virtue, is antithetical to Orc, and is another face of Urizen's tyrant.

The four pairs of children, then, illustrate various manifestations of Enitharmon's doctrine that "women's love is sin." Ethinthus, the unreflecting, unconcerned queen, is involved only with the present. Like Manathu-Vorcyon, she is shallow and indifferent. Leutha, the moralist, strives to restrain desire in order that she may control it, and Antamon is the male both drawn and repelled by her. Oothoon, the representative of freedom and honesty in human relations, is thwarted and trapped by Theotormon, whose ego is geared to the precepts of Leutha. Thiralatha sees more deeply than Ethinthus, but her dream is again one of power, and Sotha becomes the Norse poet of chivalry and war in order that he may maintain her respect.

Enitharmon next seems to lose control over her children, since all ignore her call and go to "sport beheath the solemn moon." But Enitharmon is herself associated with the moon, and she may be seen as still presiding over them. The nature of their sport is probably

the role-playing indicated in Enitharmon's invocation of each, and the laughing at war and "despising toil and care" that Los commended.

Los is the aggregate of his sons, as Enitharmon is that of her daughters and thus Rintrah and Pallamah are not only slaves to Enitharmon, but also are poet figures, represent state and church poetry. Manathu-Vorcyon, Antamon, Theotormon and Sotha are similar figures, representing errors into which Los falls.⁶⁰

Morning comes, signalling the end of the "deadly night," the "night of holy shadows." The dawn is in one sense a reminder that natural cycles continue despite human history. In another sense the trump of doom sounded by Newton is the herald of this dawn, again, the consolidation of error, which enables the prophet to perceive the error and to react against it. The children flee to their "stations," perhaps suggesting the battle to come, and parodying the soldiers fleeing "like shadows to their abodes" early in the poem.

But terrible Orc, when he beheld the morning in the east,
Shot from the heights of Enitharmon;
And in the vineyards of red France appear'd the light of his
fury. (14:36-15:2)

There is a descending movement implied in that Enitharmon began by descending into the light of Orc, then calling on him to rise above her, which he does not do, but rather himself descends further into the physical world. The result is that Enitharmon is "fallen," left spatially at a lower point than that at which she began. Los, on the other hand, is to rise (15:9) and assume control.

But first chaos ensues and the passions are unchained:

The sun glow'd fiery red!
The furious terrors flew around!
On golden chariots raging, with red wheels dropping with blood;

60. This point will be taken up in the closing chapter.

The Lions lash their wrathful tails!

The Tigers couch upon the prey & suck the ruddy tide. (15:3-7)

Social order is shattered by violence and with it most of Enitharmon's dominion. The social mores and religious dogma inhibiting individuals are severely threatened, and in terms of the prophet, have lost credibility and, therefore, authority. On this closing plate, a man is depicted, rescuing his wife and child from the flames of destruction. He is a kind of Aeneas figure, leaving Troy, and setting off to establish a new order. "Enitharmon groans and cries in anguish and dismay," horrified at her loss of power.

Los, on the other hand, is reintegrated. His active role in the poem has been minimal, but here he assumes control.

Then Los arose his head he reard in snaky thunders clad:
And with a cry that shook all nature to the utmost pole,
Call'd all his sons to the strife of blood. (15:9-11)

Los has been translated into an Orc figure. That he "rears" his head suggests the serpent form of Orc in America, and that his head is clad in "snaky thunders" is also Orc-like, though it also suggests the snaky hair of the shadowy female in the Preludium. In assuming Orc's passionate reactions, Los also assumes Orc's ambivalence. As he makes his cry, which is in answer to Newton's trumpet blast, Los calls all his sons, just as Enitharmon had called her children.

VII

At this point it may be of interest to give a very short summary of the designs, for they form a progression, a retelling of the poem. What follows is one possible reading of the plates.

It is generally believed that the creator (frontispiece) has circumscribed a universe of time and space, that both are bounded, as if in a circle. Time has a beginning and moves toward an end, space is three-dimensional only. But the circle is not secure (title-page): it is alive and sinister. The pilgrim (plate 1), or the man attempting to escape entrapment, seems to be forever the victim of forces of cunning and destructiveness. The spider will be the symbol for these forces. Man's good traits seem to become a weight to bear him down and the hiding, repressed figure is winged, though in Satanic, bat-wing fashion. The three reactions to the sense of unending misfortune are horror, amazement and despair (plate 2). The first two are a surrender to the misfortune, the third a temporary escape. There must be another alternative. In general, out of fear and despair springs the seed of revolt (plate 3), which though contained in a kind of circular shell, nonetheless has the potential to change the world. Despair breaks down one's resistance to change, or else it strengthens it. Those in the latter category, together with individuals who have not experienced this despair, attempt to play with the spirit of change (plate 4), or else to hide it, and War (plate 5) becomes rampant, seemingly necessary protections against change. But Plague and Famine (plates 6-7) are inevitable results of wars of repression. They are evils not to be warded off (plate 8). They proceed in fact out of the symbol of the trumpet of war (plate 9), ending in a hopelessly cyclic view of history and man (plate 10), in which the individual is helpless against misfortune. This hopelessness means a capitulation to war, and to power in religious terms, too (plate 11). It is a surrender to authority figures necessary because of the insecurity of the individual in the world

of social tyranny. The result (plate 12) is an emmeshing of the individual in the web of crafty, predatory insects: an entrapment not availed by appeal to authority, for the only authority is the scaled War-figure (plate 13), who is also the jailor, represented before as the spider. So the insects, serpents, and the worm of mortality seem to have sway (plate 14), the only flames to threaten them are the delusions of Manathu-Vorcyon. It seems to be a bleak and nightmarish world after all, and there seems to be no transcendence. But (plate 15) the flames of revolution break out because the cycles operate after all, and the stasis or oblivion the shadowy female wishes for cannot be. When the flames of revolution or destruction break out, it is the man's task to rescue himself, like Aeneas, and break out of the closed society. He must again become a pilgrim, again be a potential victim, but now a more vigilant one, aware of the traps of experience.

Chapter Five: The Poet and the Orc Cycle

In America and Europe, we have encountered ~~three~~ poet-figures in addition to ~~Los and his~~ sons. The simplest of these is the Bard of Albion, who is revealed to be an image of the tyranny he supported. The poet in Blake's terms must represent the Poetic Genius, and the Bard of Albion clearly does not. The "stern Bard" of the cancelled lines to the America Preludium is in a state of error less serious than that of the Bard of Albion because he realizes spontaneously the error into which he has fallen. As already indicated, the Bard is one who is celebrating the downfall of a tyrant without recognizing the nature of the cycles of history. He glories in his awareness of imminent downfall for Edward without seeing the endless cycles that downfall implies. The cry of the shadowy daughter, "This is eternal death," awakens the Bard to a realization of his error. This Bard is not the author of America: in fact America describes a solution for the "sick and drear lamentings" the Bard is indulging in, but the "ruined pillar" which signifies Orc's success does not console him, and he dashes his harp upon it. He is not a reactionary poet, however, as is the Bard of Albion, for he is aware of the world of experience, the dismal round of hope and disappointment in which despair is the eternal lot of the individual who desires that which he thinks he cannot attain.

The two Bards in America, then, are two poets caught in the world of experience. Neither is, properly speaking, a prophet, and neither is the speaker in the poem.

The Introduction to Europe presents a Fairy to whom Blake attributes the poem (iii:24). This Fairy represents the spirit which transcends the world of experience. The Fairy finds the woes of experience to be a source of humour, for he has the power to see "the infinite which was hid" behind appearances. He is a product of Blake's power of vision and he comes to personify that power. Thus he is a representative of the Poetic Genius. This Poetic Genius gives a context to the poem and identifies the narrative voice as that of the inspired poet, as the subtitle "A Prophecy" already has suggested. That this passage was added later does not alter the importance of the Fairy. He is Blake's inspiration (Blake could hardly have a female muse for Europe) and Blake is speaking as the prophet.

As a prophet, one of Blake's purposes in Europe is to establish the role of the prophet in historical terms. There have been many bards, poets, pipers and singers in Blake's writings to this point, and in Europe he proceeds to sort them and introduce them into his developing myth. The criterion on which the sorting is based is the question of the poet's relation to the Orc cycle, and the related question of the nature of the physical world. Those poets who see the material world as incapable of producing a Fairy are those whose frame of reference is the world of time and space. In Blake's terms they have lost the "divine vision," they become politically oriented and self-righteous. Both Bards in America fall into this

category, and the lament which the "stern Bard" commences and which is ultimately self-pitying, is their final state. Poets in this state see the world as barren and hostile.

All Los's sons are fallen. All have been captured in the various traps facing the individual attempting to be a prophet, attempting the task of instructing and leading a society. They all make the basic mistake of assuming the material world is dead, the question Blake himself asked of the Fairy in the Introduction. To doubt the infinite within the natural world is to deny hope to the shadowy female of the Preludium, and thus to side with Enitharmon and other seekers after the power and security of a stable dominion. It is to deny Oothoon's challenge to admit the "holy eternal, infinite" joys of each aspect of creation.

Rintrah and Palamabron are expressly linked with the Bards of America. They become identified as church and state poetry, propagandists for the suppression of revolutionary ideas. Their traditional identifications as Wrath and Pity apply here since both church and state are maintained by threats and impotent sympathy.

The four remaining sons are more briefly seen. They embody the several states into which poets become trapped, and they represent four stages of the poet's development into a prophet. The first of these is the immature Manathu-Vorcyon. He is "flaming," but his flames are no more than "soft delusion." He is oblivious to the cares of experience, and is a kind of child-poet, playing with emotions he does not really feel. His inspiration is Ethinthus,

the shining aloof muse, as in the early "To the Muses."¹ As in the early poem, "the sound is forced, the notes are few" because Manathu-Vorcyon remains in Enitharmon's halls, unadventurous and separated from his muse. He has eagles of aspiration that are "lovely" rather than bold or powerful. They too remain in Enitharmon's crystal house. Manathu-Vorcyon's alternative to the natural world is his protected world of self-conceit.

Antamon is the rebel. He is one stage beyond Manathu-Vorcyon, and Enitharmon asks plaintively, "why wilt thou leave thy mother?" Antamon has broken with the Female Will, but he still remains bound to it: his inspiration is Leutha. He represents the poet attempting to change the social world, but is unable to release himself from tradition.² Obviously, from the "lineaments of gratified desire," Antamon champions the ideal of free love. His "loose Bible" in the Song of Los (3:28-29) is the Koran, with its doctrine of sex as one of the joys of paradise.³ But though Antamon is repelled by Enitharmon's tyranny, he is nonetheless also bound to it, since his inspiration is Leutha, the moral restrainer on him. It is Antamon's idealistic voice heard in the opening stanzas of the "Little Girl Lost" poems of Innocence and Experience. But Antamon is caught between his ideal and his inclination. He is trapped by his attraction to Leutha, when his inclination leads him

1. The description of Ethinthus recalls "To the Muses" at several points: the sky, the "chrystal rock" and the "bosom of the sea" in "To the Muses" have obvious parallels to Enitharmon's invocation of Ethinthus.

2. Blake later seems to have softened toward Antamon, for as Damon notes, he is linked with Shelley in Jerusalem as the "Bard of Oxford." See Blake Dictionary, pp. 24-25, 314.

3. Ibid., p. 259.

to reject the moral authority over individuals. Antamon views the natural world as a battleground, and he sees it only in terms of his rebel consciousness.

Unless the tension between social mores and individual desires is resolved, it at last results in the Theotormon character. Theotormon is passive and self-pitying. He is capable only of lament and cannot escape the role of victim. He is subject to the restraints of the moral and social codes because he doubts his own purity. The world around him appears threatening as well as dead. Theotormon's world-view ultimately leads nowhere because he refuses to act, and refuses to see any escape from his situation. In Visions he anticipates only further suffering, hatred and "poison" from thought itself. In the Song of Los, Theotormon gives the Gospel to Jesus. The "Gospel" is, of course, the passive, law-bound Christianity to which Theotormon is victim. In a sense, Theotormon creates his own torments.

Another alternative to the conflict between the individual and society is the violent world of Sotha. Sotha is the contrary to Theotormon in that his code of war celebrates action. As has been indicated, he represents the beginnings of Chivalry and the idealizing of woman it implies. Sotha is like the minstrel in Edward the Third, and the singer of the "War Song to Englishmen," as well as the "Alfred" mentioned in the "War Song." Though Sotha is violent, he is not a rebel, and acts "thinking to reclaim his joy," hoping to achieve a kind of peace with his muse, Thiralatha. But they are "secret dwellers of dreamful caves," unconscious of the world about them, as self-involved and insensitive as Theotormon. Sotha is like the Bards in America, for their aim, like his, is to reclaim or maintain the peace of the past.

All of the poets mentioned to this point are false prophets in that they cannot transcend the cycles of history. Sotha lives for the past, Theotormon and Manathu-Vorcyon live in the past, and Antamon lives under the shadow of old morality. In short, all of these poets are bound by tradition. They represent old errors that have not been transcended. Thus in the Song of Los it is the "children of Los" who dispense the religions to mankind, religions that became increasingly contraining, "till like a dream Eternity was obliterated and erased:"

Thus the terrible race of Los and Enitharmon gave
Laws & Religions to the sons of Har, binding them more
And more to Earth, closing and restraining
Till a Philosophy of Five Senses was complete.

It is this "Philosophy of Five Senses" that each of the sons of Los tend toward, for each of them is bound to the world of time and space. None can conceive of a world in which "every particle of dust breathes forth its joy," and none can escape the cycles of history. With one exception.

Orc is the stage beyond Sotha, and he represents the overcoming of the world in which the preceeding sons are caught. He is not self-involved, refuses social restraint, and his violence is not directed at his own betterment. He achieves his peace without social sanction and before he begins to act. He is like Sotha in that he wishes to "renew the fiery joy" through violence, and he is limited in that respect. But his interest is with releasing mankind, not himself, for he is already free.⁴

4. Cf. "Voice of the Ancient Bard" (E31/K126).

Since the natural world itself is Orc's muse, he is in an ambiguous position. As we have seen, Orc is a double figure. First he represents the rebel striving against social powers, just as Antamon does, but Orc is not attracted to Leutha and her institutionalized religion of repression. Orc's revolution, however, must return to another tyranny, since the human tendency to stasis is as strong as that to energy, and insofar as he is politically oriented, he must become a despairing "Theotormon. The "stern Bard" of America follows this pattern. To the degree that a poet is concerned with institutions, then, he is an Antamon figure, and his revolt must dwindle to a lament over the vicissitudes of social change and the moral dilemma inherent in the conflict between the individual and society. To the extent to which Orc is a Spartacus, he is doomed to be a martyr.

Because he represents the dignity of the individual and the life force of every aspect of creation, Orc also represents the Poetic Genius. The "thought provoking fires of Orc" and the "visions of Orc" do not apply to the Americans only. The visionary power Orc, like the Fairy in the Introduction to Europe, ultimately comes to personify transcends the fleeting "visionary joy" of the shadowy female. It is the force of the imagination recreating what the senses perceive. Each of the sons of Los represents, to some degree, this power of the imagination, but the visionary power becomes perverted and at last is lost by the poet who attempts to use it against itself. The visionary power enables one to see the infinite behind the natural, and each of the preceding sons of Los attempts to limit the natural world, finally to the point where "a Philosophy of Five Senses" is complete and Newton

can appear to proclaim, albeit unknowingly, the final stagnation of poetry.

Orc is different. Because his revolution is iconoclastic and fought in the name of the autonomy of the individual, and, by implication, also in the name of Oothoon's ideal of the sanctity of everything that lives, the revolution represents a rebirth of the visionary power in a purer form. The great danger for both Blake's reader, and the spectator of a revolution, is to assume the revolution can be understood in social terms as an apocalyptic event. To do so is to see Orc as a kind of Sotha, cherishing war and conquest over human values. Orc refuses the "dreamful caves" of blind violence and cynicism. Orc's aim is "to burst the stony floor," to expand awareness beyond social structures, to stimulate creativity and to replace the individual consciousness of self as the universal frame of reference. In twentieth-century terms, his aim is to "blow minds," to break down human insensitivity to the natural world. Insofar as social unrest leads to a respect for the individual, and for change, it is an image of life force and creativity.

Orc's revolution is compromised by its tendency to relapse into a Sotha-like glorification of violence and terror, or further into a Theotormonesque depression in the face of reviving social mores. That is to say, Orc's revolution is easily seen in terms of Antamon's conflict between his freedom and the churches of Leutha who seek him just as Enitharmon seeks Orc and regards his ideals as perversity of will. Orc's capacity for transcendence, then, is precarious to say the least, and certainly it is temporary. Because Orc is limited in this manner, Blake required a more

transcendent and enduring figure to act as the Poetic Genius.

This figure is Los, who is seen also, in what is generally called his "eternal name," Urthona. Before Europe, Urthona is mentioned only twice, and he does not reappear until he is seen in The Four Zoas. In The Four Zoas, he is clearly identified as the unfallen Los (1:14-17), but in the minor prophecies the connection is by no means so clear. As we have seen, Urthona is a kind of Pluto-figure, with no apparent connection with Los. In the "Song of Liberty," it is on "Urthona's dens" that the forces of tyranny fall. The shadowy female of the America Preludium is the daughter of Urthona, and he is said to be the binder of Orc (1:11-12). But since his name suggests "earth-owner," "Urthona's dens" would refer to the lowermost point of man's fall as an earth-bound creature. It is inescapable that Urthona's dens be associated with tyranny, however, since he presides over the fallen world. Thus Orc is bound in a "deep den" in Europe, and Urthona appears as the jealous tyrant-god. Because Orc represents a dangerous side to Urthona's character--the rebel--he is bound in the interests of security. In fact the binding of Orc simply represents the limitations placed on the individual in the material world, a limitation Orc refuses to accept. The real tyrant is Urizen, the force that demands one accept the limitations of time and space. But Urthona remains a shadowy figure, and were it not that the shadowy daughter is Urthona's, and the shadowy female in Europe is the daughter of Enitharmon, Los's consort, there would be little motivation to link this earth-owner with Los. As it is, there is a strong indication that Los is Urthona. In terms of the

later myth, Orc is incorrect in accusing "Urthona" of binding him, for it was "Los" who did so. Because Orc is Los's child, Urthona has already fallen and lost his eternal identity. But Blake uses the terms Los and Urthona almost interchangeably through the major prophecies and seeking consistency here is certainly fruitless.⁵

Los/Urthona, then, the "eternal prophet," is strongly associated with the earth and also with the sun, for the phrase, "possessor of the moon" implies both, and Los's opening speech in Europe,

Again the night is come
That strong Urthona takes his rest,

implies his association with the sun.

After the shadowy female's lament in the Preludium, Los's opening speech sounds particularly shallow. Los recommends they laugh at war and care, and he wishes to bind the spirits of life. Los does not see the "eternal day" from which the secret child appears, and for him it is the peaceful night. He is emmeshed in the cycles of the natural world. Los is fallen indeed, but we misunderstand his role if we underrate his importance here. He is in control, and from the description of his sons, we can see no other figure with his control over his world. Los has achieved a Beulah state, the "lucky hours" of joy return to him, and he enjoys the moment. He calls up Orc, and, as he does so, Enitharmon's revolt commences. Los summons Orc partly in excess of self-assurance, but also in a bid to reconcile himself with the rejected fragment of his psyche. Orc is identified as a kind of Dionysus here, a god of reviving energy, and in one sense Los's calling him up is an attempt to revive his power of vision. Inexplicably Los disappears after Orc rises, and though Enitharmon's voice echoes from the

"distant heavens," he does not interfere. Los cannot sanction Enitharmon's bid for power, for it is directed against himself.

Los is not seen again until the closing lines of the poem. When he reappears, it is in an enigmatic manner indeed:

Then Los arose his head he rear'd in snaky thunders clad:
And with a cry that shook all nature to the utmost pole,
Call'd all his sons to the strife of blood.

As Los reappears, he speaks with authority and power beyond that he generally enjoys elsewhere. Here his cry "shook all nature to the utmost pole." And although he is attributed with a head that "rears," serpentlike, and is clad in "snaky thunders," so that his appearance at first implies only a continuing political revolution, he is still the voice of authority. He is the alternative to the "stern Bard" in despair at the opening of America. With the attributes of Orc that Los assumes here, Los also assumes Orc's ambivalent nature. But Los does not call warriors, as Orc would do, and he does not revel in the violence of the revolution. He calls on his sons, the poet figures throughout the poem, to be spectators at the "strife of blood" in France. For his sons to do so would be for them to experience the visionary apocalypse with which America ends.

Los is not infallible. He in fact makes several blunders in the course of the poem. When we first see him, he is in a state of error, and Enitharmon's dominion goes unopposed by him. But Los is a true bard, aloof, but not indifferent to the cycles, and aware of the direction necessary to be taken on the road to reintegration.

We can see that Los here is closely linked with Orc. But Los is not the spirit of revolution, and the appearance of Los at this point is redundant unless his role is distinguished from that of Orc. Orc's revolution in France, at the height of which Los appears, is described in particularly bloody terms:

The sun glow'd fiery red!
 The furious terrors flew around!
 On golden chariots raging, with red wheels dropping with blood;
 The Lions lash their wrathful tails!
 The Tigers couch upon the prey & suck the ruddy tide.

These "portions of eternity" attract Los and he calls his sons to participate in the vision they inspire. Without the creative imagination, the revolution would be without meaning, aside from that of a change in power-figures. The point is that the redemptive agent in the minor prophecies was never Orc. It is the prophet-figure who can see the transcendence Orc's revolution only implies.

Blake realized in America that Orc's double role as the spirit of revolutionary fervour and the all-pervading spirit of energy is too great a burden for a single figure, and that his identification with revolutionary ardor actually undercut, in a sense, his significance as life force. Accordingly, Orc represents the reviving power of energy, and Los, the prophet, the abiding power. Los stands behind Orc's ideals in France, but he is above Orc in that Los will endure after Orc has burned himself out.

When we reach the closing line of "Africa," we find that America has an identifiable narrator beyond Blake himself. "Africa," in the Song of Los, ends with the opening line of America. Los,

5. R. L. Grimes, The Divine Imagination (Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow, 1972), p. 44n4.

then, is the narrator of America. It is he who describes the apocalypse Orc's revolution precipitates, and he serves as the kind of frame we defined earlier as the prophet's vision. Los is the Poetic Genius, the "true man" according to the tractates. He does not participate in the Orc cycle. He is the prophet evaluating the historical events he sees, and the transcendence that is seen in Orc's revolution is seen by the creative imagination, the Poetic Genius, and has nothing to do with the three-dimensional world.

In Europe, Blake expands on the cycles and the tension against them, and examines the attempt to escape the cycles. In fact, Orc sheds half of his character and becomes simply the spirit of revolution, the pressure against closure. In one sense, then, he is still a manifestation of life force, but only in the same way spring or dawn is an image of life force. Los becomes the spirit of prophecy, the Poetic Genius, the role that Orc also carried in America. Revolt in itself lacks articulation. It is simply a reaction against external pressures, a wedge of iron heated in the furnace. Los, the prophet, is the blacksmith, and it is he who shapes the blind power of Orc into a prophetic statement. Thus in Europe, Orc loses the ambivalence he had in America, and his revolutionary activities become to a large extent only points in cycles. It is Los who rises, endued with some of Orc's characteristics and ultimately representing the transcendence Orc's speeches implied in America. Orc becomes a pyromaniac, and Los becomes the Aeneas figure, the pilgrim.

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