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The Politics of Defamiliarization in Blake's Printed Works

by

Julia M. Wright

Department of English

Submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The works of William Blake are notoriously strange. Multimedia artifacts with stylized illustrations and texts that have unusual forms and proper names, they evade the limits of the familiar. But such an evasion is not simply aesthetic. For Blake, the familiar world is entangled in a web of false paradigms that, whether formal or political, alienate individuals from their proper selves. "Familiarity" is an apparently innocuous term that masks easy distinctions between what is proper and what is alien--distinctions that delineate everything from genres to nations and so place invisible, but effective, limits on what can be said and, more crucially for Blake, imagined.

Focussing on Blake's printed works, the present study examines the political implications of the poet's defamiliarizing strategies. Of particular concern is Blake's resistance to linearity and the closure which it facilitates as a resistance to the totalizing narratives that supported the hegemony of his day. By offering alternative forms of history, and alternative perspectives on a set of events, as well as inscribing non-linear, acausal connections between events, Blake disrupts the forms as well as the content of hegemonic discourse. By publishing his work, moreover, he does not simply critique such discourse but complicates the cultural domain by inserting his own forms and ideas. Working with a well-established model in which texts circulate through the public body like diseases or envigorating agents (particularly sterilizing fires and vaccines), Blake envisions circulated radical discourse as an active defense against the false, pestilential, codes of familiarity that constrain society. The clash of radical and hegemonic discourses creates a hybrid space in which change is probable, and totalization impossible.

But there is a danger in this. In the early works, Blake limits himself to the subversion of prevailing paradigms. In *Milton*, however, Blake begins to piece together his critical stances to form his own vision of the renovated nation, a vision that is completed in *Jerusalem*. While retaining subversive strategies such as multiperspectivism and defamiliarizing settings, Blake can only use hegemonic strategies to put his own system into place. Submerging difference in a totalizable system and imagining a counter-colonization that sweeps the globe, Blake's discourse becomes hybrid, infected by the very paradigms that he had so long contested.

Poetry Fetter'd, Fetters the Human Race!
Nations are Destroy'd, or Flourish, in
proportion as Their Poetry Painting and Music,
are Destroy'd or Flourish!

William Blake, *Jerusalem*

"A poet's work," he answers. "To name the
unnamable, to point at frauds, start arguments,
shape the world and stop it from going to
sleep."

Salman Rushdie, *Satanic Verses*

William Blake, *The Laocoön*

Acknowledgments

"Acknowledgements" are an academic genre, a forum in which it is traditional to recognize academic debts not covered by bibliographies. But they are also a place to acknowledge, and affirm, the humanity of the academy by mapping the interactions that sustain and mark us as members of a community. The academy is embodied institutionally through titles, grades, and regulations, but its spirit, its fundamental vitality, is constituted in such interactions, from formal lectures to informal conversations, from publications to letters from friends, and from readers' reports to e-mail notes that offer a reference. I cannot enumerate all of the exchanges from which I have benefitted and must, for practical reasons, limit myself to naming those with whom I have interacted the most. But I fully realize the value of each casual conversation, as well as every heated debate, and here thank each of those with whom I have shared such discussions.

The University of Western Ontario has a flourishing Romantic contingent, and it is with it that I must begin my acknowledgments. To begin at the beginning, I would like to thank James M. Good: his undergraduate course on the Romantic period was the catalyst that turned my interest in that body of literature into an avocation, and his support while I pursued it, through two theses and innumerable applications, has been invaluable. J. Douglas Kneale, as supervisor for my Master's thesis, demanded a theoretical and rhetorical rigour that matured my work discernibly. Balachandra Rajan introduced me to a set of literary concerns, particularly representations of the cultural other, that forever altered my critical approach and with which the present study is saturated. In more recent years, I have benefitted inestimably from the kind support, advice, insights, and considerable expertise of my dissertation supervisors, Angela Esterhammer and Tilottama Rajan. In their graduate courses, their invaluable comments throughout the various drafts of the present study, and in less formal exchanges, they have not only taught me a great deal and helped me to refine this study, but have taught me how to teach. Chapter 4 began in two sections of the final term paper for Tilottama Rajan's course on the Romantics: in that earlier paper on *Europe* and *America* and, through it, her course, lies the origin of this study. I have also

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Finally, I would like to thank a now-anonymous acquaintance for something she has certainly long since forgotten, picking me up when I was about four years old to show me a poster on her wall and read aloud the poem written on it:

> Tyger tyger, burning bright
> In the forests of the night . . .

Abbreviations

All references to Blake's writings, except for *The Laocoön*, will be to the Erdman edition. Shorter poems and the prose will be cited by page number while longer poems will be cited by plate; where applicable, line numbers will be given. All references to Blake's engravings will be to the Bindman edition, cited by the plate number in the Erdman edition, unless otherwise specified. Because of editorial issues discussed in Chapter One, all references to the texts of *The Laocoön*, except where editions are specified, are my own transcriptions from the Bindman reproduction, with the quadrant in which the quotation is located being indicated by A (upper lefthand), B (upper righthand), C (lower lefthand), and D (lower righthand). All references to Milton's verse are to the Shawcross edition, and all references to Percy Bysshe Shelley's writings are to the Reiman edition.

The following abbreviations will be used for Blake's works:

Am	*America; a Prophecy*
Anno. Reynolds	Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*
Anno. Bacon	Annotations to Bacon's *Essays Moral, Economical and Political*
Anno. Wordsworth	Annotations to Wordsworth's Preface to *The Excursion*
BL	*The Book of Los*
BU	*The [First] Book of Urizen*
DC	*A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures*
Eur	*Europe; a Prophecy*
J	*Jerusalem*
L	*The Laocoön*
M	*Milton*
MHH	*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*
PA	*Public Address*
SL	*The Song of Los*
VDA	*Visions of the Daughters of Albion*
VLJ	*A Vision of The Last Judgment*

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Introduction

> I am rather of the opinion, that the more incommensurable, and the more incomprehensible to the understanding, a poetic production is, so much the better it is.
>
> J. W. Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann*

The works of William Blake are, if nothing else, unusual. He was an eccentric in his own time, and his art remains eccentric in ours. D. G. Gillham notes "his unusual manner of writing" (1) before distinguishing the *Songs* from that corpus, while both David V. Erdman and Northrop Frye begin their influential studies with a defence of Blake's right to belong in the canon.[1] When this quality of Blake's work is addressed, the word "familiar" often appears, with various prefixes and suffixes. Erdman writes that he can decode Blake, and so demonstrate that his work is allusive rather than absurdly idiosyncratic, because he has "learned to read the idiom of current allusion with sufficient familiarity" and has "become familiar, too, with Blake's use of sources in the ironic manner which historians of painting call witty quotation" (xii). Jon Mee, who follows Erdman in historicizing Blake, offers "a less familiar context for understanding Blake" (226). Further examples abound: Susan Fox writes that Blake "makes even the most familiar places and things ominously unfamiliar" (*Poetic Form* 4),[2] Donald Ault describes his study of *The Four Zoas* as

---

[1]In *Prophet Against Empire*, Erdman suggests that Blake is considered bizarre because his topical allusions, and manner of making them, are missed by critics unfamiliar with the period (xi-xii). In *Fearful Symmetry*, Frye, however, locates Blake in a poetic tradition. While noting that Blake was generally perceived as "an interruption in cultural history" (3), however, Frye defends Blake's place in a poetic tradition in the Preface that he added in 1969.

[2]Angela Esterhammer takes Fox's point further:

> In Blake's case, his use of historical names is unavoidably influenced by his admixture of names like 'Los' and

an "attempt to defamiliarize the reader with Blake's poetics" (*Narrative Unbound* xi), Leopold Damrosch Jr. asserts that "After several generations of Blakeans have banged their heads against the brick wall of artistic form, we can safely conclude that Blake's works do not possess form in any familiar sense" (350), and Tilottama Rajan suggests that a passage from *Milton* has "the effect of defamiliarizing" even what Blake perceives as "Milton's perversity" (*Supplement of Reading* 206). Thus, criticism runs the gamut from Erdman's suggestion that the reader is not sufficiently familiar with Blake's unfamiliar context, to Ault's implication that Blake has become too familiar and needs to be defamiliarized all over again.

It is one particular derivative of the term "familiar," "defamiliarization," that is the touchstone of the following study as I attempt to theorize some of the implications of this strangeness. The word often appears in literary criticism in general, and Blake criticism in particular, but divorced from its origin as the English translation of a term coined by the Russian formalist, Viktor Shklovsky, in his essay, "Art as Technique."[3] I mark that source here not to privilege origins, however Romantic that might be, but because Shklovsky's term is more complicated, and for my purposes more useful, than its usual English translation suggests. The original term is *priem ostranenija*, often abbreviated to *ostranenie*. The full phrase is usually translated as "the device of making strange," while its shorter version is variously translated as "estrangement," "making strange,"

> 'Enitharmon,' which flaunt the fact that they do not refer, at least not to any referent the reader has experience of. Blake's use of unfamiliar names defamiliarizes the whole concept of naming, exposing the fact that names in imaginative literature do not function the way they are supposed to in real-world discourse. (*Creating States* 182)

[3]The OED does not list any earlier occurrences of the word "defamiliarization" and defines it first as a translation of Shklovsky's term that is specific to literary theory, "esp. Russian Formalist." The supplementary definition describes its more casual usage in post-1971 discourse, while still connecting it to its Russian Formalist roots.

"alienation," and, most commonly, as "defamiliarization." There is an odd chiasmus in these translations, between terms that refer to the perceiving subject's sense of the artifact's belonging and those that refer to that subject's own sense of belonging, between "making strange" or "defamiliarization" and "estrangement" or "alienation."[4] It is in this chiasmus that the formalist term, I would argue, becomes useful in cultural studies, particularly in attempts to analyze the formation of cultural codes that establish the domain of the familiar. "Familiar" is a slippery term. While apparently innocuous, it often slides into constructions of what is "natural," "civilized," "right," or "proper," codes that interpellate the subject into the ideologies in which they are invested. In *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Charles Maturin makes a pertinent observation on the power of codes that are invested with familiarity:

> However extraordinary these injunctions appeared, the manner in which they were issued was so imposing, peremptory, and *habitual*,--it seemed so little a thing of local contrivance and temporary display,--so much like the established language of an absolute and longstanding system, that *obedience to it seemed inevitable.* (298-299; latter emphasis mine)

It is such injunctions, I would suggest, that concerned Blake intensely, those "well wrought blandishments, / And well contrived words, firm fixing, never forgotten, / Always comforting the

---

[4]In the maze of English translations of non-English theories, "alienation" is used to apply to a range of effects, from Karl Marx's term *Entäusserung*, which describes the individual's alienation from an inherent being that makes possible his or her insertion into a capitalist economy, to Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* or "full alienation effect," in which the theatrical audience's identification with dramatic characters is disrupted. My use of Shklovsky's term and its translation as "alienation" has points of contact with Brecht's effect, particularly in Chapter Three, and little to do with Marx's, except insofar as the "alienation" that operates in Blake's texts often works to estrange the subject from the very alienation that Marx describes, the subject's dependence on extrinsic economies rather than intrinsic ones.

remembrance" (*J* 12.34-36). In this context, *priem ostranenija*, or "the estranging device of making strange," disrupts the interpellative effect, separating the subject from the comfortable familiarity of politicized cultural codes and so making obedience to their injunctions seem less inevitable. An old riddle, becoming more and more out of date in Western culture, will serve as a brief illustration. A father and son are in a car accident; the father is killed but the son is only wounded, though critically, and taken to hospital. The surgeon enters the operating theatre and announces, "I can't operate on this boy--he's my son." Who is the surgeon? The answer, of course, is "his mother." I heard that riddle posed over and over again in the late 1970's, though, and never heard it solved--we were all stumped, including one friend who was planning to become a medical doctor herself. The riddle was always packaged differently from the "what is black and white and re(a)d all over" variety, posed not to share delight in a logical nicety or clever wordplay but to force the audience to examine its gender-bias, to ask why the unfamiliar, a doctor who is not male, was not even considered in attempts to solve a riddle whose formal presentation marked it as a logical puzzle. It identified the gap between the familiar world and the politically-imagined one, between the domain of "self-evident" truths and arguable truths, reminding us that the world from which we draw to make choices, determine consequences, and solve puzzles is itself traversed by arguable truths for which we have lost track of the arguments. And it is in this sense, as I will argue in the following pages, that Blake's texts "make strange."

Coding the World

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake writes, "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite. / For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (14). The chinks of Blake's cavern are similar in function to the censorship that Pierre Bourdieu discusses in his essay, "Censorship and the Imposition of Form":

> The metaphor of censorship should not mislead: it is the structure of the field itself which governs expression by

> governing both access to expression and the form of expression. . . . By imposing form, the censorship exercised by the structure of the field determines the form--which all formalist analyses attempt to detach from social determinisms--and, necessarily, the content, which is inseparable from its appropriate expression and therefore literally unthinkable outside of the known forms and recognized forms. (138, 139)

Bourdieu limits such structures to academic disciplines but this statement could be extended to all governing codes, from genres to ideologies to scientific theories and aesthetic norms. All such structures select what is visible, what is thinkable: they are the chinks in the cavern's walls. They do not offer valuable glimpses of open vision, but structured vision, a vision that is mediated by codes which determine what is visible and how. As Shklovsky's analysis in "Art as Technique" implies, however, the code and its selection of visible signs are co-dependent: the code not only determines the selection, but the selection reinforces the code. Shklovsky suggests that the introduction of an element that does not fit into a text unsettles the reader's decoding of it, arresting the process of comprehension described by Bourdieu in which "To understand also means to understand without having to be told, to read between the lines, by re-enacting in the mode of practice (in most cases unconsciously) the linguistic associations and substitutions initially set up by the producer" (158). The unfamiliar, the irreconcilable, halts the chain of substitutions mapped by the code, making possible the production of other codes, even the recognition of the codedness of the reading process.

Such codes are semiotic structures that contextualize signs. In Michel Foucault's formulation,

> The fundamental codes of a culture--those governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices--establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home. At the other extremity of thought, there

> are the scientific theories or the philosophical interpretations which explain why order exists in general. (*Order* xx)

The semiotic field is saturated by interlocking constellations of these codes. A word is not only a member of a text in which it appears but a member of every set in which that word is recognized. The word "liberty" in "A Song of Liberty" brings to bear the weight of the word's implications, calling to mind the rallying cry of the French Revolution, the nationalist construction of England or Britain as the site of liberty, the slavery debate, political theories of individual rights, and a variety of other discourses and specific texts in which "liberty" figures in Blake's time and since.[5] These discourses are cued by the title, affecting the expectations with which the text is read. And it is here that Foucault's mapping of the topography of order needs to be modified. Foucault argues that between the realms of cultural and academic codes

> lies a domain which, even though its role is mainly an intermediary one, is nonetheless fundamental. . . . It is

---

[5]"England" and "Britain" are slippery terms in this period, as well as in our own. After 1707, England, Scotland, and Wales were incorporated into a single political entity and attempts were made to consolidate those countries into a single cultural entity as well (see especially Linda Colley's excellent study, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*). But, as Scottish and Welsh nationalists, and even those from the north of England, now complain, the southeast corner of England has had a disproportionate influence on defining British culture and British interests. So, there are contexts in which "Britain" refers to an England that has been supplemented by more territory and not extended otherwise to include, for instance, more cultural traditions and political perspectives. In the former case, politically and culturally "England" remains intact and continuous and so, on those terms, the entity in question is more usefully characterized as English. But there are other contexts in which the latter is meant, and others in which the referents of "Britain" and "England" are far from clear as the meaning of both is discussed and redefined in the wake of the Acts of Union (1707 and 1800). I have tried to distinguish between "Britain" and "England" on sociopolitical terms where possible.

> here that culture, imperceptibly deviating from the empirical orders prescribed for it by its primary codes, instituting an initial separation from them, causes them to lose their original transparency, relinquishes its immediate and invisible powers, frees itself sufficiently to discover that these orders are perhaps not the only possible ones or the best ones. (*Order* xx)

Foucault plots the "intermediary" space as the one that is outside of "these orders" but this needs to be complicated further because stepping outside of all established orders at once is simply inconceivable and inconceivably simple. In Foucault's topography, this space, however, is not just outside of order but between cultural codes and academic paradigms, or between codes and meta-codes. A fractal rather than a binary topography would be more useful here: the "intermediary" space lies between every code and all of the meta-codes which seek to explain it. This domain is a resisting medium. It is at once the space across which codes and meta-codes converse and the boundary which prevents their reconciliation. Gayatri C. Spivak finds such a blockage in the scission between "the world of action and the world of the disciplines" (95): different codes govern as well as define those two worlds and, through that definition, disallow communication without deformation. Poststructuralism becomes rampant relativism and Madonna becomes a cultural icon as the contents of one sphere are comprehended within the codes of the other. It is the recognition of their incommensurability that makes possible the discovery that alternatives may exist. On a local level, we are constantly passing through the resisting medium, deforming codes and visions as new information intrudes upon the visible field and new attempts are made to accommodate it to existing structures.

This is a more general formulation of a process which Barbara Herrnstein Smith describes in *Poetic Closure.* Smith suggests that the weight of past readings intervenes in every present one: "Each reading is, in a sense, a new and unique experience, the quality of which continues to depend as much upon the relation of the poem's structure to *all* our experiences as upon our previous experiences with the poem or others like it in form" (56). Smith is addressing the response of

literate Western readers to familiar verse structures, but the point can be extrapolated to include our responses to structures in general. Kaja Silverman's formulation of subjectivity is useful here:

> The term "subject" foregrounds the relationship between ethnology, psychoanalysis, and semiotics. It helps us to conceive of human reality as a construction, as the product of signifying activities which are both culturally specific and generally unconscious. (130)

We exist in the interstice between a psychological drive for pattern-making and a patterned world that has been constructed by generations of individuals with such a drive. The "intermediary" space is a transitional one. It is the fluid into which order dissolves before it is re-crystallized into a new order that accommodates the incongruity that compromised the old one or even depends on it.[6] The intertext, in the broadest sense of the world-as-text, is saturated by such patterns or codes, leaving the uncoded unmarked and unrecognized by this taxonomical imperative.[7] Every sign must be a member of a taxonomy, a

---

[6]That is, minor incongruities can be quietly absorbed, but major ones often redefine the order in ways that emphasize the incorporation of the prior incongruity, usually characterizing its incorporation as a revolutionary enlightenment. Thus, for example, nations such as Canada and the United States have a history of racist slavery but established themselves as anti-racist states with the abolition of that practice and later took a public stand against apartheid in South Africa. Similarly, previously patriarchal nations throughout the West now place the equality of women at the forefront of their national values.

[7]Kristeva's use of intertextuality extends the term to the broad purview that it has here, to a kind of inter-discursivity. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, for example, she writes,

> In this connection we examined the formation of a specific signifying system--the novel--as the result of a redistribution of several different sign systems: carnival, courtly poetry, scholastic discourse. The term *inter-textuality* denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another. . . . If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an inter-textuality), one then understands that its "place" of enunciation and its

code, a hierarchy, or a pattern, if not all at once. As Jacques Derrida writes, "we believe in the necessity of reducing the unique, of analyzing it and decomposing it by shattering it even further" ("Parole Soufflée" 174): a category of one is a category without meaning, so the offending unicity must be fractured into classifiable components, into components that can be comprehended within familiar taxonomical structures.

This construction of the intertext has implications for the topography of reading. In *The Mirror and the Lamp*, M. H. Abrams establishes "Some Co-ordinates of Art Criticism": locating the "work" at the centre, Abrams orients the "universe," the "artist," and the "audience," around it in a triangular formation, with arrows pointing away from the "work" to each of the other three components (6). Abrams argues that "Although any reasonably adequate theory takes some account of all four elements, almost all theories . . . exhibit a discernible orientation toward one only" (6): "objective theories" privilege the relationship between "work" and "world"; "expressive theories" emphasize the work's derivation from the author; "pragmatic theories" value the work's effect on the audience. In recent years, the boundary that separates "work" from "world" has been challenged, but in order to emphasize the textuality of the world and the interplay between the world-as-text and the book-as-text. Spivak describes this textuality in a particularly relevant way:

> Everyone reads life and the world like a book. . . . Without the reading of the world as a book, there is no prediction, no planning, no taxes, no laws, no welfare, no war. Yet these leaders read the world in terms of rationality and averages, as if it were a textbook. The world actually writes itself with the many-leveled,

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> denoted "object" are never single, complete, and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated. In this way polysemy can also be seen as the result of semiotic polyvalence--an adherence to different sign systems. (59-60)

This polyvalence has useful resonances with the hybridity that I will later outline and discuss at length.

> unfixable intricacy and openness of a work of literature. (95)

To write a tax law which reduces a million different financial and social situations to a few income levels and numbers of dependents is thus, according to Spivak's formulation, comparable to reading *Moby Dick* as *How To Whale*. Spivak aligns the construction or anticipation of patterns--extrapolation, regulation, social organization--with reading, identifying reductive hegemonic patterns with the simplification of a heterogeneous and unparaphraseable text to the univocality and authoritarian tone of a textbook. At issue here is not so much the scission between action and academia, but the different reading strategies that circulate within those two domains, strategies that are coded in the texts that circulate but cannot cross the dividing domain without deformation. In terms of Abrams' paradigm, the work of art is not directly accessible to the author or the audience but is mediated by the world-as-(patterned)-text. Past readings, in the broad sense used by Spivak, intervene in every writing and every reading. This requires a reconfiguration of Abrams' schematic diagram:

AUTHOR <-----> WORLD <-----> WORK <-----> WORLD <-----> AUDIENCE

The world, in this case, is not the objective reality that Abrams assumes but the world-as-(patterned)-text, the sum of the subject's readings and the discursively-constituted organizational structures with which those readings are at once traversed and entangled. The arrows are bilateral because these constructs are mutually constitutive. Silverman argues that "signification occurs only through discourse, that discourse requires a subject, and that the subject itself is an effect of discourse" (vii) but I would formulate this model slightly differently by grafting it onto Smith's formulation. The author and the members of the audience are subjects who simultaneously shape the world through the constructions that they derive from their prior experiences of the ordered world and are shaped by the world through the addition of new experiences to that pattern-making consciousness. The work is not only read within the context of that (patterned)-world-in-process but is configured by it. We skip over or fracture signs that, like unfamiliar words, are not comprehensible within the structures with which we approach the work

and we emphasize signs that are comprehensible within privileged structures. The work, like the transcendental signified, is not directly accessible; it is "always already" mediated by the assumptions, values, constructs, taxonomies, and other systems with which the subject approaches the work. These constructs are not signs and cannot be flattened into a linguistic dimension. They are emplotments of differences and similitudes, of relationships, of genealogies and of hierarchies. They make each word polysemous by making it polycoded, by providing a constellation of codes through which the word can be comprehended and so rendering the signifying matter heterogeneous.

It is this heterogeneity that makes defamiliarization possible, providing spaces within the discursive domain that are incommensurable with, and thus in some measure alien to, each other. Defamiliarization does not mark that which is totally alien, but plots an erosion of the familiar, of the most obvious and comfortable paradigms with which the world is coded. Shklovsky, not surprisingly given his own political context, emphasized the aesthetic implications of the less familiar, writing that "The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged" (12). But Shklovsky also extends the aesthetic into the epistemological, maintaining that *ostraneniye* facilitates art's attempt "to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known" (12).[9] Readers of Romantic literature will find these statements somewhat familiar: "Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar" (Shelley, *Defence* 487); "to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances, which every day for perhaps

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[9]Regarding the difficulties of translating Shklovsky's phrase, *priem ostranenija* ("the device of making strange"), see Stacy (2-3). Stacy includes "estrangement" as a possible translation of *ostranenija* (3), suggesting the social implications of removing the percipient from a socially-constructed frame of reference.

forty years had rendered familiar . . . this is the character and privilege of genius" (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* 1: 80-81). Behind Percy Shelley's and Coleridge's assertions is the premise that the reader has turned from a supra-familiarity that all share towards the false familiar generated by experience and paradigms, and it is this general epistemological taxonomy which contains, but is not limited to, the aesthetic. In his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, William Wordsworth claims for the Ballads this supra-familiarity and distinguishes it from the unnatural excess of other literature but, in doing so, isolates literature along national lines. By extensively characterizing his literature as familiar and briefly decrying other literature as "frantic," "extravagant," "sickly," and "outrageous" (599), Wordsworth defamiliarizes the properly unfamiliar and familiarizes what he classifies as properly familiar, valorizing it by claiming that the familiar is the resource of good poetry: "The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us" (607). In *Defamiliarization in Language and Literature*, R. H. Stacy notes this double agenda of defamiliarization: "the artist familiarizes by defamiliarizing, in the sense that, if successful, he brings to our recognition a new or different or more striking vision; he renews our familiarity, or even refamiliarizes us" (49). The defamiliarizing effect of the artifact is perishable, surviving only until its contemplation allows it to supplement the range of the familiar. Shklovsky emphasizes the immediate effect of defamiliarization, but it is the consequences of its longterm effects through its supplementing of the familiar that are of concern here. Writing of "interruption," those moments of opacity (as ambiguity or undecidability) in reading texts and perceiving visual art that arrest interpretation in terms that suggest the transitional spaces of Foucault and Spivak, Mary Ann Caws argues that it is "something positive" (12). Caws suggests that "it works towards openness and struggles against the system as closure, undoing categories" (12), leading to "a flexibility of function able to accommodate images both ordinary and askew, straight or with perceptual shifts, and to

translate them liberally into nourishment for new ways of seeing" (15)--"the eye altering alters all." In all three formulations, a crisis develops in the attempt to mediate between two orders of order--between philosophy and cultural codes for Foucault, between the academic world and the world of action for Spivak, and between the strategies of interpretation and acts of perception for Caws--and, by way of dealing with that crisis, order is reconfigured along new lines of familiarity. These interruptions operate beyond the moment that they interrupt, challenging familiar paradigms and so inserting the challenge into the domain of the familiar as well as disrupting the closure of familiarity. The wide-ranging effects of subverting totalization and epistemological complacency readily extend to political discourse.

In his essay, "Defamiliarization in the Gospels," James L. Resseguie retains Shklovsky's formalist focus but does so in terms that have political resonances: "Several of Shklovsky's defamiliarizing devices have comic features, i.e. low-ranking elements are placed in a high position or vice versa. . . . For example, characters at the bottom of the social hierarchy displace those who are higher" (25); "This novel point of view forces the reader to view the institution of private property, often taken for granted, from an unfamiliar perspective" (30).[9] Jonathan Swift, whose linguistic games are cited in discussions of defamiliarization [10] also applied his ironic word-play to political ends. In a recent article on Swift's most famous work, Clement Hawes writes that

> The satiric effect of *Gulliver's Travels* depends on Swift's ironizing, and, above all, reversing of the commonplaces of

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[9]Given Blake's religious concerns, Resseguie's article provides an interesting view of the Gospels. Noting the prevalence of the defamiliarizing device of "a novel point of view" (30) in the Gospels, Resseguie writes that "A divergent point of view is also expressed by Jesus, who continually undermines conventionally-based norms and values. . . . Although the text sets forth the conventional norm of greatness--the exercise of authority over others--the disciples are to follow a different norm" (31).

[10]See, for example, Stacy (55, 80) and Gunn (25).

> eighteenth-century British colonial discourse. This redirection of the tropes of colonial discourse, very typical of Swift's satirical strategies, turns them against the 'wrong' object: the middle-class Englishman. (189)

On a simply lexical level, "loud silence" is an oxymoron (Stacy 64), but on an ideological level, "barbaric Englishman" and "African culture" were also oxymoronic to many Englishmen of Swift's time. Language is not neutral: assumptions about the meaning of individual words are constructed within prevailing ideologies. In Shklovsky's essay on defamiliarization, the formalist analyzes the euphemisms, double entendres, and elaborate metaphors by which sexual activity is described without obviously transgressing the cultural taboo against explicit discussions of sex. These defamiliarizations, like Swift's, are subversive: the taboo is a consequence of assumptions which identify sex with vulgarity and immorality, the body with embarrassment, and sexual activity with dirty secrets. Euphemisms and other word games engage the reader in a knowing transgression of the taboo, involving the reader in a conspiracy of nudges and winks that evade the control of the austere censor. But they also defamiliarize the taboo, and familiarize its transgression, by using a device that, as Shklovsky notes, forces the reader to linger over the words on the page, to pay attention to that which the taboo says must be ignored. Defamiliarization, in other words, when applied to ideologically-invested constructs that have become so familiar that they are virtually invisible, invites the reader to contradict, with the author, the assumptions of the prevailing ideology, to linger over the contradiction, to become comfortable with the contradiction and the possibility of contradiction, and to render the familiar construct less familiar, and less comfortable. Moreover, through the bidirectional nature of the mechanism, it alienates the percipient from the system as it alienates the system from the percipient.

At the etymological root of the familiar lies the family: the familiar defines not only what is well-known to us but the environment in which we are known, as it shapes, interpellatively, the definition of the community of which we are members. For Swift's English audience, an Englishman who thinks himself less intelligent than a

horse is unfamiliar because it is fundamental to their belief system that Englishmen are superior to animals, and the human members of other nations, on every scale that matters. It is bizarre, and alienating, because it asks those readers to examine their own complacent assurances about their intellectual and moral superiority. Defamiliarization pushes us into the interstitial discursive space described by Foucault in which order no longer surrounds us but also pushes us into the interstices of the community. I choose the word "interstices" rather than "margins," a term that is more familiar to poststructuralist discourse, to emphasize the interiority of these pockets of the less familiar. "Marginal" bears the double sense of almost-exterior and trivial, as in "marginal error," but it is the power of the intersticial, of that which operates unacknowledged on the inside of the communal culture, that interests me here. Heterogeneity and hybridity mark the failure of the prevailing paradigms to police closure in part because, as Homi K. Bhabha notes in "Signs Taken for Wonders," the governing ideology must, to a certain extent, refuse to see that which does not fit its paradigms. But it also provides easy access to the rhetoric of invasion, allowing for claims that the communal ideology has been corrupted or infected in a threatening, rather than a marginal, way that must be addressed before the community is transformed through compromises to its ideological, and cultural, integrity. In *Power-Knowledge*, Foucault writes that opinion "represents a mode of operation through which power will be exercised by virtue of the mere fact of things being known and people being seen in a sort of immediate, collective and anonymous gaze" (65), recalling Bertolt Brecht's application of the "alienation effect" to George Bernard Shaw's plays:

> [Shaw's] world is one that arises from opinions. The opinions of his characters constitute their fates. Shaw creates a play by inventing a series of complications which give his characters a chance to develop their opinions as fully as possible and to oppose them to our own. . . . Probably every single feature of all Shaw's characters can be attributed to his delight in dislocating our stock associations. (11)

The corollary to Foucault's observation is that a familiar collectivity is sensitive to fluctuations in opinion, to changes in the way that things are known or people are seen--the unfamiliar, by alienating the individual from the collective, destabilizes the collective through the production of another body of opinion. Such "dislocation," "defamiliarization," "alienation effect," "eccentricity"--whatever term is used--marks not only the intrusion of the alien into the familiar, but the *grafting* of the alien onto the familiar, an intervention in culture that renders it hybrid.

De-Coding Blake

My own theoretical position is itself a product of such hybridity, as my early remark about the intersection of cultural studies and formalism suggests, but Blake criticism has always been susceptible to polycoded approaches. Early Blake criticism appropriated the working-class mystic, poet, and artisan into the domain of academic discipline. As E. P. Thompson notes, this appropriation constitutes a kind of violence when it is insensitive to Blake's distance from the institutions and the élites that produced such disciplinary codes in his own time (xiii-xvii). In 1947, Frye placed Blake in the forefront of the canon of English letters by tracing Blake's engagement with a specifically literary tradition and constituting the poet's verse as symptomatic of an essential literariness, characterizing Blake as "a reliable teacher of a poetic language" (*Fearful Symmetry* 11):

> If Blake were unique, or even rare, . . . I should perhaps not have finished the book. But there are so many symbolic constructs in literature, ranging from Dante's Ptolemaic universe to Yeats's spirit-dictated *Vision*, that one begins to suspect that such constructs have something to do with the way poetry is written. (*Fearful Symmetry* n.p.)

This work has since been extended into the visual arts by critics such as John Barrell, David Bindman, Morris Eaves, Robert Essick, and Joseph Viscomi who have addressed Blake's participation in the visual arts. In 1954, Erdman located Blake in a political and historical context, subtitling *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* as "A Poet's Interpretation

of the History of His Own Times." In recent years, the radical Blake has become the nexus of various poststructuralist approaches which, to one degree or another, mix these three strains of Blake criticism to trace Blake's subversiveness beyond his radical politics to his textual and artistic practice, and to trace his textual and artistic practice to his politics. The methodologies of feminism and gender studies have thus been applied to his representations of women in order to elucidate Blake's own politics of gender, while other critics with primarily editorial or formalist concerns have found visual and verbal aporias, inversions, and complications that broaden the range of Blake's radicalism. This concern with what might be described as Blake's multi-disciplinary resistance to closure has recently been extended to Blake's work itself, as Ault, Damrosch, and Rajan have drawn attention to the untotalizability of Blake's work, marking its resistance to narrative closure, metaphysical dogmatism, and hermeneutic determinacy. Blake criticism is a particularly hybrid space, its interdisciplinarity and concern with a range of discourses suggesting Blake's own engagement with a number of different cultural components. From work by Barrell, Stephen C. Behrendt, Eaves, Seymour Howard and others on Blake's engagement of the mutually informing discourses of nationalism and art theory to Damrosch's deconstructive investigation of the incommensurabilities in Blake's theory of the imagination and myth, from Mee's investigation of Blake's literary appropriation of certain strains of political rhetoric to Steven Goldsmith's discussion of the politics of anti-apocalyptic representation in Blake's writings, from Ault's discussion of the relation between Blake's narratives and Newtonian physics to Jerome McGann's discussions of the editorial paradigms that Blake's work resists, and from Essick's and Angela Esterhammer's studies of Blake's use of language theory to critical works on Blake and psychology by Mark Bracher, Paul Youngquist, June Singer, and others, a wide range of cultural paradigms have been grafted onto literary discourse in order to examine Blake's works.[11]

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[11]I refer particularly to Barrell's essay, "Sir Joshua Reynolds and the Englishness of English Art," Behrendt's studies on history painting, "*Paradise Lost*, History Painting, and Eighteenth-Century English Nationalism" and *Reading William Blake* (123-124; 154-155),

Such criticism has not only elucidated aspects of particular writings, but implicitly supports Thompson's observation that Blake's corpus is incompatible with disciplinary codes. No work is purely literary, but Blake's work resists such a classification with particular energy and so invites multi-disciplinary criticism (given that we cannot now escape disciplinary formations to develop an extra-disciplinary approach).

Such graftings are made possible by poststructuralism's attention to the sign and the slipperiness of discourse, including the discursive construction of disciplinary scissions. They also mark the hybrid cultural space that Blake engaged and often fought. Hazard Adams states that "For Blake it is language or languages (since there is for Blake a language of design) that constitute culture" (198), but for poststructuralism there is nothing perceptible outside of language, or outside of culture--and this, arguably, is an iteration of the problem against which Blake struggled in his works. Blake's individual is inescapably entangled with a mundane culture that is fundamentally communal and therefore, given Blake's strong emphasis on differences between individuals and the errors of the culture in which they live, a vehicle by which innate identity is contaminated by that which is not proper to it. In the Introduction to *Witness Against the Beast*, Thompson laments the proliferation of "William Blakes" (xi) on the library shelves, expressing some nostalgia for the time, "Over a hundred years ago," when "there was some consensus as to what kind of man Blake was" (xii). On the one hand, critics identify Blake with particular traditions--Thompson's included--from neo-Platonism to Marxism (xii) and, on the other, "more cautious scholars avoid such

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Eaves' *Counter-Arts Conspiracy* and Seymour Howard's essay, "Blake: Classicism, Gothicism, and Nationalism"; Mee's *Dangerous Enthusiasm* and Steven Goldsmith's *Unbuilding Jerusalem*; Ault's *Visionary Physics: Blake's Response to Newton* and "Incommensurability and Interconnection in Blake's Anti-Newtonian Text" and McGann's chapter on *Jerusalem* in *The Textual Condition*; Essick's *William Blake and the Language of Adam* and Esterhammer's *Creating States*; Bracher's essay on *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Youngquist's diagnostic work on Blake in *Blake and Madness*, and Jung-influenced studies such as Singer's *Unholy Bible*.

direct identifications" and "offer us instead William Blake as syncretic polymath" (xii). But there is a third position missing from Thompson's cursory survey, namely one which depends on poststructuralist notions of a subject who is constituted in the social, public space of culture and fractally marked by all of its eddies and fluctuations, and it is that Blake who is assumed in the following pages. Blake's texts insistently map the incursions of this public space onto the private space of the individual--figures are tied down, shackled, imprisoned, exiled, and rendered just plain miserable by the tyranny of public discourses, from social norms to legislation to theories of art. The subjective interiority of these figures is never represented in Blake's texts: there are no soliloquies that are not marked as public addresses or addresses about the public, there are no references to the internal thoughts of his characters, and there are no lyrics in the conventional Romantic sense of private poetic expression. The character's private thoughts are always represented by publicly-perceived actions, such as speeches, laughter, rejoicing, howling, and the hurling of thunder-bolts, telegraphed as they would be on a stage and not omnisciently described as in written texts. How would readings of *Europe* change if a variant of plate 14 were found with lines that clearly stated, "Enitharmon loved nothing more than to see her children happy and feared that Orc would be drawn back to war and bloodshed"? Blake's texts--most explicitly, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*--are marked as public texts and his characters are constituted as public characters, caught in a maelstrom of cultural forces and currents.

In his useful analysis of Blake's myth and symbols, Damrosch writes,

> Both in linguistic and in structural form, Blake constantly points *beyond* his artifacts to a visionary realm that leaves them behind; to put it differently, he deconstructs symbols but continues to insist on their content. But he does this in a most peculiar way, since ordinarily we say that a symbol is a concrete or intelligible object that stands for, or participates in, something less clear than itself. . . . But in Blake's theory, owing to his suspicion of the fallen world, symbols are vitiated by their fallen

status. (362)

The paradox that Damrosch outlines so well, however, takes on a different cast if we consider Blake's reality, and symbols, as a hybrid of the visionary and the fallen. Blake's texts contain both myth and history, both the familiar and the unfamiliar, both error and truth. "[T]he tension between the self as subjective, alienated, even solipsistic, and the self as integrated into a universal Humanity" (3) is an internal tension: "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that calld Body is a portion of Soul discernd by the five Senses. the chief inlets of Soul in this age" (*MHH* 4). The distinction between the individual and the universal that circulates through Blake criticism and, as Damrosch notes, collapses in his definition of the "individuality of vision" as universal (31), moreover, is reflected on the mundane plane as a tension between the individual and the communal. The term "communal" suggests individuals who are grouped under shared terms (culture, ideology, region, gender, and so forth), but those competing forces are not readily disentangled. The individual is, in a sense, caught between the unity-as-divine-and-universal and the unity-as-fallen-and-political--and remains caught between those two controlling vehicles of individual identity. It is the culturally-entangled and politically-contested exteriority, of Blake, the model subject, and specific characters, that is at issue here. Culture is written upon the individuals within the community that it defines: "the sayings used in a nation, mark its character" (*MHH* 5). This exteriority is fundamentally hybridized, crossed by all of the discourses to which Blake had direct or indirect access, and all of the models in which those discourses are formulated, just as the public domain is traversed by those discourses and models. But if each individual is unique, as Blake often insists, then any sense of community must require the suppression or elision of some elements of that uniqueness, and therein lies the rub.

Nationalism in particular is susceptible to this criticism. While sexism and racism have generally been used *against* those that they attempt to define most thoroughly, so that sexists and racists generally do not obviously lose anything by their subscription to such a repressive -ism, nationalism is used to unite and flatter those that

it describes. This is, of course, greatly oversimplified. Such a construction fails to address, for instance, the constraints that gender codes place on men or the temptation to accept, at least in part, a disempowering ideology in order to share at least that agreement with those who do hold power. But it does draw out a nationalist quandary: nationalism seeks to establish an exterior, communal paradigm as interior and, by offering communal power, seeks to set aside the pre-existing interiority. Thus, an Englishman is not a Protestant because of acculturation and legislative pressure, or even personal faith, but because England is a Protestant nation. To offer another sense of national identity, or to claim individual identity against the collective, is to show the falseness of this communal interior: "The Hirelings of Kings & Courts . . . make themselves Every Body & Knowingly propagate Falshood" (Anno. Bacon 620).

In his valuable study, *The Political Theory of Painting*, Barrell makes a crucial remark that contests the identification of Blake with an essentially-defined political position. Barrell argues that in both American and British streams of Blake criticism, "Blake becomes a founding father of liberal individualism which has been the prevailing ideology of 'Blake Studies', and which can understand the public only as an invasion of private space--as 'standardization', as 'big government'" (225). Barrell goes on to suggest that Blake had the same agenda as Sir Joshua Reynolds, the constitution of a civic public, and disagreed only on some of the precise terms of its constitution (226), and that Blake's notion of an individual character was not absolutely unique but generically similar in the sense that it "constitutes the ground of his unity with eternity" (242)--that which evades the closure of the mundane world but occasionally erupts into it. As Damrosch writes,

> Imaginative experience is valid because it is guaranteed by the Divine Imagination, but its expressive symbols are contaminated by the fallen world from which they are drawn. The languages in which symbols are represented--visual as well as verbal--are "stubborn structures," barriers to vision as well as aids to it. (73)

And herein lies the problem of recuperating the individual character

described by Barrell: it can only be described generically in fallen language, and relative to the mundane world to which it is antagonistic. The absolute unity of the alternative community that Blake posits in his later works arguably reflects not its character but the limits of mundane access to it: "We live as One Man; for contracting our infinite senses / We behold multitude; or expanding: we behold as one, / As One Man all the Universal Family; and that One Man / We call Jesus the Christ" (*J* 34.17-20). We "call" it "Jesus the Christ" and so even the utopian community is grafted onto the world of linguistic production and contracted senses. In this sense I would depart from Steven Goldsmith's argument that "When Blake developed a practice that gave representation priority over apocalypse, he did so under the aegis of representative democracy, the political project which he believed capable of producing revolutionary social change" (163). While I completely agree with Steven Goldsmith's observation that Blake has a "stubborn commitment to making representational acts visible" (153) as a means of "revealing the play of power within language" (160), and that this "insistence on a wary vigilance, and the role that representation plays in that vigilance, characterizes both Blake's texts and the democratic discourse that appeared simultaneously" (160), the same sense of vigilance and the power of representation appeared in hegemonic discourse. At issue here is not the "liberating potential of discursive practices" (Steven Goldsmith 164), but the pan-ideological competition to control the representation of the individual and the community through which the individual is defined. The Romantic period is less revolutionary than politically contested. The era saw numberless skirmishes between different political groups--from religious sectarians to non-sectarian democrats, from Paine-inspired radicals to Burke-emboldened conservatives, and from feminists to proponents of feminine propriety--and those skirmishes were fought in the streets, the media, and the courts. But, because they were fighting together, they often used the same weapons. Thomas Paine offered one political vision, Edmund Burke offered another, and Blake offered a third, and the same culturally-constituted, rather than politically-specific, polemic strategies circulate through their representations of social errors and utopian

ideals. All three, for instance, use the family as the basis of their societies and implicitly share certain assumptions about what "family" means ontologically as well as ideologically. They just disagreed when it came to extending the familial model to the national stage.

Barrell's notion of "this/that/the other" is useful here. In *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey*, Barrell posits a dynamic in which the working classes operate as a medial figure between the hegemonic definition of Englishness and its Oriental Other. "That" is at once an ally of the former against the latter and the site of an internal orient that threatens "this" by its very proximity. I would extend the paradigm's application to argue that, during the Romantic period and beyond, political debate centres on siezing "this" for one's own party and relegating the others to "that," on defamiliarizing the opposition while allowing the possibility that it may yet be assimilated to "this," and instituting one's own familiarity as the communal one. "That" is the hybrid space that is at once strange but assimilable because its strangeness can be purged once it is identified. From Blake's "this," the prevailing cultural codes constitute "that": just as the subject is rendered hybrid by its engagement with a corrupting and false exteriority, the cultural space is itself rendered hybrid by its infection by false and alien paradigms as well as the productions of truths by visionaries such as Blake. As Eaves' recent study, *The Ccunter-Arts Conspiracy*, shows, art and nation were discursively entangled during Blake's lifetime and the compromise of one was marked as the compromise of the other. Eaves suggests that Blake's different inflection of "English-school art history" arises from his dependence on the Bible as the codicil of artistic value, a dependence for which every step away from the original is dogged by error--"where intellectual change is necessarily a scandal that can be accounted for only as theft and self-betrayal, significant historical difference is assigned entirely to the intellectual crime rate" (Eaves, *Counter-Arts Conspiracy* 146). Conspirators, strongly identified with foreign influences (Eaves, *Counter-Arts Conspiracy* 144), pervert the growth of English art--a misdirected development that appears in *Jerusalem* as cancer and disease, as a kind of cultural invasion. But Eaves' emphasis on conspiracy leaves open the other side of the question, the

terms on which Blake's work sought to circulate as a purgative medicine or as revitalizing nourishment. The world of "that" contains both "this" and "other," and it moves between those poles. Thus, Blake does not identify the Bible as a "foreign" influence but assimilates it into his definition of Englishness via Milton's nationalist identification of England with the new Jerusalem, while the Old Testament is rejected as a Urizenic text. The Bible enables Blake's critique of contemporary culture as alien but not irrecuperable by its very hybridity relative to that culture: it enacts, through the typological relations between the Old and New Testaments, the purgation of error that leaves valued elements of the culture intact. The defamiliarizing strategies of Jesus noted by Resseguie are appropriated by Blake, to similar ends, to purge the best culture that currently exists, the English-Hebraic, of that which prevents it from fulfilling its utopian potential, a Christian Albion. Blake's texts map the sites of hybridity in English culture, the mergings of alien and familiar in which the flawed familiar can be renovated through the alien and the flawed alien can be purged from the familiar. Defamiliarization is the tool of such mapping, marking those elements of communal culture which are alienating to the individual and to the proper collective.

Re-Coding the Nation

A concern with nationalism weaves in and out of the following chapters: by challenging forms that support genealogical justifications for the present, by subverting homogenizing discourses, and by representing certain constructions of the political body as diseased or uninspired, Blake critiques the tools, agenda, and ideology of the prevailing nationalist discourse. Nationalism, by generating a national character, a national history, and a national ideology, is the ultimate familiarizing vehicle. It produces a national community along familial lines, enforcing genetic, genealogical, and cultural ties, as well as requiring the loyalty that is the basis of familial relationships. It also establishes a national identity with which all who belong to that nation will be comfortably familiar. To defamiliarize its constituent constructs is to pry open its totalizing impetus, complicate its familial genealogy, and, finally, to create an

alternative community that establishes different terms of familiarity through what one revolutionary tract termed "the witchcraft of a proclamation" (qtd. *Full Report* 39).

Insofar as he had an ideology that he wished to dominate the national scene, held dogmatically to certain beliefs as right and good, used public forms of discourse to further that agenda, and verbally abused opponents of that political vision, Blake was not very different from those he opposed. As Barrell notes, Blake's theory of the social effects of art is much the same as that of Reynolds in its operation, if not in its content:

> For Blake, as for Reynolds, the point seems to be that by the exhibition of ideal forms, we will learn the grounds of social affiliation; . . . because the ideal forms are fitted, are designed for action, Blake believes that they will teach us (as the central forms of Reynolds do not) that the sense of community among the varieties of character is to be achieved by deeds which are of service to a Christian community. (*Political Theory of Painting* 237)

Similarly, to take another Blakean nemesis, Burke, William Richey argues that Blake used the same paradigms as Burke but inverted their associations. Thus, for example, "Since Burke has consistently presented the revolutionaries in the worst possible light--comparing them to madmen, savages, and, at times, even devils--Blake simply treats the *ancien regime* in a similarly derogatory manner" (824). At issue here is not Blake's ideology, but the strategies with which he sought to propagate that ideology--hence my decision to limit this discussion, almost exclusively, to Blake's printed works. By defamiliarizing the dominant cultural codes in the public domain, on however limited a scale, Blake disturbs the existing "grounds of social affiliation" to inaugurate his own. To counter the hegemony, Blake disrupts the linearity that informed their totalizing myths of progress, represents characters casting off the shackles of gender and other social codes, and turns the tables, so to speak, on its nationalist discourse by identifying such nationalism with the very figures that it used to mark the alien that it wished to exclude. Each

of these approaches requires the representation of the existing structure as an alien constraint, and therefore posits a proper national collectivity beneath that structure that can be released. As Barrell notes, for example, "for Blake the English audience is only a public when it exhibits (as it rarely does) the qualities necessary to appreciate his work" (*Political Theory of Painting* 254). It is this conflict between proper and alien within the identity of Blake's English public that is traced in the following pages.

Vital to this conflict is Blake's rejection of telic linearity with instantaneous transformations and of communal ideologies with personal vision, his replacement of evolution with epiphany. In "Introduction: Narrating the Nation," Bhabha describes "the traditional authority of those national objects of knowledge--Tradition, People, the Reason of State, High Culture, for instance--whose pedagogical value often relies on their representation as holistic concepts located within an evolutionary narrative of historical continuity" (3). Bhabha opposes this kind of authority to the ambivalence of "modern society" in which "textual strategies, metaphoric displacements, sub-texts and figurative strategems" write the nation (2), where "the problematic 'closure' of textuality questions the 'totalization' of national culture" (3). From validating genealogies to the march of history and the myth of progress, English, and British, nationalism was predicated upon the authority not of the "bounding line" but of the directed line, with its beginning, middle, and end, as many recent studies of nationalism, including Eaves' analysis of nationalist theories of art in *The Counter-Arts Conspiracy,* have noted. That directed line is, however, also an infinitesimally thin bounding line, marking the inside of "Englishness" or "Britishness," "art," and "civilization." Breaking up the directed line disrupts the limiting line that it implicitly validates: a discontinuous national history threatens to produce a hybrid national identity, just as a continuous history supports a safely homogeneous definition. While Charles Bernstein's volume, *The Politics of Poetic Form,* is concerned with "how radically innovative poetic styles can have political meanings" (vii), the argument here is that all discursive styles have political significations:

> When this Verse was first dictated to me I consider'd a Monotonous Cadence like that used by Milton & Shakspeare & all writers of *English* Blank Verse, derived from the modern bondage of rhyming, to be a necessary and indispensible part of Verse. But I soon found that in the mouth of a true Orator such monotony was not only awkward, but as much a bondage as rhyme itself. . . . Poetry Fetter'd, Fetters the Human Race! Nations are Destroy'd, or Flourish, in proportion as Their Poetry Painting and Music, are Destroy'd or Flourish! (*J* 3)

As Eaves puts it, "Time corrupts: history brings temporizing, error, and illusion" (*Counter-Arts Conspiracy* 146). The formal components of political discourses--from the ballad appropriated by those of Blake's contemporaries who wished to align themselves with the lower classes, to the epics selected to promote particular views of the nations they depicted, the epistolary satires that Thomas Moore used to critique the private face of the aristocracy, and the pseudo-folkish verse forms that Wordsworth associated with Englishness--insert those arguments into a domain of assumptions and conventions with which those forms are associated.

In Eliza Fenwick's novel, *Secresy; or, The Ruin on the Rock*, for instance, the epistolary novel's letters are not only used to mark and evade the heroine's intellectual and physical incarceration by her uncle,[12] but disrupt the univocal, linear novelistic plot that had been mapped out for her by that uncle formally as well as ideologically. Through a collection of letters by a variety of authors, from a misogynist patriarch to a libertine and from a rationalist anti-imperialist to a Romantic innocent, the novel maps the gothic fragmentation of English cultural codes, and dissolves aristocratic, patriarchal, imperial, and nationalist lines of authority. The hero of

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[12]As Elizabeth C. Goldsmith notes, in her introduction to a volume on the epistolary genre that covers three centuries and as many continents, the "collection [of essays] may seem to suggest that female epistolary voices tend to describe confinement more than liberation, isolation more than interaction" (xii).

Jane Austen's novel, *Northanger Abbey*, tries to seal this breach by separating the gothic from the English:

> Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. *What have you been judging from*? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you--Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this . . . where roads and newspapers lay everything open? (159; my emphasis)

Catherine's error lies in her application of paradigms produced to describe tyrannical, non-English, non-Christian nations to honest, liberal England--it does not conform to a common "sense of the probable," just as a woman surgeon did not conform the "sense of the probable" that my peers and I shared in high school. While *Secresy* estranges the reader from English cultural codes through a fragmented, multi-vocal narrative form, *Northanger Abbey* re-defamiliarizes the gothic against which Englishness was defined through the causal authority of precedent, of education, legislation, and prior experience as well as the conclusive polemic of a male aristocrat. Catherine can respond only with silence and "tears of shame" (159).

In "Dangerous Blake," W. J. T. Mitchell proposes the "defamiliarization and the rediscovery of Blake's exotic, archaic, alien, and eccentric character" (415), suggesting that Blake's "madness, obscenity, and incoherence" (411) are incompatible with the parameters of critical discourse and are therefore unseen by it and characterizing those features as "dangerous." The imperfect Blake slides into a "dangerous Blake," as "the tyrannical husband" and "the second-rate draughtsman" are placed on a par with each other. Mitchell argues that "The greatest challenge and the most threatening scandal for the formalist appropriation of Blake is the threat of incoherence, nonsense, failure to communicate; the presence of accident, random sloppiness, lack of technical facility" ("Dangerous Blake" 414),

marking as threatening the gulf between practice and theory, between the actuality of Blake's art and the imagined essence of art--a rift that resonates with that which I earlier termed as the "gap between the familiar world and the politically-imagined one." Quietly at work in Mitchell's representation of formalism, and of what is acceptably visible to critical discourse, are a series of academic hierarchies that we rarely examine and are anything but "disinterested," hierarchies that exoticize, alienate, or otherwise dismiss that which does not fit into a complex of paradigms in which a state of mind that impedes an individual's productivity is "madness," earthiness is "obscenity," and an untotalized text is "incoherent." These paradigms--roughly capitalist, puritan, and rationalist--are fundamentally aligned with the English hegemony of Blake's time, a period in which England developed an identity that was fundamentally commercial, as well as intrinsically "civilized" and Protestant, and everything, from the raced, classed and gendered political subject to the work of art to a sub-species in a botanical taxonomy, had to be "in its fit place," a phrase that Mitchell repeats as the hallmark of a formalist aesthetic ("Dangerous Blake" 410, 414). But for Blake, as for many of his contemporaries, the division between the aesthetic and the substantial, form and content, and the ideology of genre and the genre of ideology, was effectively a fuzzy one. Late eighteenth-century England cried out for a contemporary school of art that would adequately reflect its national, and imperial, importance, propagandist engravings and tracts were circulated to sway public opinion, and treason was redefined to reflect the power of the word to effect political change. As Nicholas Roe notes, "The Treasonable Practices Bill extended the definition of treason beyond overt action to include a treasonable intention expressed in speech or in writing; only two witnesses were required for a conviction" (142). This not only "extended" the provenance of the term "treason," but marks the recognition, or at least the fear, that the publication of words, vocally or textually, constitutes an "overt action," and, moreover, an action that can alter the political order as surely as the sword. The network of spies that criss-crossed the British Isles and Ireland during the period, as well as legislation which prohibited meetings beyond a particular size and required that

texts be "stamped" by an official institution before publication, testify to the government's intense, and wide-ranging, concern with what people were saying to each other. The period saw a stunning transformation of the configuration of the political domain and the way in which it was policed to secure the continuation of the *status quo* by securing the circulation of discourse, as the sphere of political activity was extended from the body to the book. Blake's contention that art is a reflection of the national condition, his figuring of national bards, his many statements on the power of art to alter perception, his nationalist defense of the English language and his libertarian condemnation of rhyme in the proclamation, "Poetry Fetter'd, Fetters the Human Race!" (*J* 3)--all of these assertions are implicated in the extension of textual political power from Parliamentary and coffee-house debate to the fundamentally transformed and extended domain of popular allegiances and opinions in which the range of genres and media increased exponentially with the segments of society included in the debate. Blake does not endanger a formalist aesthetic, but reminds us of its ncealed investments.

This dissertation falls into two parts, and three. The first three chapters address Blake's disruption of linearity and closure as a defamiliarizing strategy, while the latter three discuss his representations of the effects of such strategies. The first third of the dissertation examines Blake's contravention of artistic conventions, particularly of linearity, of media and genre in a range of works; the second third focuses on his representations of alienation and heterogeneity in *Europe* and *America*; and the final third narrows that focus to the (re)construction of the infected political body, primarily in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. Chapter One examines the form of *The Laocoön* in terms of the debate about *ut pictura poesis* and the privileging of linearity, particularly as chronology, which informs opponents of that equivalence; that linearity not only lies behind form, but the formation of genealogies that Blake identifies with a

progressive, often nationalist, theory of the development of art.[13] The next chapter continues to discuss the ties of form and ideologically-implicated history, addressing Blake's manipulation of antiquarian discourse and forms to construct a different defining origin for the world as he held it to be constructed in *Poetical Sketches*, the prophecies, and *Milton* as well as a different, non-linear model for establishing national renovation. Cnapter Three addresses destabilizations of the ideological closure of the communal space in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *Europe*, and *America*, arguing that Blake defamiliarizes conventional social codes to subvert the ease with which they are accepted as well as to demonstrate their failure to totalize a social space that is finally more heterogeneous than such codes can allow. Chapter Four is concerned with Blake's use of heterogeneity to subvert enforced uniformity in *America* and *Europe*. It addresses in particular the ways in which hybridity can be used to demonize the replicated text and offer instead a radically-fragmented one that evades the totalization and closure that he associates with the replication of uniform perspectives while describing two females' resistance to the interpellative effects associated with the book. The fifth chapter focuses on Blake's critique in *Milton* of another homogenizing and prescriptive communal rubric, the prevailing brand of English nationalism. Blake decries the contemporary hegemony's exploitation of the classical valorization of duty and self-sacrifice, condemning the classics as corruptions of a native English culture as well as of personal imaginative vision. Restriction is revealed not as a damning constraint, but as a culturally-disseminated structure that is incompatible with Blake's idea of a renovated England. The final chapter describes what I term the vital/viral model of textual propagation and examines its deployment in Blake's prophecies, particularly in Blake's more nationalist works, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*.

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[13]The investment of this period's art theory in national narrative is well-established. For a range of discussions on this topic see, for instance, Barrell (esp. "Sir Joshua Reynolds and the Englishness of English Art"), Eaves (*Counter-Arts Conspiracy*), Seymour Howard, and Colley.

In *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, Blake extends the implications of the preludiums to *America* and *Europe* in order to hybridize the body politic, fragmenting the national population according to its inspiration or infection by textually-embodied ideology. Disease and cancerous growths, in this context, figure the transformation of individual identity in ways that can be limiting or liberating, depending upon the transformative textual agent and the ideological perspective of the pseudo-medical authority. With *Jerusalem*, Blake attempts to vaccinate the body politic against the diseases of "error." But, through the formulation of this vaccine, his own discourse, by the very logic of vaccination, is brought uncomfortably close to that which it is supposed to eradicate.

Chapter One

The Medium, the Message and the Line in Blake's *Laocoön*

> Under the rumps of lettering
> they herded myopic angers.
> Resentment seeded in the uncurling
> fernheads of their capitals.
>
> Seamus Heaney, "The Scribes"

In his essay, "Blake: Social Relations of Poetic Form," David Punter argues that the "mixed structure" of Blake's verse "represents a significant defiance of the regularity and standardization which classicism entailed" (183). Blake's resistance to classicism is a well-established tenet of his aesthetics but, as Punter notes, it is also implicated in Blake's politics: the "classical regulation of form is seen as one among many manifestations of that fear-induced alienation by which humanity constrains and binds itself" (185). Classicism imposes formal standards that, in effect, standardize the artistic structures in which human experience is represented and codified. More generally, the problem here is the standardization of form and the impact of that homogeneity on the social sphere. Through such works as *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Marshall McLuhan has provoked an interest in precisely this problem--the ways in which form, or medium, configure the mass-reception of cultural artifacts. One concern of McLuhan's, and of Blake's, is the impact of the mass-produced book:

> Printing changed learning and marketing process alike. The book was the first teaching machine and also the first mass-produced commodity. . . . The psychic and social consequences of print included an extension of its fissile and uniform character to the gradual homogenization of diverse regions. (McLuhan 174, 175)

I shall discuss Blake's critique of the homogenizing power of the mass-produced book in Chapter Four, which deals with the circulation of identical dictates throughout the social domain, but I want to

The Laocoön (from Bindman's *Complete Graphic Works of William Blake*)

emphasize here the standardization of form implicit in such productions. In the Western tradition, books have a well-established conventional form: regular type, lines that read from left to right and from the top of the page to the bottom, pages that are read from the front of the book to the back, partitioned illustrations (if any), page numbers along an upper or lower edge, and, in Blake's time, catchwords along the lower edge. This format produces page after page that is formally identical to every other page in the book, and formally iterative of every other page in every other book. While the mass-production of texts homogenizes society by widely distributing identical messages, the standardization of bibliographical format homogenizes it by enforcing identical reading patterns and strategies. Every feature of the standard book format is, in one way or another, designed to support linearity: the arrangement of words and pages, as well as catchwords and pagination, provides clear and unimpeachable emplotments of the line of the text, while the separation of word and illustration, and the effacement of typographical difference through normalized typeface, enforce the perception of writing as a transcription of speech rather than as a graphological signifier that operates independently of its transcription. Derrida has drawn attention to the latter in *Of Grammatology*, noting that "literature passes through an irreducibly graphic text, tying the *play of form* to a determined substance of expression" (59). While McLuhan quips, "The medium is the message," Derrida posits a dynamic interplay between form and content of a kind that has often engaged Blake scholars in readings that go beyond the text to the illustrations, erasures, and pagination of Blake's work. At issue is not just the expanded framework of reading Blake's works, but the contravention of norms that they present and the implications of such contraventions for reading as a verb rather than a noun. It is the standardization of form that submerges the "play of form," as the corollary to Shklovsky's observation that the unfamiliar holds our attention is that the familiar does not. By contesting the familiar, formal imperatives of mass-produced texts, Blake defamiliarizes both bibliographical conventions and the strategies by which theories of media and genre program our perception of words and pictures. He thereby generates a space for reading in

which alternative strategies can be produced, rendering the modes of reading heterogeneous rather than uniform.

Some of Blake's more extreme contraventions of traditional bibliographical form can be found in an untitled design known as *The Laocoön*.[1] The engraving, a single plate, consists of a drawing of the classical statue of Laocoön and his sons battling the snakes around which are pieced a considerable number of short texts in English, Greek and Hebrew: these texts are often cited in support of various assertions about Blake's thought, but are removed from this multi-media context. The work is of uncertain date but is usually placed around 1820 and is believed to be roughly contemporaneous with the design, "On Homers Poetry"/"On Virgil."[2] It is certainly derived from the drawing he produced for Abraham Rees' *Cyclopaedia* (1819) in which a variety of subjects are covered pictorially through technical drawings and, in the case of sculpture, with sketches of famous works.[3] The engraving defies generic classification. It at once suggests an illustrated

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[1]In much of the secondary literature and criticism, the name of the statue and the Homeric character is variously spelled "Laocoön" or "Laocoon," while references to Lessing's text often use the German form, *Laokoon*. When quoting, I have retained the author's spelling but I consistently use "Laocoön" otherwise since that is the spelling which appears in the editions of Blake that I consulted. To add to the confusion, there are four Laocoöns circulating in this text: Lessing's text, Blake's work, the Rhodians' statue, and the priest in Homer's *Iliad*. I have tried to make the distinctions clear.

[2]Erdman, for example, does not give a date for the work, Bindman suggests 1822 (486*n*), Geoffrey Keynes writes that the "engraving may . . . be assigned to the period 1818 to 1820" (923*n*), David E. James places the writings "around 1820" ("Blake's *Laocoön*" 226), and Joseph Viscomi and Robert Essick have recently dated it to 1825 or later. The drawing, it is clear, was first made in 1815 during a visit to the Royal Academy (Gilchrist). Bindman suggests that *Laocoön* and "On Homers Poetry"/"On Virgil" are contemporaneous (486*n*).

[3]An 1820 edition of the *Cyclopaedia* deleted the essays and produced the drawings with just brief captions, even though many of the illustrations are decidedly technical, from surgical implements to feats of engineering.

essay, by surrounding the drawing of the sculpture with various assertions about art, and recalls a Renaissance emblem book, by placing the pictorial component in the foreground and piecing the verbal portion around it as an implicit gloss on the illustration.[4] Blake also follows this format in his *Illustrations of The Book of Job* (1825), commissioned in 1823 (Bindman 487*n*), but while *Illustrations* limits the amount of text on each design and usually organizes the lines of text along architectural frames or within drawings of scrolls and books, the sheer textual plenitude of *Laocoön* forbids even such limited gestures towards generic recognizability. The design recalls a jigsaw puzzle more than a page from an emblem book, graffiti more than an engraving, and marginal annotations more than aphorisms on art. *Laocoön's* unrecognizability reflects its resistance to the conventions of the book and therefore to the models of reading that they presuppose. The multi-media performance of *The Laocoön*, combining sculpture, engraving, writing, and drawing, reminds us that the signifying process, for Blake, was technological, visual, aural, and verbal as well as bibliographical. At issue here is not Blake's message but Blake's media. As Mark Poster has recently argued, "Changes in the configuration or wrapping of language alters [*sic*] the way the subject processes signs into meanings, that sensitive point of cultural production" (11). Like an opaque and textured piece of glass, the medium of a work determines the perception of its content, or "message." Transcriptions of the design included in editions of Blake's writings elide the work's "configuration" by erasing its contestation of "bibliographical codes" and so eliding the ways in which Blake inserts this work into a specific debate about the nature of art and, to bring us back to Punter's useful remarks, the classicist valorization of linearity and causality in particular.

Lessing, Fuseli, and Blake: *Laocoön* and Late-Eighteenth-Century Art Theory

In *William Blake's Theory of Art* and, more recently, in *The*

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[4]For a discussion of the influence of emblem books on Blake, see Hagstrum (esp. 48-57).

Counter-Arts Conspiracy, Eaves has shown that Blake was deeply involved in the controversies and the concerns of the visual arts. One controversy which has not yet garnered any attention from Blake critics, however, is Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's critique of the doctrine, *ut pictura poesis*. In *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766), Lessing argues that the content of a work is determined by its medium: painting could deal only with a single moment, but could present various objects simultaneously; poetry could narrate a sequence of events, but could not escape its linearity to present two objects at once. Lessing did not choose his central example at random. During the eighteenth century, especially among German critics, the Laocoön was a recurring example in discussions about classicism, art theory, the relationship between the arts, and art history. Lessing's nemesis, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, used it extensively in *Reflections on the Imitations of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755) as well as in the copious *History of Ancient Art* (1764). While it is generally accepted that "Winckelmann and Lessing rather decisively set the German debate about the Laocoon in terms of both the *querelle des anciens et des modernes* and *ut pictura poesis*" (Richter 19), a host of other critics contributed to the debate, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Johann Gottfried Herder and Friedrich Schiller, as well as Johann Heinrich Füssli, or Henry Fuseli as he became known after moving to England.[5] In Blake criticism, Lessing is cited rarely and in passing, and usually not with reference to Blake's *Laocoön*.[6] Yvonne M. Carothers' essay, "Space and Time in *Milton*: The 'Bard's Song,'" is a rare exception, but she still

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[5]Regarding the pervasiveness of the Laocoön in eighteenth-century German art criticism, see Richter (esp. 16-23).

[6]Lessing is cited in passing with reference to *ut pictura poesis* by Hagstrum (8) and David Wagenknecht (Afterword 316). In *William Blake and the Language of Adam*, Essick mentions Lessing twice on the subject of natural signs (71-72, 77), citing Lessing's *Laocoön* once but not with reference to Blake's engraving of that name (77). Winckelmann is much better represented in Blake criticism, particularly in Eaves' work.

compares Lessing's *Laocoön* to Blake's in non-genetic terms.[7] She identifies Lessing's essay as "exemplary of the aesthetic principles operative in the arts of the latter eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (120) and moves from a summary of Lessing's thesis to the assertion, "Of course, Blake would object to Lessing's theory of the imagination" (121), but she avoids the question of how closely the two *Laocoöns* are linked. While Morton D. Paley maintains that "Lessing's *Laocoön* . . . does not seem to have been known by Blake at all, though it could have been through reports and fragmentary translations" ("Wonderful" 196*n*), there is significant evidence which suggests that Blake did know of Lessing's *Laocoön* as well as textual evidence in Blake's *Laocoön* which strongly suggests that Blake actively engages the Lessing-Winckelmann debate in that engraving.

Although it is generally assumed that Blake knew virtually nothing of his German contemporaries,[8] Blake's friend Fuseli was clearly familiar with Winckelmann's and Lessing's writings. Fuseli, to whom Blake was particularly close during the 1790's, figures prominently when the German debate surfaces in English: in 1765, he translated Winckelmann's *Reflections* into English (Blake possessed a copy of the translation and, according to Paley, it "was obviously of considerable importance to him" ["Wonderful" 196*n*]); in 1766, Lavater asked Fuseli to review Lessing's *Laocoön*; in 1789, he ranked the Laocoön among the best three classical statues as he discussed his own aesthetic theory with a correspondent of Fanny Burney's;[9] in 1801, he

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[7]Carothers is concerned with Blake's opposition to the prevailing theory of the imagination that Lessing articulated with regard to the empirical definitions of space and time upon which it depends. In other words, Lessing is selected for providing useful and exemplary articulations of a particular position rather than for producing particular texts that are specifically relevant to Blake studies.

[8]Martin Bidney makes this point in his introductory remarks (xi-xii).

[9]Describing a conversation with Fuseli about his aphorisms on painting, Mrs. Federica Lock wrote to Fanny Burney that "These were the subjects of his discussion--he considers the finest antique Statues--the Apollo, Laocoon, and Hercules and then describes what produces

cited Lessing's *Laocoön* and succinctly summarized its central thesis on the relationship between verbal and visual media (*Lectures* 2: 133-134). Furthermore, Lessing's text is mentioned in the *Analytical Review*, an interdisciplinary periodical published by Joseph Johnson and Thomas Christie that frequently printed contributions from the Johnson circle, including Mary Hays, Mary Wollstonecraft and Fuseli, and reviewed some of Blake's work.[10] While *Laocoön* was not itself reviewed, the journal did print, in November 1794, a review of a book on the sublime that cites Lessing's essay; and the review's author, "R. R.," has been identified as Fuseli by Eudo C. Mason (207). In the *Review*, R. R. accepts the basic premise of Lessing's argument, as does Fuseli in another text: as Mason notes, "The opening sentences of Fuseli's third Lecture are an almost literal translation of [an early] passage in Lessing" (206).[11] R. R. goes further, and suggests that Lessing did not go far enough: "The futility of such mutual inroads of poetry and painting on each other has been shown by a late German writer of great acuteness and some taste, though on a tame principle, and without drawing the inferences that obviously derive from his rules" (R. R. 259). He footnotes his reference to a "writer of great acuteness" with the remark, "G. E. Lessing, in a treatise entitled Laocoon; or on the limits of poetry and painting" (R. R. 259*n*). Moreover, Fuseli's third lecture, which summarizes, if not plagiarizes, Lessing's text was written during the 1790's, at the height of Fuseli's and Blake's friendship. It was published in 1801, and was reprinted in 1820, the

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their particular beauty" (20 June 1789; *Collected Letters* 44). Fuseli referred to the statue often in his *Lectures*.

[10]Some of the works that included engravings by Blake were reviewed in the *Analytical Review*, including G. A. Burger's *Leonora*, J. G. Stedman's *Narrative to Surinam*, and C. G. Salzmann's *Elements of Morality* (Bentley, *Blake Records* 55, 613*n*, 38-39) (Blake's contribution to the latter is not definitively established [see Bentley, *Blake Records* 39*n*]).

[11]The passages in question are the eighth and following paragraphs of Lessing's Preface (4) and the first paragraph of Part I of Lessing's Third Lecture, "Invention" (133).

year often cited in estimations of the date of Blake's engraving of *Laocoön*. Lessing's text would also have been of particular interest to the two colleagues because it deals at length with an issue important to both Fuseli and Blake, the transformation of verbal material into a visual medium: Fuseli often based his paintings on passages from texts, illustrating the works of Aeschylus, Plutarch, Dante, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton and Gray, to name a few, while much of Blake's visual art consists of illustrations to his texts and others' writings.[12]

There is also internal evidence to suggest that Blake at least knew something of the text's content. Blake, for instance, refers to a passage in Pliny that was discussed at length by both Lessing and Winckelmann, and which identifies the sculptors of the Laocoön as "three Rhodians" (*L* C) while also providing an answer to the question which so concerns Lessing--the textual source of the sculpture, should one exist. Also, in the engraving's texts, Blake ascribes the Laocoön and "Antique Gems" (*L* C-D; D), both classical artifacts, to Hebraic sources and Winckelmann discusses antique gems immediately after his analysis of the Laocoön (*History of Art* 3-4: 232-234). Moreover, Lessing is concerned throughout his work with the question of unity, particularly in Homer, and Blake addresses the same issue briefly in *Laocoön* and more extensively in "On Homers Poetry," part of an engraving generally taken to be contemporary with *Laocoön* which also mentions the sculpture.[13] More interestingly, contesting some of

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[12]See, for example, the Catalogue of Paintings in Weinglass's edition of Fuseli's *Collected Letters* (595-599) and Nancy L. Pressly's selection from Fuseli (28-47).

[13]There are also a number of correspondences which are too pervasive in aesthetic theory to suggest a clear connection. For instance, Lessing writes, "I grant that there is also such a thing as beauty in clothing, but what is that when compared to the beauty of the human form? And will he who can attain the greater be content with the lesser?" (39), while Blake asserts, "Art can never exist without Naked Beauty displayed" (*L* B). The "Antique Gems" to which Blake refers, moreover, are the subject of the pages which follow Winckelmann's discussion of sculptors' signatures on the socle of statues.

Winckelmann's conclusions about the identity of the Laocoön's sculptors, Lessing begins with a piece of information which he acknowledges that Winckelmann was "the first to publish" (Lessing 146), namely that the signature of the sculptors had been found inscribed on the recently discovered base of the Laocoön statue (qtd. Lessing 146; Winckelmann, *History of Art* 3-4: 228, 453*n*). Blake usually signed his works along the bottom edge of either the plate or, in the case of some of the work that he did professionally, along the outer circumference of a design. But he signed the *Laocoön* engraving across the top of the statue's base (*L* C-D), in a clear reference to Winckelmann's discovery, if not Lessing's challenge to Winckelmann's identification of the sculptors.[14]

Given this context, it is important to examine Mason's suggestion that "Blake's own *Laocoon* sheet of aphorisms on art [is] a body of art doctrine utterly opposed to everything Fuseli stood for" (48). The case is overstated, not least because many of the so-called aphorisms are not directly relevant to art, but it is nevertheless a useful observation. Not only do many of the aphorisms contradict the classicist position which Fuseli advocated, but the form of the work itself, by emphasizing the spatial component of writing and using a non-linear arrangement, refutes the thesis of Lessing's which Fuseli took to heart. Lessing's premises are founded upon the priority of chronology: the chronology of the various artistic representations of Laocoön's death is the object of much of his research as he seeks to

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[14]The signature reads, "Athanodorus, son of Agesander, of Rhodes, made it." Lessing is concerned, perhaps not surprisingly, with the tense of the verb and the chronological development of certain attitudes towards creation. Lessing, basing his argument on a reading of Pliny at variance with Winckelmann's, argues that "the first of the old masters" used the "imperfect tense" (148), "was making" (146*n*), while later sculptors, "long after the time of Alexander the Great" (149), used the more audacious "perfect tense" or "aorist" (149). Thus, the tense of the verb, and the chronology of the tense's use, allow Lessing to date the statue. (McCormick notes that Lessing's theory "is no longer accepted. One of the principal reasons for this is the simple fact that the aorist is found on statues of every possible date" [149*n*].)

address the question of whether the statue is derived from a literary version or the converse, while chronology determines the order of his argument and, he maintains, all writing. In his third lecture, Fuseli took up this priority in his own way. After praising the visual arts on the grounds that "In forms alone the idea of existence can be rendered permanent" (*Lectures* 2: 134), he argues that, "as bodies exist in time as well as space," it is necessary to put forms into motion and that "this is the *moral* element of the art" (*Lectures* 2: 135). "Invention," the title of the third lecture, is itself fundamentally chronological: "to *invent* is to find: to find something, presupposes its existence somewhere" (*Lectures* 2: 137). Through invention, form "discovers, selects, combines the *possible*" and "Possible *strictly* means an effect derived from a cause . . . means the representation of effects derived from causes, or forms compounded from materials" (*Lectures* 2: 137; my emphasis). Chronology is thus not only necessary to artistic ethics, but determines each step in the chronology of artistic production: invention is a derivative of the possible and the possible is defined as fundamentally derivative, as a derivative of other derivatives through the representation of causal relationships or static forms derived from prior materials. In this complex genealogy, the only non-derivative product is God's creation (*Lectures* 2: 136-137)--hence Fuseli's devout insistence on using the term "invention" rather than "creation" (*Lectures* 2: 137) when referring to human productions. Chronology is not just a founding concept in Lessing's and Fuseli's theory of art, but a privileged one that generates value.

Evading Genealogy and Chronology: Constructing a Non-Linear History

Genealogy is an important type of sequence in the context of these artistic debates because it carries with it the promise of transferrable value. Classicists posited a history of art that was much like Hegel's history of empires: individual nations rise and fall, and then pass the baton of supremacy to the next rising nation. First Greece, then Rome, and then Renaissance Italy rose to artistic perfection and, it was contended, Britain would be next:

> As X, so England, with X usually being ancient Greece, whose grace often extended sequentially to ancient Rome and

Renaissance Italy. That historical sequence is the product rather than the origin of a more profound idea, that all past artistic success manifested a fundamental evolutionary pattern. The pattern, a gradual development based on the cumulative acquisition of concepts and skills, arrives in many alternative and overlapping forms. (Eaves, *Counter-Arts Conspiracy* 23)

This view of the history of art is, like Eaves' description of it, heavily implicated in the motif of progress, in the assumption that success is constituted within a history of positive evolution. This is the assumption which governed pedagogical practice at the Royal Academy, where students were first fully trained in classical art, enacting on an individual level the historical progression that would authorize British art as descended from and superior to the classics. Blake explicitly refuted the position that success depends upon building on past successes with which one must be fully conversant: "If Art was Progressive We should have had Mich Angelo's & Rafaels to Succeed and to Improve upon each other But it is not so. Genius dies with its Possessor & comes not again till Another is Born with It" (Anno. Reynolds 656).[15] Blake's resistance to linearity thus extends to the history of art and the pedagogical practice--learning the classics and the Masters before developing one's own art--which it

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[15]Many of Blake's differences with Reynolds are derived from Reynolds' advocacy of the sequential view of art history: "*It is not in Terms that Reynolds & I disagree* Two Contrary Opinions can never by any Language be made alike. I say Taste & Genius are Not Teachable or Acquirable but are born with us Reynolds says that Contrary" (Anno. Reynolds 659; my emphasis). This position is reiterated throughout the annotations: "The Man Either Painter or Philosopher who Learns or Acquires all he Knows from Others. Must be full of Contradictions" (Anno. Reynolds 639); "The following [*Lecture*] <Discourse> is particularly Interesting to Blockheads. as it Endeavours to prove That there is No such thing as Inspiration & that any Man of plain Understanding may by Thieving from Others become a Mich Angelo" (Anno. Reynolds 646); "How ridiculous it would be to see the Sheep Endeavouring to walk like the Dog . . . just as Ridiculous it is to see One Man Striving to Imitate Another" (Anno. Reynolds 656).

informed. In *Laocoön*, Blake not only takes the central icon of the classicists, transforms it, and answers the controversy about its origins by declaring that it was, like other artifacts valued by the classicists, appropriated from Hebraic art, but also refutes the history in which the statue is at once the pinnacle of a national art and the model from which English art must progress:

> Englishmen rouze yourselves from the fatal Slumber into which Booksellers & Trading Dealers have thrown you Under the artfully propagated pretence that a Translation or a Copy of any kind can be as honourable to a Nation as An Original [*Belying*] Be-lying the English Character in that well known Saying Englishmen Improve what others Invent. (*PA* 576)

Lessing's main concern regarding the statue is its status as copy or original. Lessing begins by seeking to establish that Virgil's *Aeneid* could not be based on the sculpture and closes by contradicting Winckelmann's dating of the work to lend historical support to his earlier argument:

> I must confess that the idea of Virgil's having imitated the artists is, to me, far more incomprehensible than the contrary assumption. If the artists followed the poet, I can account for all their deviations. They had to deviate because those very features found in harmonious relationship in the poet's work would have revealed some infelicities in their own. But why did the poet have to deviate? If he had faithfully followed the group in each and every detail, would he not still have given us an excellent picture? (41)

Lessing's analysis of the reasons in favour of the text being the "original" or "a copy" (45) is unusual because of the history of the statue which he elides. The Laocoön statue was found in a damaged state during the Renaissance and restored in a way that modified it: the original statue had Laocoön's arm bent behind his head but the

statue's restorers and copiers rendered it outstretched.[16] Blake continues the tradition by altering the version of the sculpture that he would have seen in a number of details. In the restored sculpture, the child on the left extends his arm straight up, but Blake bends it at a right angle, reversing the modification of Laocoön's arm and oddly recalling the posture which Janet A. Warner has argued "connotes sleep or . . . an abandonment to sexual pleasure" (20) but which Winckelmann identifies with suffering in his discussion of Laocoön's attitude in

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[16]For a useful narrative of the Laocoön's alterations and duplications, see Richter, esp. 23-24. The statue was uncovered in 1506 but each of the three figures was missing an upraised arm. Baccio Bandinelli, commissioned by Pope Julius II, made a bronze copy of the statue but replaced the arms, changing the orientation of Laocoön's arm: in the original statue, the father's arm is bent at right angles above his head, but Bandinelli straightened it out and so became known as "the inventor of the outstretched arm" (qtd. Richter 23). Giovanni Montorsoli, on Michelangelo's recommendation, was then commissioned by Pope Clement VII to restore the original statue, and did so "essentially along the lines of Bandinelli's model. It was this Laocoon with the radically outthrust arm that was seen either in the original or in plaster casts by all the Germans of the eighteenth century" (Richter 23). Winckelmann not only addresses questions about the statue's authenticity, noting that the statue "is composed of two pieces, and not formed of a single block, which Pliny asserts of the group in the Baths of Titus" (*History of Art* 3-4: 231), but was also clearly aware of the modifications to the recovered statue:

> Michael Angelo thought of restoring the right arm of Laocoön, which is wanting, and has been replaced by one in terra cotta. . . . This arm, around which the serpents are twined, was to have been held in a bent position across the head of the statue. It may have been the intention of Michael Angelo, in this approximation of the arm to the head, to render the idea of suffering in Laocoön. . . . But it seems as if the arm, bent over and across the head, would divide the principal attention. . . . For this reason Bernini [sic] extended the arm when he restored it in terra cotta. (*History of Art* 3-4: 229-230)

In other words, the Laocoön was reinterpreted and modified according to different aesthetic criteria as it was reproduced under the guise of restoration.

the original sculpture (*History of Art* 3-4: 229). Further, in the sculpture, the child on the right places the two smaller fingers of his raised hand at right angles to his palm and other fingers, but Blake draws all four fingers parallel to each other and to the palm, almost exactly duplicating the gesture of "suffrager" in Bulwer's *Chirologia*.[17] Also, the snake's head on the right in the sculpture is in profile so that the viewer can see the jaws extended, but Blake turns the head almost ninety degrees so that the viewer sees the top of the head and not the jaw. Blake's substitution of his own signature, "Drawn & Engraved by William Blake," for the sculptor's, "Athanodorus, son of Agesander, of Rhodes, made it," is another revision as well as one that calls attention to the others--Blake created his own *Laocoön*. Blake also characterizes his reinterpretation as another restoration that resurrects the original. While Lessing and those whom he cites quarrelled about whether the statue was the inspiration for or a copy of the pertinent passage in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Blake, citing the usual passage from Pliny, writes, "יה & his two Sons Satan & Adam as they were copied from the Cherubim / of Solomons Temple by three Rhodians & applied to Natural Fact. or. History of Ilium," beneath the podium (*L* C-D). Blake enters the debate summarized by Lessing in the early chapters of *Laocoön* by arguing that the statue is not based on Virgil's *Aeneid* or a common prior text as Lessing suggests (34), but is copied from a Hebraic visual artifact and appropriated by classicists. Moreover, since one Biblical account of Solomon's Temple refers to "graved cherubims on the walls" (2 Chronicles 3.7), Blake is arguably suggesting that he has returned the statue to its original medium, engraving.[18] Blake makes a similar argument on the right edge of the

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[17]See Warner 51.

[18]See 1 Kings 6-8, Ezekiel 42, and 2 Chronicles 2-4. In this context, it is also worth noting that Blake often used the Latin term for "carved," *sculptilis*, when identifying himself as the engraver. For example, in a number of engravings after designs by Thomas Stothard, Blake identified their different roles in Latin abbreviations: a circular design for *The Fall of Rosamond* (1783) is signed "Blake Sculpt" on the right undercurve and "Stothard Delin." along the left undercurve; the frontispiece for the first volume of *The*

design, asserting that "What we call Antique Gems / are the Gems of Aarons Breast Plate" (*L* D), once again locating a Hebraic origin for works praised as classical by neoclassicists. Similar references to Hebrew culture appear in the texts which surround the statue: "Hebrew Art is / called Sin by the Deist Science" (*L* B);[19] "The Gods of Priam are the Cherubim of Moses & Solomon" (*L* A); "Israel delivered from Egypt / is Art deliverd from / Nature & Imitation" (*L* C). Blake thus engages the debate between the classical and the modern in which Winckelmann and Lessing were central by ascribing important classical artifacts to Hebrew art, as he wraps the statue in Hebrew script and references to the Old Testament and Hebrew Apocrypha and presents his own version of the statue as the lost original.[20]

There is more at stake here, however, than the "History of

Wit's Magazine; or Library of Momus (1784), edited by Thomas Holcroft, is signed "Blake sculp" on the right and "Stothard Del." on the left. The distinction between sculpting and engraving collapses in the common Latin nomenclature, as in *The Laocoön*.

[19]Underlining indicates Blake's use of gothic script.

[20]See Paley's essay, "Wonderful Originals--Blake and Ancient Sculpture," for an examination of the sources in which Blake could have found arguments that coincided with his in claiming that the plastic arts began in the culture of the Old Testament. Paley takes his title and his primary subject from a passage with a similar argument in *Descriptive Catalogue*:

> The two Pictures of Nelson and Pitt are compositions of a mythological cast, similar to those Apotheoses of Persian, Hindoo, and Egyptian antiquity . . . being preserved from some stupendous originals now lost or perhaps buried. . . . The Artist having been [P 4] taken in vision into the ancient republics, monarchies, and patriarchates of Asia, has seen those wonderful originals called in the Sacred Scriptures the Cherubim, which were sculptured and painted on walls . . . and erected in the highly cultivated states of Egypt, Moab, Edom, Aram, among the Rivers of Paradise, being originals from which the the Greeks and Hetrurians copied . . . all the grand works of ancient art. (*DC* 530-531)

Ancient Art." Recently, Victor Anthony Rudowski and Carol Jacobs have argued separately that Lessing distorts the chronology of his reading of Winckelmann, suppressing his knowledge of Winckelmann's later work in order to sustain his absolute contradiction of the critic for polemical purposes (Rudowski 241; Jacobs 488). Lessing's *Laocoön* "thus tells us that *actual* historical priorities are not at stake but rather the very concept of historical priority so thoroughly ironized throughout the text" (Jacobs 488). Jacobs argues that Lessing's concern with imitation--emphasized by his choice of epigraph from Plutarch, "They distinguish themselves from one another in their objects and mode of imitation" (qtd Jacobs 495)[21]--is implicated in his own anxiety about appearing to be imitating Winckelmann, so that locating Virgil before the Laocoön becomes tropologically linked with locating Lessing's *Laocoön* before Winckelmann's *History of Art*. Blake's argument about priority and imitation is itself polemical. It is concerned not with historical validity but with asserting the precedence of Hebrew art to construct Classical art as a fall from its precursor, in direct contradiction of the Classicists' claim that contemporary art has fallen from the ideals of Classical artifacts. In an engraving contemporary with *The Laocoön*, "On Homers Poetry"/"On Virgil," Blake makes a more explicit assertion on this point:

> Sacred Truth has pronounced that Greece & Rome as Babylon & Egypt: so far from being parents of Arts & Sciences as they pretend: were destroyers of all Art. Homer Virgil & Ovid confirm this opinion & make us reverence The Word of God, the only light of antiquity that remains unperverted by War. Virgil in the Eneid Book VI. line 848 says Let others study Art: Rome has somewhat better to do, namely War & Dominion. ("On Virgil")

Blake cites the same passage from Virgil in *The Laocoön* (*L* B) and uses the same identification of classical cultures with imperialism and the corruption of art, a charge that is laid with even greater force in *Milton* (see Chapter 5). In "On Homers Poetry" and "On Virgil,"

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[21]McCormick does not include the epigraph in his translation of Lessing's text.

however, Blake opposes not just the Bible to Classical art, but the Gothic: "The Classics, it is the Classics! & not Goths nor Monks, that Desolate Europe with Wars" ("On Homers Poetry"); "Grecian is Mathematic Form / Gothic is Living Form" ("On Virgil"). Since, historically, the classical period falls between Biblical Israel and the Gothic period in Europe, Blake's chronology is not founded upon the sequence of events but upon a scale of aesthetic values: "Mathematical Form is Eternal in the Reasoning Memory. Living Form is Eternal Existence" ("On Virgil"). Blake argues that Gothic and Hebrew art are part of "Eternal Existence," transhistorical artifacts which embody artistic values and which "always already" precede the corruption of those values by militaristic cultures. The paradigm which informs Blake's identification of the Laocoön as a copy of the cherubim in Solomon's Temple is thus not chronological but hierarchical, plotted relative to a range of aesthetic values rather than temporality.

In the context of Blake's differences with Reynolds, the poet's challenge to a sequential progression from success to success validates his insistence that geniuses are born rather than taught as well as his rejection of the classics. The Laocoön is, in many ways, an eminently suitable emblem of the pro-classical tradition that Fuseli and Lessing accepted without question: sculpted by Greeks and then revised during the Renaissance by its restorers, the Laocoön is a bridge between the two traditions as well as proof that the Renaissance could improve upon the Greeks by outstretching Laocoön's arm and so, as Winckelmann put it, preventing it from "divid[ing] the principal attention" by being bent (*History of Art* 3-4: 230). Blake, by modifying it himself and claiming that it was a derivative of a Hebraic engraving, inserts the work into his own Gothic-Hebraic coordinates, challenging linearity as a rubric which governs the narrativization of art history in favour of a non-chronological value system. Lessing, however, goes beyond the myth of progress. He valorizes narrative sequence in his characterization of writing just as classicists in general valorized the classics and works which claimed derivation from them.

Transgressing the Line of Writing

Lessing draws attention to the chronology of his writing and

reading, asserting in his Preface, "the following chapters . . . were written as chance dictated and more in keeping with my reading than through any systematic development of general principles. Hence they are to be regarded more as unordered notes for a book than as a book itself" (5). After expanding on his Blakean opposition to the book as the medium of systems, Lessing adds that he "started, as it were, with the Laocoön and return[s] to it a number of times" (5).[22] The critic thus ties the sequence of his work to the chronology of his experiences of other works in a way that recalls his paradigm on the properties of artistic media: he starts with and returns to a sculpture, while he follows his reading, identifying the Laocoön with a point of departure or arrival and verbal works with sequence. More to the point, Lessing's *Laocoön* is not only about the limitations of verbal and visual media but about the transformation caused by those limitations when a particular content is translated from one medium into the other. Lessing's concern with the statue's origin is not a simple question of art history, because it operates as an excuse for moving from the differences of fact between the various artistic representations of the event to the ways in which the media's different limitations enforce variations in representation. The former set of disparities establishes genetic relationships, but the latter establishes generic

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[22]Lessing's expression of distaste for systematic books anticipates his combative analysis of Winckelmann's works. Winckelmann, especially in the *History of Art*, was nothing if not analytical, dividing his subject into topics, sub-topics, and sub-sub-topics: "Art Among the Greeks," for instance, has a section on "Beauty of Individual Parts of the Body," which has sub-sections entitled, "The Eyelids," "Objections to Joined Eyebrows," "The Ears Generally," and "Ears of Athletes or Pancratiasts" (*History of Art* 1-2: xv). As Winckelmann puts it,

> In considering beauty I have proceeded analytically, that is, from the whole to the parts. . . . [A]s a knowledge of general principles must, in every regular system, be presumed before any particular observations are made . . . I have given a preference to the analytical mode of proceeding. (*History of Art* 1-2: 380)

relationships.[23] Poetry, Lessing argues, is sequential and temporal, while the visual arts are instantaneous and spatial. Consequently, the visual artist must choose a pivotal moment while the verbal artist must address the whole narrative. It is this question of media which Fuseli singles out in his own reference to Lessing:

> poetry and painting resemble each other in their uniform address to the senses . . . [and] differ as essentially in their *materials* and their *modes* of application, which are regulated by the diversity of the organs they address, ear and eye. *Successive action* communicated by sounds, and *time*, are the medium of poetry; *form* displayed in *space*, and momentaneous energy, are the element of painting.[24] (*Lectures* 2: 133-134)

Blake's engraving challenges this paradigm. While works such as *Milton* also challenge narrative linearity, dealing at verbal length with a single moment from a variety of perspectives as well as combining visual and verbal media,[25] *The Laocoön* is almost a work of dare-devilry: Blake's cocky demonstration that he can exceed the limitations of painting and poetry delineated by Lessing. In this

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[23]I allude to Hagstrum's useful formulation of Blake's relationship to his artistic sources as "generic as well as genetic" (48).

[24]Goethe also addresses this issue, concluding his discussion of the statue as a work of art by comparing it, almost with a sense of obligation, to Virgil's account of the incident in terms that recall Lessing's distinction between visual and verbal media: "We are doing a great injustice to Virgil and poetry in general if we compare, even for a moment, the most self-contained of all sculptural masterpieces with the episodic treatment the subject receives in the *Aeneid*" (23).

[25]Behrendt suggests that "*Milton* is in fact an interdisciplinary analogue to grand style eighteenth-century painting, an exercise in 'Sublime Allegory' that directly engages artist, subject and audience in a community activity of consciousness-raising" (*Reading William Blake* 155), but it also brings writing closer to painting, as Lessing defined it, through "the Blakean principle of simultaneity that governs the entire work" (Behrendt, *Reading William Blake* 157), discussed at length by Fox in *Poetic Form in Blake's* Milton.

sense, *The Laocoön* is like the poem, "When Klopstock England defied," in which Blake refutes Klopstock's assertion that the English language cannot be accommodated to "the epic grandeur of hexameters" (Erdman, "Textual Notes" 863) by applying such a verse form to scatological content. The satire concludes with poetic bravado: "If Blake could do this when he rose up from shite, / What might he not do if he sat down to write" (31-32). The mystic was not immune to the temptation of the occasional swagger and his *Laocoön* is a refutation of Lessing's thesis, delivered with a flourish.

The linear, orderly structure of verbal media--whether writing, printing, or typography--is undone in the engraving, as Blake instead gives shape to his pieces of text, by bending them in arcs, horseshoes, trapeziums, and even a question mark, as well as more conventional rectangles with indentations on alternate lines, and by fitting them into the interstices left between his drawing of the statue and the borders of the plate. Lipking's important observation that Blake defaces Reynolds' *Discourses* by scribbling in its margins to challenge its authoritarian stance is pertinent here (164-165). Blake not only revises the great statue in his own way but also scribbles in the margins of the Laocoön and refuses to write a book on art, annotating an absent debate. Through the *Laocoön*, Blake iconographically inserts his annotations into the discourse to which they refer while producing a clash of media and texts which not only avoids the pitfalls that he saw in the bookish medium of that discourse but engages, by its very form, some of the questions that concerned his colleagues. The Laocoön was the touchstone of a series of debates that dealt not just with classicism or the unity of the arts, but with the properties of different artistic media. By combining as many as four different media in *Laocoön*--drawing, writing, engraving, and sculpture--Blake puts into play these different properties, engaging the debate in theory as well as practice.

The work offers no beginning and no ending, no top and no bottom, no grammatical units to follow for more than a brief span. As an entity to be read, the engraving shatters sequence as well as completion: it defies the reader to read all of the words and be sure that all are read, to read all of the words and be sure that the

grammatical units are all discerned, to produce a text like that which Blake's editors seek, a linear text which has a beginning and an ending that frames the entire text. Unlike Blake's other illuminated works, the verbal component of the engraving is not presented in the conventional series of horizontal lines. The lines are written in three directions, horizontally, vertically from top to bottom, vertically from bottom to top, as well as in curves that correspond to the lines of the statue. Only the left and bottom edges are consistent in the directions of their texts, and only the latter edge does not have divisions which are perpendicular to the line of writing, thus making it alone readable in the conventional manner. To read the left edge, the page must be turned sideways and the reader must decide whether to read column by column, or straight across, and accept that neither alternative is facilitated by the arrangement of the grammatical units of words. The remaining space of the engraving conjoins texts that are written in curves, horizontally, and vertically from top to bottom. Where does one begin? It is not possible to read from left to right, from top to bottom, from page one to page two, and each reorientation of the work makes a different group of texts readable. Moreover, as David E. James argues, Blake's arrangement "emphasizes the materiality of the plate by requiring the reader constantly to turn the plate around," subverting the classification of the work as an artistic product by forcing a recognition of its status as an object ("Blake's *Laocoön*" 228). The usual organization of a book's textual components effaces its corporeality through an arrangement of words that renders the problems of reading invisible by organizing them into a clear sequence that does not ask the reader to stop, to find a new place to start, to try to keep track of what has been read and what has not, and by following conventions that are so familiar that they are no longer noticeable. The textual pieces mirror the broken bodies of the snake(s): flattened from three dimensions into two, it is impossible to trace their serpentine lines for more than a short space.[26]

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[26]As Anthony Campbell noted, during the question period after a portion of this paper was read at a department colloquium and later in

The non-linearity of Blake's *Laocoön* has traditionally been recuperated by the characterization of the work as a collection of aphorisms, exploding the non-linear work into a non-linear assemblage of perfect lines--an anthology of serpentine fragments.[27] While the textual elements of the design contain assertions that can certainly be classified as aphorisms, there are other texts which clearly are not aphoristic. Typically, the texts that cannot be recuperated as aphorisms are segregated, or even eliminated, as graphic supplements to a series of aphoristic doctrinal assertions. Adams omits the non-aphoristic texts in his selection from *Laocoön*, Geoffrey Keynes places the four texts that are most resistant to aphoristic classification at the four corners of a parallelogram at the top of the list of texts less resistant to that designation, while Max Plowman and Erdman divide the texts into unclassified preludia and then writings that are explicitly designated "aphorisms." The tendency to read the pieces of texts as aphorisms has even guided the organization of the material. Erdman, whose edition is known and lauded for its preservation of Blake's punctuation, ignores many of the line breaks in this particular text or represents them as a series of horizontal spaces, normalizing the spatial arrangement of the texts to conform to standards established for prose fragments. Thus, a passage such as, "Divine Union / Deriding / And Denying Immediate / Communion with God" (*L* B), is transcribed as one line in most editions of the work. Blake's

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a private conversation, the serpentine lines are represented as atelic by Blake's failure to represent that point of closure, the tail. One tail is just visible in front of the boy's raised leg on the righthand side of the design, but the other is hidden and, because of the convolutions of the snake's bodies, it is impossible to determine to which head that tail belongs. Moreover, because of the flat plane of the drawing, there is always the possibility that that tail belongs to a hidden third head. Other frontal representations of the statue are similarly ambiguous, but, since Blake did alter the statue in other ways, the potential signification of this might not have been lost on him.

[27]See, for example, Eaves (*Counter-Arts Conspiracy* 134, 162), Max Plowman (288), and Adams (585).

departure from prosaic form is most marked in a passage in the upper-righthand corner of the design that is, as Walter Scott described poetry, "written out in fair straight lines, with a capital at the beginning of each" (*Waverley* 60):

The Spoilers say
Where are his Works
That he did in the Wilderness
    Lo what are these
Whence came they
These are not the Works . . . (*L* B)

There are only two other texts in the design which capitalize the first word of a line that is syntactically dependent on the preceding line: the vast majority of texts in which a line is clearly linked to its predecessor do not capitalize the first word of the subsequent line. Moreover, those two exceptions only involve two lines, but the passage in question involves seventeen capitalized lines.[28] Yet it is always transcribed as prose.[29] Such deformation elides line breaks, alters capitalization, and makes the texts look aphoristic.

But the engraving includes texts which are clearly not aphoristic, such as single words ("Good" [*L* B], "Evil" [*L* A]),

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[28]The two passages to which I refer are "The whole Business of Man Is / The Arts & All Things Common" (*L* B) and "What can be Created / Can be Destroyed / Adam is only / The Natural Man / & not the Soul / or Imagination" (*L* B); note that these two passages bracket the seventeen-line passage on the design, though their line of writing is perpendicular to it. I exclude examples in which the next line is a new sentence or begins with a noun, as in, for instance, "Prayer is the Study of Art / Praise is the Practise of Art" (*L* A), "Christianity is Art / & not Money / Money is its Curse" (*L* D), and "Science is the / Tree of Death" (*L* B).

[29]Erdman omits one of the capitals: the plate clearly reads, "Of Egypt nor Babylon / Whose Gods are the Powers / Of this World. Goddess, Nature," and Erdman transcribes it as, "Of Egypt nor Babylon Whose Gods are the Powers of this World" (274). Keynes and Plowman capitalize "Of this World," but Plowman does not capitalize "Of Egypt." Adams omits the capitals on both uses of the preposition, but retains Blake's capitalization of nouns and other words which begin lines.

scholarly imperatives ("See Luke Ch 2 v I" [*L* D], "See Virgils Eneid. Lib. VI. v 848" [*L* B], "Read Matthew CX. 9 & 10 v" [*L* B]), descriptions of the design which cite the original of the drawing and the artists involved, proper names in Hebrew and Greek that are set apart from other words ("Lilith" [*L* D], "Angel of Jehovah" [*L* A-B], "Serpent-holder" [*L* A]), and biblical-style fragments ("He repented that he had made Adam / (of the female, the Adamah) / & it grieved him at his heart" [*L* A-B]). The texts of Blake's *Laocoön* thus often depart radically from the genre, particularly as seen in Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, translated by Fuseli and heavily annotated by Blake--but not always. The collection of texts which surround the engraving of the statue are generically heterogeneous, calling into question that generic status of assertions that, of themselves, appear aphoristic. In his essay on Blake's mock-proverbs, Gavin Edwards notes that proverbs are aphorisms with a history, sayings that have become recognizable by and significant through their common, familiar usage. Writing about the proverbs in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Edwards suggests

> Blake knew very well that he was producing aphorisms and not proverbs. He ironically emphasizes the gap between the two by inventing a society in which his aphorisms become proverbs by utopian fiat. . . . In working with proverbs and answering them Blake is not simply proposing alternative proverbs--proverbs of hell against proverbs of the church; he is questioning the finality of proverbs as such, refusing their authority, insisting on replying to these replies, on revealing what proverbs try to conceal, that they are acts of speech among others. (46, 47)

The ease with which Blake's aphorisms in *Laocoön* are taken as authoritative--indeed, the ease with which the design is reduced to an amalgam of aphorisms with its other components elided--therefore needs to be called into question.[10] If Blake's Proverbs of Hell "question[]

[10]Blake's investment in the so-called aphorisms has only rarely been called into question. Irene Tayler writes that the engraving is "clearly a kind of summary index to Blake's later thought" ("Blake's Laocoön" 72; qtd James, "Blake's *Laocoön*" 228), James argues that "such

the finality of proverbs," then a non-linear arrangement of aphoristic and non-aphoristic texts, an arrangement that offers neither formal nor theoretical closure while mimicking the strangulating movement of the snakes questions that finality on even more planes of totalization. While Lessing's polemic depended, formally and conceptually, on the linearity of writing to insert each point into a validating causality, Blake's non-linear assemblage offers a collection of loci that can be "hooked up" to other texts in ways that are not predetermined and so do not lock it into a causal frame that contains its signification.

Editing as Transformation: Reading the Non-Linear Text

So, Blake's *Laocoön* disrupts the chronology of art history, the assumptions of causality, the linearity of writing, and the finality of doctrinal statements. But what exactly does it do instead? While the editorial liberties taken with the design suggest that it has no authorial order, I would argue that it does have such an order and that this order is related to strategies for organizing the elements of visual works of art. That organization can be recuperated, in part, by attention to the ways in which editors transform *The Laocoön* into a linear text. Blake's editors almost invariably include *The Laocoön* in selections from his works, but in transcribing `s verbal component they inevitably elide the medium of the design in favour of the messages of which the work is supposed to consist. McGann, discussing Blake's *Jerusalem*, notes that Erdman's edition of the work "translate[s] Blake's illuminated work into a reasonable set of

formulations . . . fall easily into place inside Blake's previous thought" (230), joining the array of critics who have characterized the aphorisms as the truth "according to Blake" (Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* 141), as communications of how "Blake ultimately defined the whole business of man" (Erdman, *Prophet* 242), "epitomizing much of his philosophy" (Keynes 923*n*). Damrosch, however, suggests that the statements' "status as aphorisms allows them to make gnomic claims that are not easily sustained in the myth as a whole" (246), noting that absolutist doctrine has limited applicability to Blake's works. Gavin Edwards has noted Blake's problematic handling of aphorisms but makes no reference to this particular ensemble.

typographical equivalences," arguing that different "bibliographical codes" are at work in Blake's illuminated work and Erdman's transcription of it (*Textual Condition* 53, 56). Even facsimile editions cannot duplicate such qualities as the texture of the paper, the layering of colour over the indentations caused by the printing process, and the collection of the pages. To one degree or another, Blake's *Jerusalem* is normalized as it is reproduced in new editions: at the very least, such editions generate the bound and duplicated book, which was anathema to Blake, rather than a unique, handcrafted copy; more usually, the lettering is standardized, the designs and colouring disappear, capitalization and punctuation are normalized, and Blake's illuminated works are transformed into a form which is visually indistinguishable from that of the standard book. Nowhere is this transformation more marked than in transcriptions of Blake's *Laocoön*. "Typographical translations" of the design, to use McGann's terminology, not only eliminate the drawing which dominates the piece and normalize the typography, but rearrange the lines of text.[31] The commonalities between these different editions indicate an editorial imperative to render Blake's engraving consistent with existing models. It is conventional to place the title of a picture in large type at its bottom edge; therefore the lines, "יה & his two Sons Satan & Adam as they were copied from the Cherubim / of Solomons Temple by three Rhodians & applied to Natural Fact. or. History of Ilium," must be the title. It is conventional to read from top to bottom, and therefore the words, after being grouped by grammatical rules, must be published in such an order, although some exception may be made for certain departures from this order. Apart from these two features, Blake's editors differ radically from each other. Among the many editions of Blake's works, *Laocoön* is never transcribed in the same sequence twice and so, despite the application of the same paradigms, each transformation of the work to conform to bibliographical codes produces

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[31] Blake uses a variety of scripts in the engraving. In Erdman's edition, the gothic Germanic script is normalized as block capitals even though only the first letter of most of the words in question is capitalized.

a different linear text.

Each edition of the work is finally only one reading of the work, one possible sequence of the lines--and often one that it is difficult to arrive at by reading the engraving rather than taking the "aphorisms" out of that context and rearranging them on another page. For instance, under the statue, Blake writes four lines: the first, barely legible in Bindman's reproduction of the design and barely visible in Erdman's reproduction, is "If Morality was Christianity Socrates was the Saviour" (*L* C-D); the second and third lines, in slightly larger writing, are "יה & his two Sons Satan & Adam as they were copied from the Cherubim / of Solomons Temple by three Rhodians & applied to Natural Fact. or. History of Ilium" (*L* C-D); the fourth is "Art Degraded Imagination Denied War Governed the Nations" (*L* C-D).[32] (My numbering of the lines is, of course, contingent upon the convention that one reads horizontally towards the right and then moves downward to the next horizontal line.) In Plowman's edition, the second and third lines are given as the title, and the first and fourth lines are seventh and eighth in a general list of aphorisms. Keynes begins his transcription of the design with a stylized representation of the arrangement of certain words and phrases, then lists the second and third lines under the statue, then the first, and then the fourth. In Adams' edition, the second and third lines are given first, the fourth line is listed nineteenth, and the first line is given third last. Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant print the second and third lines first, in larger type, typographically implying titular status, then the fourth and finally the first; the classification of the middle lines as a title is reinforced by their parenthetical, and newly-capitalized, addition to the design's usual appellation, "The Laocoön (Yah and His Two Sons)". In Erdman's edition, the second and third lines are given first, the fourth line appears in the middle of a

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[32]By a strange coincidence, though separated by a full page in Erdman's text, both the first and the fourth lines are preceded by a passage from the lower righthand side of the engraving, along the structural support that balances the righthand figure, and followed by a passage from the far upper righthand corner in Erdman's thematic transcription (274-275).

general list of statements, and the first line is given, as in Adams' edition, third last. While all of the editors make some gesture towards the unorthodox arrangement of the lines, typically by repeating Blake's use of a bracket to conjoin two lines to one in the upper lefthand corner of the engraving, Erdman and Plowman are the only editors to indicate where some of the words are relative to the statue, and they limit themselves to those aphorisms which are curved around the statue. There is little consensus among these editions: one of the better known, if often misquoted, lines from the engraving, "The Old & New Testaments are the Great Code of Art" (*L* B), is listed eleventh in Erdman's general list, twelfth in Adams' list, fourteenth in Plowman's general list, ninth last by Keynes, and seventh last by Johnson and Grant. The groupings of the lines also differ radically from edition to edition.

Erdman does not classify the texts by theme until after he has listed two other categories of texts: the material proper to the title page, namely Blake's signature, "Drawn & Engraved by William Blake" (*L* C-D), and the two lines that Plowman calls the title; and a selection of texts which are classified by their proximity to sections of the figures. Then, the rest of the texts are grouped under the heading, "Remaining aphorisms, reading outward in thematic order" (273). How, though, does one define "outward"? Erdman gives the horizontally placed statement, "Art can never exist without / Naked Beauty displayed" (*L* B) which begins one line below the upper edge, before the vertical lines, "No Secre / sy in Art" (*L* B) which begin five lines to the left of the right edge. How, especially, does one define "thematic order"? Such an order requires that the words be grouped in particular ways and that each group has a governing theme. But is the group, "Where any view of Money exists Art cannot be carried on. but War only / by pretences to the Two Impossibilities Chastity & Abstinence Gods of the Heathen" (*L* A-B), about war, art, commerce, mythology, or virtue? And what unarticulated notions of "order" govern the other editions? The wide range of editorial solutions to Blake's textual puzzle, within the editorial unanimity about the importance of the two lines under the statue and the necessity of publishing the lines horizontally in a vertical order, demonstrates both an impetus towards a recognizable

order and the limitations of recognizable orders when confronted with that which refuses to be recognizable. The editors agree that the words engraved on the design must be given a linear order, a sequence through which the engraving could be read from beginning to end without missing a word, and share a recognition of the title-like qualities, typographic and referential, of the description of the statue, while also attempting to address the difficulty of converting to that conventional form a work which does not conform to such conventions.

Erdman, the most self-conscious about editorial interventions in Blake's illuminated works, handles the *Laocoön* in a particularly telling way. By normalizing the typography, even modernizing one of the Hebrew letters,[33] eliding line breaks or representing them as spaces, and organizing the texts into "roughly thematic sequence" ("Textual Notes" 814), he normalizes the texts according to literary conventions. But he also includes a reproduction of the *Laocoön* design in his edition and remarks in his notes that "There is no right way to read [the inscriptions]--except all at once and as the frame of the picture" (814). This is an important departure from the presentation of transcriptions of the design as unproblematic editions, and it brings us right back to Lessing and Fuseli. Given the art theorists' insistence that painting is "momentaneous," Erdman's remark that the texts, as they appear in Blake's design, should be "read . . . all at once" and as "the frame of the picture" seems to offer not a resolution to the transgressive spatial component of the writing but its recuperative translation from a verbal to a visual medium in which its non-linear organization is appropriate. In short, if it is not linear, it must be a picture--a ready corollary to Lessing's paradigm--and experienced in the terms prescribed for that medium. By reproducing the engraving, one of just four illustrations in his edition of Blake, and setting it beside his linear transformation of the plate's texts, along with his editorial note on how to read the former, Erdman splits

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[33]Compare the second letter of the second word, an aleph, under "The Angel of the Divine Presence" (*L* A-B) to Erdman's transcription (273). Erdman uses the modern form while, as Martin Kreiswirth noted in a private conversation, Blake uses a now unusual form.

the work along media lines: first, Blake's engraving as a visual work, to be viewed "at once," in the moment, and then its translation into readable format, a verbal work to be read in the traditional, linear manner. This splitting is reinforced by an accident in the first printing of Erdman's latest edition, namely the inclusion of the reverse image of the design.[34] Instead of the typographically-familiar black lettering on a white ground, the reader is presented with the more alien white lettering. But this compromise to the textual recognizability of the design restores the whiteness, and so the recognizability, of the statue. Erdman's editorial treatment of the work elides the contradiction of the rules of media implicit in the design by producing two versions of the plate, each under the rubric of a different medium, splitting apart its formal hybridity to produce two generically pure works--a "momentaneous" picture of a statue in a frame and a series of verbal aphorisms arranged by theme.

Erdman is nevertheless raising an important question: how does one read a work without a clear sequence? Blake's statements repudiate genealogy and historical timelines while their very form subverts Lessing's claim that writing is founded upon simple sequence. These questions about how we publish verbal material and what that indicates about how we read and what we expect are not simply editorial. Such constructions impinge upon the content of the material. Blake's disruption of the conventions of arrangement, from foreground and background to the horizontal orientation of lines and the vertical sequence of those lines, subverts those constructions and the ideologies which produced them. Linearity and definitive order are repressed and process, an ongoing investigation of alternative orders--none of which is sanctioned by the text or the author--is made possible. The various editorial constructions of *Laocoön* as a linear text, as a text with divisions by genre, subject, or spatial orientation, as a text which conforms to bibliographical conventions, not only foreground the kind of editorial "intervention" which McGann discusses in the second chapter of *The Textual Condition* but also deflect the possibilities of the text. Each of these interventions is a reading, and the plurality of the editorial interventions indicates the degree to which Blake has challenged the most basic rules of book-

[34]I am indebted to Robert Essick for this information about the reverse image.

making. By combining media in a way that contravenes conventional practice and prevailing theory, Blake, in effect, does what Nicole Brossard calls "breaking the habits of reading." She writes,

> I believe that a text gives subliminal information on how it wants to be read. Its structure is itself a statement, no matter what the text says. . . . So by changing the perspective, the themes, or the style, somehow you deceive the conformist reader in her or his moral or aesthetic expectations and you annoy her or him by breaking the habits of reading . . . [and] you also offer the non-conformist reader a space for a new experience. (78, 79)

The *Laocoön* forces the recognition that we do not read the same way twice and that our access to the text is not transparent, but depends upon certain rules: linearity and order (whether thematic, generic, spatial, or formal), conventionally govern our contact with the text but do not totalize it.

In its atelic non-linearity, *Laocoön* anticipates the modern hypertext. Michael Joyce defines the hypertext not as a stable artifact but as an activity, as

> reading and writing electronically in an order you choose; whether among choices represented for you by the writer, or by your discovery of the topographic (sensual) organization of the text. Your choices, not the author's representations or the initial topography, constitute the current state of the text. (14)

Like the hypertext, *Laocoön* has no single beginning, no single ending, but innumerable places to begin and/or end. The beginning is not defined by the number of the page and its position on that page, but by where the reader chooses to begin and, as Brossard and Caws point out, linearity is fundamental to conventionality (76). As with a hypertext, the reader can skip, re-read, re-begin, end, and begin again, without being bound by linearity. In the *Laocoön*, Blake writes, "Without Unceasing Practise nothing can be done Practise is Art / If you leave off you are Lost" (*L* A): a text without a beginning or an end offers no place at which to "leave off" and be "Lost." In *Laocoön*, Blake mixes scripts, genres, media, languages, and even planes, disrupting

the smooth reading that works like Lavater's permit by proliferating "modes of information," to use Poster's revision of McLuhan's central dictum:

> McLuhan's axiom that "the medium is the message" points in the direction of the mode of information but does not go far enough. . . . In the mode of information the subject is no longer located in a point in absolute time/space, enjoying a physical, fixed vantage point from which rationally to calculate its options. (15)

Without the fixed points of reference that a stable chronological organization of the text constructs, Blake's reader to "nomads who wander at will" (Poster 15) through the work.

This is not to suggest that Blake's work is completely chaotic, but that it requires its readers to open up new routes, and new ways of imagining routes, through the words on a page. "<u>Science</u>" is printed, twice, in gothic Germanic script and so is "<u>Death</u>" and "<u>Sin</u>"--but so is "<u>Jesus</u>" and "<u>Life</u>." All examples of that script, moreover, are confined to the lower half of the upper-righthand quadrant of the design, suggesting an echoing among the different key words. At the same time, two of those texts allude to Genesis: "<u>Art</u> is the / Tree / of <u>Life</u> / <u>GOD</u> / is <u>Jesus</u>" (*L* B); "<u>Science</u> is the / Tree of <u>Death</u>" (*L* B). The third quotation inserts those two references to the Edenic trees into Blake's argument about Hebrew art, asserting that "<u>Hebrew Art</u> is / called <u>Sin</u> by the Deist <u>Science</u>" (*L* B). Separating the allusions to Genesis from the condemnation of aspersions on Hebrew Art are seventeen lines that associate empire with the destruction of art, empires that Blake identifies with Greece and Rome but opposes to the Gothic in "On Homers Poetry" for reasons that could extend to the Hebraic. Thus the Gothic lettering of Hebraic references echoes the two cultures' shared position in Blake's anti-imperial topography, further affirming their cultural redemption from the taint of militarism through art. Similarly, single words echo across the design in geometrical patterns: references to the Antichrist appear at diagonally opposed corners, the words "Good & Evil" appear at the top of a triangular formation with "Good" at its lower left corner and "Evil" at the third, "Good" is placed over the head of one snake and

"Evil" over the head of the other. Numerous other connections are invited by Blake's combination of genres, media, and forms, from the placement of "The Angel of the Divine Presence" over the line, "Angel of Jehovah" in Hebrew, as a kind of translation, to the suggestive wrapping of "If you leave off you are lost" around the outstretched fist of the priest that struggles to hold the snake and impede its dangerous coiling. These different mediating contexts--genre, script, placement, illustrative relationships, translation, and so forth--mean that the work goes beyond being non-linear to being multi-dimensional, as intersecting planes of signification cross through every element of the work. "Science" is crossed by all of the other occurrences of the word on the design, by its opposition to art, by its different placement on the right half of the design, by its different scripts, by its relationship to knowledge through Genesis, and through that relationship to Blake's condemnation of Reynolds' view of the artist as a student rather than a genius, and so on and so on. Being non-linear, in other words, does not make the textual fragments disorganized, as the editorial license with which the work has been treated suggests. As Caws notes, "all too often the linear structure from which contemporary readers have learned, more or less easily, to tear themselves away in the reading of texts seems to retain its traditional hypnotic effect on our perception" (16). Linearity is a familiar road--and Blake's *Laocoön* offers a kaleidoscope.[14] While Lessing, and Fuseli, separated the arts and delineated their limits, Blake combines the arts and transgresses their limits.

Throughout these controversies about the limits of media, modes of reading, art history, and linearity, Laocoön and his sons struggle with the snake. Laocoön's outstretched arm, holding a coil of the snake in his tightly clamped fist, figures this struggle with the line

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[14]Damrosch uses the same figure in addressing a similar point regarding the form of Blake's poetry, writing that it is "a kind of poetry almost entirely recalcitrant to theories of organic form. The poetic whole is made of interpenetrating symbolic facets that can be juxtaposed with each other in an almost infinite variety of ways; the poems are kaleidoscopes" (350).

while, in the plane of the two-dimensional engraving, his fist succeeds in breaking the serpentine line. A priest who stood at a series of boundaries--between the gods and the people, between the Trojans and the Greeks, between victory and defeat, and at the moment between life and death--and was later located, through eighteenth-century debates about the statue, in a web of chronological lines, is a useful figure for Blake's political and formal contestation of the line. In the following pages, Lessing, Fuseli, and *The Laocoön* all but disappear, but the problems that intersect through those figures--the constraints of linearity in the production of national, artistic, polemical, and literary narratives as well as the closure on debate that such linearity promises--will appear and reappear like the segmented body of the snakes as Blake struggles with and divides their lines.

Chapter Two

"Whence Came They": Contesting National Narrative

OISIN. O Patrick!--to the Finian race
A falsehood was unknown
No lie, not imputation base
On our clear fame was thrown. . . .
Not thy own clerks in truth excell'd
The heroes of our line.

Anonymous, *The Chase* (medieval Irish poem, trans. Charlotte Brooke [1789])

The late eighteenth century was not only a time of political crisis for England. Political upheaval led to a crisis in national identity, as England's status as an imperial and quintessentially "civilized" nation was challenged from all quarters--from the colonies, from imperial competitors, and from within English society. Major uprisings in nations under its imperial control had taken place throughout the century, from the Scottish rebellion in the 1740's, to the American Revolution in the 1770's, the conflict with Tipu in India during the 1780's, and the Irish uprisings of 1798 and 1803 that closed the century. From 1788 to 1795, the impeachment of Warren Hastings, Governor-General of India, exposed English rule as corrupt, exploitative, and greedy. Within England, the Gordon riots exposed an ugly side of nationalist Protestantism, naval mutinies exposed a comparably ugly side of that cornerstone of English imperial power, the navy, while political agitation, and the numberless trials of the agitators, exposed the authority of secular institutions to question. While the civil face of English culture was being stripped away throughout the empire, the French Revolution offered another challenge to its aristocratic hegemony and then, out of the ashes of the Terror, came a military threat to England's imperial rule--Napoleon. It is in this context that radical writings proliferated, challenging the sociopolitical order which had been previously justified as natural,

divinely sanctioned, and rational by establishing alternative value systems, particularly that system derived from Paine in which rights were equal and inherent and social hierarchies were supposed to be culturally rather than naturally produced. Radical writers went into the breach, so to speak, storming the halls of political power through the failures of established systems to invoke social closure, further destabilizing the systems to which they objected as well as generating new sites of stability.

A pervasive premise in such writings, as well as in those of the Romantic writers that followed them, is that society began well but went wrong somewhere. Conservatives emphasized tradition as the foundation of ongoing progress, maintaining the *status quo* through reference to its long life and plotting a slow evolution of the society which nevertheless was consistent in revealing certain valued features, whether a monarchy or the domestic containment of women. But this view faced an interesting challenge from radicals who appropriated the discourse of the recent antiquarian revival to validate a national tradition that supported their counter-hegemonic position rather than that of their opponents, turning the conservatives' paradigm against them. While accepting the conservatives' nationalism and valorization of historical origins, such radicals maintained that society had lost touch with these traditions because of artificial social structures that had been overlaid onto an intrinsic character, a character that is, for counter-hegemonic nationalists as for many of their opponents, specific to nation and place.[1] The rubric by which these two nationalisms are distinguished is generic as well as political. In the conservative view, the national narrative is continuous and plots the evolution of the nation from its inception onward to its imperial development; the construction of that origin often located England as a branch of the imperial tree that has its roots in Greece, Troy, and Rome. But, for the antiquarian radicals, the national narrative has

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[1]Besides the antiquarianism with which this chapter is concerned, there were, of course, other radical theories that characterized contemporary culture as corrupt but were less amenable to nationalism; see, for example, Paine's notion of inherent and equal rights.

the status of an antiquarian document: lost and existing only in a few tattered fragments, corrupted and destroyed by an intervening history, it survives only as a trace through which the recovery of the original may be possible, but not readily so. Like the causation to which Blake objects in *The Laocoön*, the progress-oriented conservatives organize validating events in a linear and sequential narrative, while their antiquarian opponents seek to break free of that historical intervention to reestablish an origin that is compatible with an essential core of national identity--and so restore and resume the writing of the proper national narrative. Such a political agenda arguably promoted the productions of forgeries, of pseudo-antiquarian texts that could be used to authenticate a particular political position in the present, as well as of "legitimate" antiquarian scholarship.[2] Antiquarian endeavour became less defined by its authenticity with respect to historical truths than its authenticity with respect to national truths.[3] It is perhaps in that context that Blake wrote, long after the forgeries of James MacPherson and Thomas Chatterton had been exposed, "I Believe both Macpherson & Chatterton, that what they say is Ancient, Is so" (Anno. Wordsworth 665).

In his earlier works, Blake engages both the content of

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[2]As the Ossian controversy, which continues today, shows, the line between a forgery and good scholarship is a rather fuzzy one, particularly during a period in which the terms of good scholarship were still being established. The authenticity of James Macpherson's Ossian poems is still being contested because Macpherson did base his work on authentic material: his alterations to the material can be understood as a revision of the kind that takes place without note in popular culture rather than as Macpherson's creation of a text distinct from the Scottish material (see Howard Gaskill and Clare O'Halloran [esp. 69-70]).

[3]Walter Scott parodies such re-writings of the nation in his Waverley novel, *The Antiquary* (1816). The title character encourages a young poet to write an epic in which Scotland repels an historical Roman invasion: after acknowledging that "the invasion of Agricola was *not* repelled," the antiquary yet offers to "write the critical and historical notes on each canto, and draw out the plan of the story" (119).

antiquarianism and the political project which it supported. But he also reinforces antiquarian radicalism's challenge to tradition by subverting linearity in his use of formal conventions that emphasize the discontinuities of antiquarian artifacts rather than the cogent chronology of conservative histories. The rejection of linearity has formal implications for the ideological investments of these competing nationalisms because of linearity's support of closure and totalization: the evolutionary model views the shared culture as an expression of values and characteristics that embody the march towards progress, but the antiquarian model that I have outlined contends that the shared culture is divorced from a national identity that remains latent in each national subject but only occasionally surfaces in public relations. In Blake's works, resistance to the former and alliance with the latter lies at the heart of the poet's valorization of bards, prophets, and artists as the voices of that submerged identity. And, if this can be narrativized, such a political-generic alignment ultimately leads to increasingly vexed identities in Blake's works as the national subject and the nation are mutually alienated, creating fissures that prohibit the mapping of the interdependence that defines them. From a few sentences that locate the verses biographically in the Advertisement to *Poetical Sketches* to prophetic books that are identified with characters rather than nations or continents to the pseudo-biography of Milton and the erasure of nation in personification and then apocalypse in *Jerusalem*, Blake continued to find new ways to destabilize hegemonic notions of the nation as a geographical and institutional entity. When a valorized notion of the nation emerges from Blake's critiques, it is of a nation that is an assemblage of individuals with shared cultural tendencies that are warped by the prevailing nationalism. By subverting the linear and ideological closure of narratives which govern the definition of the national community and replacing them with iterative, non-linear, and anti-generic works that instead define the national subject as alienated from the putatively national culture and its narrative, Blake seeks to tear away the constructs that inhibit the resurrection of the legitimate political subject from its suppressed traces.

Antiquarianism and Nationalism

As Frye notes in *Fearful Symmetry*, "Blake belongs neither to the Augustans nor to the Romantics. . . . He belongs to another age altogether; the age, in poetry, of Collins, Percy, Gray, Cowper, Smart, Chatterton, Burns, Ossian and the Wartons" (167). But these poets were not simply non-Augustan and pre-Romantic. Most of them were also actively antiquarian and nationalist: Thomas Percy produced the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* as well as translated some of Paul Henri Mallet's antiquarian research, Thomas Gray translated Norse and other antique material, Chatterton forged medieval texts that Marilyn Butler has associated with a Bristol-centred nationalism, Robert Burns recovered oral Scottish matter, Thomas Warton made an early attempt to define a millenia-old national literary tradition in his anthology, *History of English Poetry*, and "Ossian" Macpherson appropriated Gaelic traditions and modernized them.[4] As has been well established, Blake was profoundly interested in and influenced by the antiquarian researches of his contemporaries as well as the antiquarian focus of his immediate precursors, especially Gray.[5] Moreover, as Jean Hagstrum has shown, Blake was also influenced by medieval illuminated manuscripts (30-33). Recently, Stuart Peterfreund has identified the *Poetical Sketches* in particular with an attempt to recoup a national identity, the "northern, nativist alternative" which evades "the classicizing tendency" reviled by Blake (699). Blake was part of this

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[4]In the same age, Charlotte Brooke did for Ireland what Percy did for England with her *Reliques of Irish Poetry*; Edward Williams, Chatterton-like, forged Welsh triads; and more conventionally legitimate antiquarian work was done by Stukeley, Davies, Mallet, Bell, Lemprière, and many others.

[5]See, for instance, Erdman (*Prophet* 262*n*) and Schorer (405-406*n*) on the subject of correspondences between Gray's *Descent of Odin* and Blake's poetry. Regarding the influence of Gray, Collins, and Thomson's interest in antique material on Blake, see, for example, Peterfreund (698-699) and Lucas (5). Blake's debt to Stukeley, Mallet and other antiquarians is also well-established (in two of the seminal works of Blake criticism, Frye's *Fearful Symmetry* and Bloom's *Blake's Apocalypse*, references to antiquarianism are almost plentiful).

Enlightenment counter-culture, marking his affinities with authors who turned away from the rationalist, classicist progress which posited cultural origins that were often implicated in the hegemony's pro-commercial, imperial, and "progressive" nationalism. In *England and Englishness*, John Lucas argues that the massacre at Culloden in 1746 and other contingencies led to an interesting problem:

> At about this time [i.e. of Culloden], and for reasons that will often be independent of immediate politics, the Gothic becomes associated with those parts of Britain that are not England. But if the constitution is 'Gothic' then England may not assert its liberty against those other parts without ceasing to be true to the source from which such liberty is derived. England is the aggressor against the very liberty it claims to be upholding. (44)

As a consequence of this schizophrenic moment in English national identity, the rising antiquarianism of the colonized nations of the British Isles during the period was echoed within England itself. While antiquarians from Ireland, Scotland, and Wales sought to construct a national identity independent of and superior to the English "civilized" identity that was being imposed on them, antiquarians within England sought to evade their alignment with a colonizing, repressive hegemony, often appropriating the discourse of their Celtic neighbours, including such elements as the power of the poetic voice. Many of these writers shared a single concern, seeking in the past the legitimization of the "liberty" that was central to their political agenda, whether they sought the removal of English power from the colonized nations or of tyranny from England itself. As Lucas notes, this antiquarian work

> provided the more evident materials out of which it was possible to begin constructing a *new image of Britain*, one with cultural, historical, and, by implication, social and even political consequences. This new image has at its centre the affirmation of northernness. It opposes and is meant to replace the 'classical' spirit of the Augustan cultural configurations. (47; my emphasis)

Blake operates within this context, valorizing the Gothic culture

indigenous to Northern Europe and the Hebraic tradition while deprecating the rationalist and classical culture as one of laws, constraints, and militarist imperialism foreign to the "true" British identity that they corrupt.

This project is a nationalist inflection of the Romantic desire for a return to an idyllic origin. In *The Romantic Ideology*, McGann characterizes this desire as

> the feeling that the condition of harmony has to be *returned to*, that the idea of unity has to be recovered or reborn. This obsession with restoring what was perceived . . . as a lost sense of total order was a function of an age marked by extreme cultural upheaval throughout Europe. (40)

It is usual to associate this harmony with the childhood represented in the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, but Friedrich Schiller's observation that the nostalgia for childhood is related to the nostalgia for a lost natural state (34) broadens the implications to include the harmony which was believed to exist in what Schiller refers to as "childlike races" (23). In *National Identity*, Anthony D. Smith argues that an ethnic nationalism that looked to the past arose during the late eighteenth century to displace a pan-European nationalism that took classical antiquity as its model. Instead of "a universal history" in which Europe continues the civilizing narrative begun by the Greeks, ethnic nationalism offered a return to a regional primitivism, valorized by the Romantic privileging of nature over nurture. But to characterize this nationalism as an urge to return is to invest it with the same linearity as that held by the myth of progress, and that was not necessarily the case. Nationalism, of whatever political stripe, is fundamentally contingent upon an essential core of national identity that continues despite foreign cultural influences; an English character that is corrupted by French fashion or an Irish character that panders to the English nobility still remains essentially English or Irish. In this sense, nationalism does not insist upon a return to the past but to the social and cultural priority that the national essence had in the past. Conventional temporal models of social evolution simply do not apply:

antiquarian nationalism is more revolutionary than evolutionary, positing the release of what already exists rather than the initiation of progress towards an ideal state.

The Iterability of the Bard and the Writing of the Nation

Two figures are crucial to the revolutionary resurrection of the essential national identity--the prophet and the bard. The transformation of the bard from antiquarian object to a figure for the voice of political protest created a prophet-bard hybrid that bears, like a recovered antiquity, the marks of atemporality, discontinuity, and non-linearity. The transposition of the bard from a culture in which such figures are close to the establishment to a culture in which they are the voice of the opposition is also simultaneous with the transmutation of epic into prophecy. Behrendt's analysis of prophecy and epic provides some useful points of reference. In "'The Consequence of High Powers': Blake, Shelley, and Prophecy's Public Dimension," Behrendt argues that prophecy had a political status in Hebraic culture:

> The Jewish prophets were members . . . of the *opposition*, which subsisted in those days, and they figured among the leading patriots of their country; who took very free, yet necessary liberties in criticising and condemning the measures of their kings, nobles, priests and people, both in their private and their public capacities. (256-257)

Epic, however, like Virgil's propagandist work, *Aeneid*, enshrines the established order by glorifying its history and legitimating it through prophecies which are written *post hoc*, valorizing the origin of the hegemony under which it is written so that the "epic poet's private experience both precipitates and parallels a similarly intense collective public experience" ("'Consequence of Higher Powers'" 255). The epic poet is the traditionalist, believing that the values of the origin have been transmitted uncorrupted to be embodied in the present society, while the prophet argues that the genealogy has been compromised so that society is divorced from its cultural essence rather than enacting its fulfillment. This is the rhetoric of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, from Wordsworth's charge in

the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* that corrupt urban genres have infected the national literary tradition to nationalists' attempts to suspend their use of English and learn the language which their ancestors spoke before the colonial age. These attempts to return the culture to its proper path posited a national identity that had been lost to foreign or unnatural artifice, except in rural areas untouched by modern innovation. The Celtic bard is, in many ways, like the writers of classical epic, functioning as a national archive as well as reinforcing the *status quo*.[6] But the bard represented not just an element of the lost culture but also a prophet-like element that would, in the present, direct the nation back to the culture in which it was so strongly invested.[7]

Temporality is convoluted here--the bard is resuscitated in the present to lead the way back to the past--through the grafting of the bardic and the prophetic. Prophecy is paradoxical in precisely these terms, as someone in the present has a vision of the future that, as Behrendt argues, is often designed to return society to its past. In Blake, bardic declarations take on the atemporality of prophecy: it is "the Bard!" not the prophet "Who Present, Past, & Future sees" ("Introduction," *Songs of Experience* 2-3). The prophetic

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[6]Both ancient Greek and Celtic culture supported poets as living national archives, but that support typically involved forms of patronage that, at least in part, shaped the narratives that they sang. As late as the eighteenth century, O'Carolan, who is remembered as the last of the Irish bards, made his living by travelling from one great house to another where he would be fed and paid for his performances as well as the songs that he wrote to honour his hosts. His Greek precursors had to deal with similar circumstances: for instance, the poets' need to implicate their noble audiences in the Homeric epics is cited as an explanation for the impossibly large armada of ships described in *The Iliad*.

[7]The bard has a place at the less apocalyptic end--if the term "apocalyptic" can be stretched this far--of the prophetic spectrum described, and associated with Blake, by Behrendt, "generating by a process of diffusion a gradual revision of the structure of all things" ("'The Consequence of High Powers'" 273).

transformation posits a constant cultural truth, accessible, like the text of a prophecy, at all points in time. The national truth may have been compromised over time but it still continues in its essential validity, and the bard reflects this temporal duplicity. The temporally displaced bard, removed from his native culture to that of the eighteenth century, retains his epic authority while speaking in the present as a prophet in the Hebraic tradition. Lucas and Peterfreund emphasize in their discussion of the relationship between Blake's juvenilia and a recovered northern culture the genealogical linking of poets and the valorization of the bardic figure, the insertion of the poet into a tradition of prophetic, authentic voices which had Milton, despite political reservations (Lucas 45), as its exemplar. Moreover, in the case of Thomson, Gray, and Collins, this appropriation of antiquity to forge a renovated national identity was implicated in the bardic construction of the poet as one whose "ultimate responsibility . . . was, if not to radicalism, then to dissent" (44-45): the "poet-as-bard, whose epic voice cannot authentically be raised in praise of a society where freedoms are being stifled" (47-48) and who ought to be "a poet of the people" (48).[9] In brief, the bardic figure is not simply a figure for an authentic poetic voice but operates at the crux of three discourses: a nationalist, often anti-imperialist, recuperation of antiquity, the dissenting posture of the prophet in the Hebraic tradition described by Behrendt, and the populism which sought to shift the base of political as well as cultural power from the hegemony to the populace during Blake's day. The bard, like the prophet, lies outside of the contemporary communal culture and outside of temporality, and his task is to forge a connection between a latent national character and the lost culture in which that character enjoyed its full expression. He is not implicated in social evolution, but in cultural iteration--the repetition of

[9] I am simplifying Lucas's discussion of Thomson, Gray, and Collins considerably to tease out the general precepts which they found in the northern tradition. Lucas shows that the poets were uncomfortable, at best, with the radical implications of the tradition that they found so seductive.

constant cultural elements.

The atemporal and iterative framework in which the bard's role is defined resonates with a pattern that is repeated throughout Blake's writings: an instant that operates outside of chronological time (and sometimes inside spatiality instead), erupts to disrupt linearity, while iteration destablizes sequence by establishing achronic connections.[9] These alternatives to narrative not only recall the resistance to linearity and chronological histories in the *Laocoön*, as well as Blake's general resistance to causality ("The Word Cause is a foolish Word" [Anno. Bacon 626]), but resonate with many of Blake's writings on art. In his Annotations to Reynold's *Discourses*, for example, Blake contends that genius does not arise out of progressive improvement but is transhistorical and produced outside of such causation: "[Reynolds' Discourse III] Endeavours to prove That there is No such thing as Inspiration & that any Man of a plain Understanding may by Thieving from Others. become a Mich Angelo" (Anno. Reynolds 646); "Ages are All Equal. But Genius is Always Above The Age" (Anno. Reynolds 649). Thus, "If Art was Progressive We should have had Mich Angelo's & Rafaels to Succeed & to Improve upon each other But it is not so. Genius dies with its Possessor & comes not again till Another is Born with It" (Anno. Reynolds 656). Each genius, moreover, is not an exact repetition but an iteration of an eruption of genius into the mundane that differs in its manifestations. Blake argues (repeatedly) that "Every Eye Sees differently" (Anno. Reynolds 645) and "Man varies from Man more than Animal from Animal of a Different Species" (Anno. Reynolds 656). In the same section of the Annotations, Blake extends his comments about Genius being non-derivative to causation in general: "Identities or Things are Neither Cause nor Effect They are Eternal" (Anno. Reynolds 656). They are also internal, self-transforming like Blake's Genius, as "The Increase of a State as of a Man is from Internal Improvement or Intellectual Acquirement" (Anno. Bacon 625). As discussed in the previous chapter, Blake made similar claims for the history of art, using an assemblage of values that intersect in his

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[9]I use "iteration" in the sense that Derrida outlines in "Signature Event Context."

concept of genius to remove artistic objects from history and place them in a kind of ranking system that is, because its values are constant, ahistorical. Imagine a Cartesian graph, with x and y coordinates to signify time and space: Blake locates artists relative to the "degree zero" of genius in a set of coordinates that is entirely independent of historical context. Blake thus retorts, "Never!" to Reynolds' claim that the "DEGREE of excellence [of] GENIUS is different, in different times and different places" (Anno. Reynolds 656).

Conventional national narratives, however, require different premises. In "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," Bhabha argues that nationalism, of the more dominant variety, requires that the "scraps, patches, and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture, while the very act of narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects" (296). The individual genius who exists and creates independently of his time or place can neither exemplify nor encourage participation in this mundane interpellative mechanism; according to Blake, he can only channel eternal truths into the mundane world that depends upon and produces such ideologies. Blake thus situates genius, like the bard, outside of the communal perspective, outside of time, space, and other structures that distort perception, allowing only a few chinks in the cavern's walls--and he thus validates his own view of truth and proper subjectivity. Blake's resistance to certain national narratives operates within the contestation for control of such narrative. The "site of *writing the nation*" (Bhabha, "DissemiNation" 296) during this period is a contested space--the hill of which national subjects fought to be king. If the circulation of such narrative generates a sense of belonging to the nation that it constitutes, then controlling the narrative can entail control of the nation's identity and the community that it produces (a subject to which I will return at length in Chapters 5 and 6). Writing of *Jerusalem* in *Rethinking Blake's Textuality*, Molly Anne Rothenberg suggests that Blake creates

> an analytics of narrativity that reveals how narratives repress uncertainties about ends and origins by summoning

> up an ontologically transcendent "reality" to which the narrative supposedly "refers." At the same time, it shows how the vexed epistemological status of the subject in eighteenth-century moral philosophy receives an illusory grounding through the production of narratives that serve as "stable" or "coherent" memories of a "continuous" self-identity. (112)

There is a certain continuity between Rothenberg's observations and Bhabha's. Both critics posit a subject constituted by narratives that are implicated in traditional forms of authority--for Bhabha, the dominant form of modern nationalism and, for Rothenberg, "the phenomenalistically oriented self [which] exists in complicity with the oppressive metaphysics of absolute authority" (*Rethinking Blake's Textuality* 111). But Blake negotiates around this ideologically-invested closure not only by subverting narrative, but by offering a kind of counter-narrative that, like the bard, operates outside of the linearity that governs telic narrative. Blake posits a discontinuous, heterogeneous, and unstable identity that is subject to instantaneous transformation, but frames such transformations as the divestiture of the false ideologies which linearity supports. Discussing Blake's representations of apocalypse, Steven Goldsmith writes,

> Truth displaces error as new heaven and new earth displace the old; apocalypse is internal, epistemological rather than phenomenal. This interior eschatology also binds apocalypse in a most explicit way to ideology. The Last Judgment is an attempt to close the battle among conflicting judgments; it involves a restructuring of the way one thinks one's world. (160-161)

While Goldsmith goes on to argue that Blake subverts the closure of the apocalyptic transformation in other texts, the very iterability of an "internal" apocalypse enacted with every displacement of error removes the apocalyptic transformation from the taint of the teleological. Blake's resistance to linear narrative, particularly in his more apocalyptic works, arises from this view that personal epiphanies, revolutions, and the resurrection of Jerusalem must necessarily take place outside of history and chronology--paradigms that organize shared

perceptions and mitigate against individual realization or inspiration. This is consistent with the antiquarian model in which history is plotted relative to the authenticity of the cultural elements that it delineates, rejecting the march of progress in favour of a decisive return to a national and natural essence that is latent in the individual but missing from the shared culture. The unreliability of narrative, the illusion of causality and a suspicion of closure give way to momentary eruptions of the latent eternal into lapsarian temporality: eruptions that are coincident with the untaught genius of Blake's commentaries and the bards of his verse.

In the poems of the 1780's and 1790's, Blake experiments with various genres: *Poetical Sketches* (1783) includes prose pieces, songs, ballads, prologues, more conventional verse forms, and a play; *An Island in the Moon* (1784) is a satire in prose and verse;[10] *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1793) recalls the children's poetry books that had begun to appear in the previous century; *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-1793), an epithalamion between ethical sites, ranges from aphorisms to allegory and from poetry to prose; and, among the so-called Lambeth Prophecies are Preludiums, Prophecies, Books, Visions, and Songs. But these different negotiations with the rigid parameters of genre reveal an ongoing resistance to linearity, whether as a governing structure for history or as a necessary narrative structure. In the *Poetical Sketches*, self-consciously established as the poet's first work, the more politically radical texts betray a concern with the origin and sequence of events, while the overall arrangement of the poems destabilizes order and chronology. In *The Song of Los*, Blake inserts two previous works, *Europe* and *America*, into a linear narrative, punctuates that linearity with iterations and pointers that map disparate events of that narrative onto each other, and produces eddies of circularity and loci of intersecting events. *The [First] Book of Urizen* radically challenges linearity by transposing the ages of history onto the body and identifying them as decisive "changes" rather than evolutionary stages, so that an organic

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[10]Erdman deduces the date from topical allusions in the work (see "Textual Notes" 849).

whole replaces a chronological sequence and the linear narrative form of history writing is disrupted. *Milton*, as well as *Jerusalem*, repeats that organic and spatial organization of history, locating historical change not in the linear progress towards "civilization" but in the apocalyptic and epiphanic transcendance of such a construction through the instantaneous casting off of error.

Poetical Sketches and the Antique Nation

Critics have generally viewed *Poetical Sketches* as an anthology of Blake's early writings, representing his transition from juvenile imitation to the seeds of his later works, and have accepted the Advertisement, which purports to be written by someone other than Blake, more or less at face value. Peterfreund argues, however, that Blake wrote the Advertisement, using that as the basis for his discussion of originality in the collection (673-674). Whether or not it was written by Blake, the Advertisement sets the stage for a volume concerned with recuperating the "primitive" past by classifying it as authentic juvenilia:

> The following Sketches were the production of untutored youth, commenced in his twelfth, and occasionally resumed by the author till his twentieth year; since which time, his talents having been wholly directed to the attainment of excellence in his profession, he has been deprived of the leisure requisite to such a revisal of these sheets, as might have rendered them less unfit to meet the public eye.
>
> Conscious of the irregularities and defects to be found in almost every page, his friends have still believed that they possessed a poetic originality, which merited some respite from oblivion. These their opinions remain, however, to be now reproved or confirmed by a less partial public. (846)

The *Sketches* are represented as a kind of personal antiquity, an authentic remnant of a poet's early cultural productions. The Preface thus anticipates the verses' concern with engaging remnants of the nation's early cultural artifacts. Attention to the *Poetical Sketches*

has usually focussed on the seasonal poems and songs, following Frye's curt evaluation that "*Poetical Sketches* falls into two parts, a group of lyrics of startling beauty and a less distinguished group of dramatic and rhapsodic experiments which are obviously the first attempts at the prophetic form" (*Fearful Symmetry* 177). Although the degree of control that Blake had over the arrangement of these poems is unknown, their order does suggest a gradual disruption of the conventional poetic forms: the gothic "Fair Elenor" interrupts the flow of conventional Renaissance genres from sonnet to song which begin the collection, the ballad "Gwin, King of Norway" mediates between the songs and the self-conscious "Imitation of Spenser," "Blind-Man's Buff" closes the Renaissance imitations with the "style of the eighteenth century" (Lowery 201), at which point Blake turns to Renaissance drama, then the eighteenth-century fashion for dramatic prologues, and finally the late eighteenth-century vogue for Ossianic prose pieces.[11] Moving from sonnets and songs to the ballad, from poetry through drama to prose, from pastoral scenes of nature to various Northern European Kings (Gwin, Edward III, Edward IV, and John) to meditations on suffering, the *Sketches* plot the collapse of the pastoral ideal into political, earthy reality, simultaneously mapping that collapse onto the transition from "high" poetic forms to more popular genres and finally the supposed remnants of a lost primitivist culture, as well as the movement from classical to Northern European and Hebraic elements. The incursion of popular, gothic, and other elements foreign to Renaissance classicism is discernible even in the seasonal poems. Peterfreund finds nordic references in the seasonal poems which tie them to the nativist tradition resurrected by Thomson, Gray, and Collins (698-699) while Lucas argues that the seasonal poems have a popular component that "enables an audience, also artisan and city dwelling, which had been excluded from the procedures of eighteenth-century literary orthodoxy, to feel at ease with this poetry, to take

[11]This vogue was implicated in Celtic nationalism. See, for instance, Thomas Moore's "In Imitation of Ossian."

it as *their* poetry" (73).[12] This ensemble of classical and anti-classical poems can thus be viewed as an early attempt to destabilize generic expectations, to lull the reader into a false sense of poetic security through highly conventional forms--forms that are familiar as part of a shared cultural tradition--and then gradually to disrupt those expectations. This destabilizing of generic expectations is, moreover, coincident with a political turn.

The pseudo-antiquarian texts of *Sketches* reveal their participation in the political implications of antiquarian and pseudo-antiquarian works. In "Gwin, King of Norway," described by Bloom "as Blake's first handling of the theme of political and social revolt" ("Commentary" 969), Blake uses the language and genre of antique texts to represent the overthrow of a tyrant:

> Come, Kings, and listen to my song,
>   When Gwin, the son of Nore,
> Over the nations of the North
>   His cruel sceptre bore:
> The Nobles of the land did feed
>   Upon the hungry Poor . . .
> Arise, and pull the tyrant down;
>   Let Gwin be humbled. (417)

This poem anticipates many of the images later used in descriptions of Orc, from "blazing comets" to recurring images of rolling clouds and fog to sound effects such as thunder and trumpets. It also involves constructions of the political dynamic that would later appear in *America* in particular: the people's uprising against Gwin is framed as a revolt of "nations," led by the giant Gordred, against the "tyrant" and "Nobles." In distinguishing the people from the hegemony, Blake

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[12]The songs are also more accessible than the seasonal poems and sonnets. Lucas argues that the song is part of a tradition of "shared, collective utterance," a genre whose "anapaestic metres, stanza forms, rhyme schemes [are] knowable, familiar, 'owned' by those who are excluded from the society of the great cage" "of the Augustan couplet" (Lucas 79, 71). The conventional themes of Blake's songs--love, a "black ey'd maid," rural life, communion with nature--further their accessibility.

locates national identity in the former group. In the Prologue to *King John*, whose title character is the quintessential tyrant, Blake again anticipates the poems of the 1790's: "Justice hath heaved a sword to plunge in Albion's breast; for Albion's sins are crimson dy'd, and the red scourge follows her desolate sons! Then Patriot rose; full oft did Patriot rise, when Tyranny hath stain'd fair Albion's breast with her own children's gore" (439). This definition of patriotism recalls the pro-libertarian antiquarian nationalism of the late eighteenth century--the patriot, the true national subject, rises up against tyranny. Similarly, the true nation of "Albion" is populist, inclusive, and peaceful rather than tyrannical and militaristic: "O yet may Albion smile again, and stretch her peaceful arms, and raise her golden head, exultingly! Her citizens shall throng about her, her mariners shall sing upon the sea, and myriads shall to her temples crowd!" (439-440). Gleckner identifies "Gwin" and the Prologue as "effort[s] to incorporate prophecy into 'history' . . . mov[ing] immediately out of history, indeed out of all time, into an archetypal battle in the 'north'" where "the war is again both civil and internecine" (117). But this "internecine" battle is divided specifically: in both poems, Blake opposes the nationalist to the tyrant, and the people to the hegemony, thus situating the heroes on the side of a revolution against the genealogical transmission of political power. The closing lines of "Gwin" suggest that the system overthrown in the poem is genealogically transmitted to England: after the battle, "The river Dorman roll'd their blood / Into the northern sea; / Who mourn'd his sons, and overwhelm'd / The pleasant south country" (113-116), plotting the connection between the Norse situation and the English through a literal, rather than a figurative, bloodline which ties Norway and England together through the Norse river, the Northern Sea, and the tides or floods in England which indicate the sea's lament for "his sons."

"Blind-Man's Buff" seems to move in the other direction. Involving, as Gleckner notes, a traditional game described in Chatterton's *Antiquity of Christmas Games* (23), the poem describes a delightful rustic scene in which various figures join to play Blind-Man's Buff, only to have their game end in the injury of one child who,

in the role of Blind Man, is tripped by an unscrupulous player. The poem concludes with an uncharacteristic moral about the need for laws to guard against such dastardly behaviour: "The ethic espoused is one of self-restraint, playing one's part, regimentation, and eye-for-an-eye justice so totally foreign to Blake even in *Poetical Sketches* that one may justifiably be puzzled why he saved this piece" (Gleckner 25). It is not surprising that the poem has been, as Gleckner puts it, "an enigma and an embarrassment to Blake scholars" (23). Gleckner suggests that the poem, which has the same verse form as Gay's *Fables* (Gleckner 164*n*), might be a satiric subversion of the pastoral fantasy reflected in the poem's early lines (24-25) but its narrativization of national development is worth remark:

> Such are the fortunes of the game,
> And those who play should stop the same
> By wholesome laws; such as [:] all those
> Who on the blinded man impose,
> Stand in his stead; as long a-gone
> When men were first a nation grown;
> Lawless they liv'd--till wantonness
> And liberty began t' increase;
> And one man lay in another's way,
> Then laws were made to keep fair play. (61-70)

Blake thus identifies the origin of the nation in a moment of rustic play, reinforcing the positive view of the so-called "noble savage." Moreover, in repeating the rationale for legislation, he frames it as both a restraint on liberty and the symptom of a nation that has strayed too far from the pastoral ideal. As Gleckner notes, Blake "seems, rather, totally taken up with the fortunes and misfortunes of 'the game'" (24), but this is not necessarily a weakness--it is perhaps the point. The changing dynamics of the social relations depicted in the poem plot the fall from the pastoral scene of Susan, the shepherd, the "blushing bank" (3), and the verbal play of "laughing jest, the love-sick tale" and "chat" (10, 11), to flirting ("the game begins" [11]), to the decay of the game. The game rapidly declines both as a form of play and as a rule-based means of coordinating personal relationships: moving from Blind-Man's Buff without cheating to Blind-

Man's Buff with obvious but harmless cheating, it closes with undiscovered and dangerous cheating which results in a serious injury that is treated medically by the other players and then morally by the narrator. Gleckner points out that "There is a muted violence here despite the aura of jollity ushered in by the opening ten lines" that begins with the game of Blind-Man's Buff (24) upon which he suggests that the poem might have the redeeming feature of a subversive agenda. In plotting the fall, in the literal and lapsarian sense, of the children from pastoral innocence to sexual play followed by competitive games into which cheating intrudes, and in classifying their fall as one which nations experience, Blake marks legislation not as the epitome of social organization but the sign of its failure and its fall. This flies in the face of the prevailing ideology, the set of assumptions which justified imperialism in particular and hegemony in general. In his seminal essay, "Civilians and Barbarians," Seamus Deane puts the English hegemony's position since the Renaissance succinctly: "Those who live under the law are civilians; those who live beyond it are barbarians" (33). Discussing Coleridge's writings on the political turmoil in Ireland, which was still chafing at the colonial bit after two unsuccessful uprisings in 1798 and 1803, Deane notes that Coleridge shared the Renaissance "assumption that the strife in Ireland is the consequence of a battle between English civilization, based on laws, and Irish barbarism, based on local kinship loyalties and sentiments" (35). Similarly, Terry Castle finds the masquerade identified as both an example of low culture and a threat to the involuted network of the taxonomies that classify everything from class to race to ethics (an ideological framework that masqueraded as an apolitical rubric, "civilization"). Both colonization and the disempowerment of the greater part of the population were justified as the propagation of civilization while the regulations which facilitated such control were presented as the embodiment of civilization. It is this view of civilization which Blake's allegory of a nation's decay from affection to legislated protections against malice contradicts.

In "Gwin," the Prologue, and "Blind-Man's Buff," Blake polarizes the hegemonic and cultural field, placing at one extreme the people, the nation, and an original, unfallen state, and at the other the

tyrant, the hegemony, and the imposition of constraints, reflecting the same gulf that is mapped generically from the seasonal poems to the Ossianic prose pieces--the dissolution of now-familiar cultural paradigms in favour of a now-unfamiliar and relatively uncoded originary form. Blake uses the elements of antiquity and antiquarianism, from "the iron helm" (440) to the assumption of an inherent, but corrupted, national identity, to posit and sanction a view of the original culture and the hegemony which corrupted it. He works within the antiquarian genre, in other words, to further the antiquarian agenda and subvert the Augustan, rationalist, "civilizing" agenda which prevailed at the time. It should be emphasized, however, that these are not recovered materials, like Gray's free translation of *Descent of Odin*, nor even just imitations of recently recovered material, but politically-charged pseudo-antiquarian materials which engage the ideological conflict in which antiquarian work was beginning to be implicated. The pseudo-antiquarianism and popular nature of the Ossianic fragments with which the volume concludes, including the Prologue to *King John*, and of poems such as "Gwin" and "Fair Elenor," insert the poems generically into a rising conflict about national identity and political order. The poems thus construct, while claiming to reconstruct, an original identity for Northern Europe and England that is marked by pastoral harmony, liberty, and resistance to tyrannical, whether political or generic, constraint. Blake is, in this sense, very much a part of the eighteenth century in which "Liberty is the goddess of Britannia" (Lucas 41), positing liberty as the true fundamental of the original political organization from which society has strayed. The genres of the poems support this position by disrupting chronology and emphasizing instead the coincidence of different time periods, while moving generally towards the antique societies, and so challenging the premise of a genealogical development that leads society irrevocably away from its origin in a straight line. Beginning by moving through the annual cycle of seasons and then the diurnal cycle of night and day after the Advertisement's announcement that the anthology is the work of youth, Blake establishes at the outset overlapping cycles, not chronologies, of different scales and terms in which certain elements are reiterated.

Epiphany and Apocalypse: Ruptures in the Line of History

Blake continued to produce pseudo-antiquarian texts long after the *Sketches*. Written more than a decade after the material in *Poetical Sketches*, *The Song of Los* and *The [First] Book of Urizen* recall the pseudo-antiquarian texts of the early anthology through their unusual verse forms, manuscript-like appearance, and concern with pseudo-antique characters and settings. Dealing with the familiar plots of power struggles, punishment, birth and death, the poems insert themselves into a genre which encompasses Hesiod's *Theogony* and Gray's liberal translation of *Descent of Odin*: myth. This is, in a sense, stating the obvious but it is done to redirect the discussion which follows that statement. Blake criticism has traditionally been concerned with elucidating Blake's mythology, from identifying which element each figure personifies and mapping genealogies to tracing biographies among the different works in which a character appears, or with uncovering its elemental roots, tracking etymological or typological sources for the poems. At the other end of the critical spectrum, the body of work involving Los has been used to construct theories regarding Blake's thought. But, generically, the poems present themselves as early fragments of a lost culture. Blake's mythological poems are, in effect, the literary analogue to the ruins which the wealthy built on their estates during the eighteenth century, and the literary siblings of the forgeries of Chatterton, Macpherson, and Williams. In 1795, the poems were not so much the precursors of a more fully developed system or derivatives of pre-existing systems, as we have learned to perceive them, but handcrafted, illuminated, manuscripts whose texts recall the flurry of antiquarian and mythological material being published in the latter years of the eighteenth century.[13] By working within this genre, Blake not only has license to present the unfamiliar in familiar terms. He also

[13]See not just the antiquarian texts already mentioned and Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*, but also John Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* (1788) and John Bell's *New Pantheon* (1790), both of which include non-classical references (such as Odin), and William Jones' orientalist researches.

supplements his texts with the antiquarian privileging of the exotic past as the site of uncontaminated cultural identity. Politically, Blake thus inscribes his texts into the discourse in which Stukeley, Gray, and others were constructing Northernness as fundamentally imbued with liberty in opposition to the tyrannical bent of contemporary English realities. But Blake is also mapping what went wrong: he is rewriting history and formulating an exegesis of his own prophecies to assign blame where the prevailing ideology would assign kudos. He also continues to challenge the linearity and coherence upon which historical narratives are predicated by locating transformation in the ruptures in temporality.

In his pseudo-antiquarian works, Blake offers history that is not history. He not only inserts the occasional historical figure into his own mythology and so compromises the domain of historical fact, but also produces histories that, in formal terms, are defined by the ruptures in their narrative line rather than by their continuity. Through *The Song of Los*, he gathers the material of other histories and recombines it in a text that is founded upon repetition and caesura. In *Fearful Symmetry*, Frye suggests that, among Blake's Lambeth Prophecies, "there are three poems which are evidently intended to form a single group: *America*, *Europe*, and *The Song of Los*" (187). But *The Song of Los* (1795) is the work which binds the group together. Erdman notes that the first half of the *Song*, "Africa," ends with the first line of *America*'s Prophecy, in 1775, and that the second half, "Asia," begins in 1793, so that "the whole era 1775-1793 is passed over in *The Song of Los* without text, the era dealt with in the text and pictures of the two prophecies [*Europe* and *America*]" ("Symmetries" 179). Since "Africa" begins with Adam "in the garden of Eden" (*SL* 3.6) and "Asia" ends with an apocalyptic raising of the dead (*SL* 7.31-38), the use of *The Song of Los* as a frame for *Europe* and *America* duplicates the representation, within *Europe*, of history as the interruption of a song in which gathering, rather than chronology, is the governing operation by which elements are linked. *The [First] Book of Urizen* (1794), recalling both Genesis and Exodus, is Blake's first attempt at a prehistory of the main figures introduced in his prophetic material. These glosses on the prophecies operate by inserting the prophecies

into a larger narrative which has the features of mythological, and often specifically Biblical, texts. Their titles recall sections of the Bible: "The Song of Songs" is also known as "The Song of Solomon," and Solomon contains the name "Los" in the first three letters of his name; "The Book of Urizen" recalls the more conventional naming of sections, such as "The Book of Job." But there is a key difference between Blake's books, songs and prophecies and those of the Bible: Blake's works remain fragments. Caught in an intertextual web of international religious texts and histories, the Lambeth prophecies assemble fragments without ever producing a complete history. Inscriptions of Blake's own mythological or historical narratives mimic this fractal organization: Blake's myth and history is present only as traces, describing certain characters at certain moments, but never obeying the Aristotelian imperative of a beginning, middle and end. Characters' lives and political events begin and end *in medias res*. If *The Song of Los* frames *America* and *Europe* to seal them into a narrative line, where are the years 1776 to 1792? Where are the shadowy females and Orc, major players in *America* and *Europe*? Rather than framing *America* and *Europe*, *The Song of Los* takes them out of history, slicing an intersecting plane right through the plane of historical chronologies to link them directly to the acausal realm of myth and song. The intersection marks the site of an irreduceable tension between competing frames of reference rather than the resolution of those two planes into a shared frame of reference.

In *Dangerous Enthusiasm*, Mee argues that mythography in Blake's time was syncretic, "seeking to demonstrate the grand unity of all myths" (121), or the "key to all mythologies" as Eliot's Casaubon puts it--a shared frame of reference. Mee suggests that Blake saw the mythologies available to him as corrupt derivatives of a lost original, "the inspired 'poetic tales' of the ancients which came to be distorted by priestcraft" (128). The Koran, Bhagavadgita, Bible, Ossianic pieces, and others are thus different descendants of unrecovered texts in which repetitions of the originary material can be traced, and Blake's own mythological works reflect this pattern of iteration. McGann has pointed out that the poems associated with the Bible of Hell--*The [First] Book of Urizen*, *The Book of Los*, and *The Book of*

Ahania--repeat narratives from different perspectives or with different details ("Idea of an Indeterminate Text" 324), and Mee expands on this point to include *Europe* and *America* in the "reworkings of plot" which disallow "an authoritative version of a particular plot" (17). This kind of iteration can be seen in the opening lines of *The Song of Los*:

> I will sing you a song of Los, the Eternal Prophet:
> He sung it to four harps at the tables of Eternity.
> In heart-formed Africa.
> Urizen faded! Ariston shudderd!
> And thus the Song began
> Adam stood in the garden of Eden . . .
> Adam shudderd! Noah faded! (*SL* 3.1-6, 3.10)

There are two threads of iterations here. The speaker declares that he "will sing you a song," that it was "sung . . . to four harps," and that "thus the Song began," referring variously to what he will sing, the circumstances of its previous performance, and a repetition of the words of the first performance. The audience to whom the singing is directed also changes, from "you," the implied audience, to "four harps," to a descriptor which is removed from the context of performance and notes no audience. The other thread of iteration mirrors the actions of Urizen and Ariston, fading and shuddering, in Adam and Noah, the inversion typical of mirroring being indicated not only by the positive characterization of the latter characters and the negative construction of the former, but the reversal of the order of the verbs ("faded . . . shudderd" becomes "shudderd . . . faded"). Other verbal iterations are scattered through the text: "Urizen wept" (*SL* 4.17; 7.42) when the "Philosophy of Five Senses was complete" (*SL* 4.16) and again when "The SONG of LOS is Ended" (*SL* 7.41); the last line of "Africa" is the first line of *America* (Erdman, "Symmetries" 179); the image of Adam in Eden and Noah on Ararat is given at the beginning of "Africa" and repeated in modified form at the end of "Asia."[14] These kinds of repetitions are, of course, features of

[14]Erdman also suggests that the howling in "Asia" echoes that of *Europe* ("Symmetries" 179), but that is not a verbal echo of the kind that concerns me here, but an iteration of a plot element.

poetry which is close to an oral tradition.[15] But the iterations are located at points of beginning and ending--in the prologue, the first and last lines of "Africa" and the last lines of the *Song*, as well as the completion of materialist "Philosophy"--mapping the different telic points onto each other so that the texts no more have a stable beginning and ending than does *Laocoön*.

Blake uses similar conventions in his representations of social history. In *Europe*, for instance, the temporal dimension of the mythical world is collapsed relative to that of the historical domain--"And eighteen hundred years were fled / As if they had not been" (*Eur* 13.10-11), during an interruption to Enitharmon's song that is so brief that she cannot discern it. I shall return to this scission between myth and history in Chapter Three, but I want to emphasize here the instantaneous quality of the non-historical domain to which the "eighteen hundred years" of history are contrasted, a quality that Blake refers to at the beginning and end of the historical portion of the narrative, closing the gap of historical intrusion with an iteration. Enitharmon's mythical world, the space from which historical change erupts in the apocalyptic close of the poem, is outside of history and chronology.

At the same time, Blake disturbs received chronologies. By asserting that Adam "in the garden of Eden" and "Noah on the mountains of Ararat" "saw Urizen give his Laws to the Nations" (*SL* 3.6, 3.7, 3.8), Blake collapses the pre-lapsarian moment with the end of the flood. The reader can elaborate on the passage and suppose that Adam "saw Urizen give his laws" and then Noah "saw Urizen give his laws," but Blake writes, "They saw Urizen give his laws": the typological connection between the two first men of the human race and the decay from generation to generation of their progeny is placed above chronology. Similarly, the narrator claims that "Palamabron gave an abstract Law: / To Pythagoras Socrates & Plato" (*SL* 3.18-19). Pythagoras lived a century before Socrates and Plato, so that again chronology is collapsed to establish a pattern. Genealogy is also

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[15]See, for instance, Essick (***William Blake and the Language of Adam*** 69ff).

disrupted in this characterization, since Plato is not the student of Socrates, nor is the Pythagorean tradition distinguished from the Socratic, but all are equally the recipients of another philosopher's message. Moreover, Blake takes different chronologies, including the Hebraic, classical, Christian, Islamic, and Norse, and weaves them into another chronology that is concerned not with the generation of thinkers but the fragmentation of humanity by race (*SL* 3.10), war (*SL* 3.13-14), the institution of laws (*SL* 3.17-3.20), jealousy (*SL* 3.21), and isolation (*SL* 3.25-27). The central figures of the pre-existing chronologies are then inserted into this social chronology. Their removal from their own chronologies disrupts causal relationships, a disruption for which Blake's ascription of the first cause to his own mythological figures compensates. Instead of describing the development of Islamic thought by discussing its relationship to the Hebrew tradition and others, Blake need only write "Antamon call'd up Leutha from her valleys of delight: / And to Mahomet a loose Bible gave" (*SL* 3.29). But Blake's causation does not merely allow him to avoid giving the other chronologies--it allows him to create a causation that operates outside of existing chronologies and chronology itself. In "Africa," Blake writes a history of the world in which a series of uncontextualized mythological figures initiate divisiveness through surrogates who are then idolized within other chronologies. Blake thus not only represents the leading figures of various religions as the recipients of false, destructive doctrine without offering a valid alternative. He also breaks apart the chronologies which construct those figures as the catalysts for important and valued changes in thinking.

Blake's satire on Genesis, *The [First] Book of Urizen*, offers a further challenge to chronology. While *The Song of Los* disrupts the sequence of its narrative line through repetition and removes elements of other chronologies to insert them into a new chronology, *Urizen* offers an entirely new way of conceiving the flow of history. The ages of Urizen are not plotted in years, or epochs, but in the growth of parts of the body.

> A vast Spine writh'd in torment
> Upon the winds; shooting pain'd

Ribs, like a bending cavern
And bones of solidness, froze
Over all his nerves of joy.
And a first Age passed over. (*BU* 10.37-42)
From the caverns of his jointed Spine . . . Trembling
Shooting out ten thousand branches
Around his solid bones.
And a second Age passed over. (*BU* 12.1, 5-8)
Two Ears in close volutions.
From beneath his orbs of vision
Shot spiring out and petrified
As they grew. And a fourth Age passed. (*BU* 12.21-24)
He threw his right Arm to the north
His left Arm to the south
Shooting out in anguish deep.
And his Feet stamped the nether Abyss . . .
And a seventh Age passed over. (*BU* 13.13-18)

The "changes of Urizen" (*BU* 8.12) not only plot the growth of the body, from skeletal structure (first), to nervous system (second), eyes (third), ears (fourth), nostrils (fifth), organs necessary to eating (sixth) and limbs (seventh), but describe these extensions in non-linear terms, as enclosed spaces (*BU* 10.39-41; 11.3; 12.14; 13.5-7), a spectacularly multi-linear net (*BU* 12.6-7, 12.11-12), spiral formations (*BU* 12.21-23), segmented lines (*BU* 11.1), or, at least, bi-directional lines (*BU* 13.13-14). This goes beyond Los's attempt to confine Urizen corporeally, and maps a series of ages onto the bodily form in a way that denies linearity and is identified with discontinuous transformation, with "change," rather than evolution or progress. Bloom mentions, almost as an aside, that Los's work "to organize some definite outline for [Urizen], includ[es] the desperate invention of clock-time" ("Commentary" 907), as "the hammer / Incessant beat; forging chains new & new / Numb'ring with links, hours, days & years" (*BU* 10.16-18). But that invention of a means of measuring linear time only emphasizes the unusual means used in the poem. The different Ages are also tied together through the iteration of an "Age passed over, / And a state of dismal woe" (*BU* 10.43-44), so that each age, while

numbered, is equated with an identical "state of dismal woe," suggesting a history that is at once cyclical, moving through the same state periodically, sequential, through its numbered epochs, and unteleologically organic, through its mapping onto a non-linear body. Repetition and a non-sequential, organic collection of parts are all used not only to identify the epochs of Urizen's changes, but also to contain their destructive potential: while Los's "Numb'ring" inventories Urizen as well as time, controlling them by dividing them into an assemblage of objects like a Petrarchan blazon,[16] iteration and other extra-linear connections forge alternative alliances. Anatomically, the first age is connected to the sixth and seventh ages, and the second age links all seven periods together, in ways that are unmappable in one dimension, or even two. This challenge to conventional chronology is reiterated formally. The division of the poem into chapters and numbered sections not only parodies Biblical organization but breaks apart the narrative line, dividing it into discrete units rather than establishing it as a coherent, unbroken line. Moreover, the tree-like branches that link the sections in Blake's designs suggest an alternative organic organization that mirrors the mapping of the ages onto the body. Like the convolutions of the *Laocoön* statue and the texts in which Blake wraps it, the organs of the body of Urizen and the pieces of the textual body of *Urizen* offer a space where conventional narrative would offer a line. The branching of the tree, or perhaps nervous system, that separates each piece of text on the page also links those pieces in a way that their cold enumeration cannot imagine.

Milton and the Dissolution of National Narrative

In *Milton*, Blake takes this *Laocoön*-like disruption of narrative linearity even further. He not only challenges conventional notions of temporality but, as many critics have noted, produces a text that is an assemblage of iterations. In his first completed, and printed, long

[16]Patricia Parker, for instance, identifies the blazon with a rhetoric of property in which the woman's body is "inventoried" ("Rhetorics of Property" 126).

poem, Blake not only returns again and again to the same events, images, and phrases, but also repeats passages from his earlier works and echoes Milton's writings. Blake thus generates the same kind of complex intertextual affiliations as *The Song of Los* and, through internal repetitions, turns the text back into itself tying passages together in a complex filigree that recalls the patterning suggested by the tree-like branches of *Urizen* as well as the repetition of words and scripts in *Laocoön*.

In her influential study, *Poetic Form in Blake's* Milton, Fox writes, "Accruing definitions, simultaneity, multiple perspectives all are organized in *Milton* by the elaborate system of parallels that is the poem's basic framework" (24), arguing that the poem is the sum of different perspectives on a single event and that meaning is the sum of the definitions of a single term.[17] Andrew Cooper, however, takes issue with Fox's emphasis on parallelism, arguing that Blake's

> emphasis falls on their non-identicality and non-convertibility. . . . *Milton*'s "parallelism" is purely functional. It is the rehearsal of a single prophetic pattern on several different levels which serve, first, to expose the animating truth behind the pattern (the Logos of the conclusion), but then also to serve to signal the falseness of reducing this truth to any of the vehicles that shadow it forth (the mythopoeic Bard, the mythological Los, the various spiritual figures of Milton, or the historical character William Blake in Felpham garden circa 1800). ("Blake's Escape from Mythology" 90-91)

Albert J. Rivero, who does not cite either study, suggests that "all these events are versions of the same event, viewed from different perspectives" (31), but locates this in the context of typology rather than formal repetition. All three critics argue that the "Truth" is, in *Milton*, revealed through a composite of "truths" that is formed

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[17]Fox, for example, argues that the definitions of the "Three Classes" "accrue" so that "our fullest understanding of them does not come until nearly the end of the poem" (*Poetic Form in Blake's* Milton 22).

through reference to a particular hermeneutic practice, whether typology (Rivero), "accruing" (Fox) or the deconstructive sum which shows the inadequacy of its constituent parts (Cooper). But this concern with what is repeated suppresses what is not: each recurrence of one entity entering the foot of another is described in different terms, is spoken by a different voice, is located in a different portion of the poem, and is affected by its membership in a set of repeated images. In other words, it is iterated in the sense that Derrida uses the term in "Signature, Event, Context": "Every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, . . . can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts" (12). Each iteration, or citation, operates within a different context, creating not a rigid series to be summed or divided, but a dynamic of interrelationships. Moreover, given Blake's disruption of regular notions of time in *Milton*, this iterability needs to be placed outside of linearity.

Yvonne Carothers has argued that Blake's representations of time and space in *Milton* are Kantian, characterizing them as imaginative constructs rather than empirical standards. Thus, for example, Blake suggests that space and time are constructs which distort truth:

> But in Eternity the Four Arts: Poetry, Painting, Music,
> And Architecture which is Science: are the Four Faces of Man.
> Not so in Time & Space: there Three are shut out, and only
> Science remains thro Mercy: & by means of Science, the Three
> Become apparent in Time & Space, in the Three Professions.
> (*M* 27.55-59)

It is not time and space *per se* that are constructions of the imagination, but only their coding of the epistemological field. Space is thus "Limited / To those without but Infinite to those within" (*M* 10.8-9). Like the TARDISS of science fiction or Mary Poppins' carpet bag, standards of space are rendered specific to a particular vantage point, relativistic in senses that even Einstein would find far-fetched. In *Milton*, Blake plays relentlessly with concepts of time and space that are at odds with the notions which inform historiography, as

well as the generic distinctions plotted by Lessing. Time becomes an elaborate architecture, as "the Sons of Los build Moments & Minutes & Hours / And Days & Months & Years & Ages & Periods; wondrous buildings" (*M* 28.44-45), so that "every Minute has an azure Tent with silken Veils" (*M* 28.50) and "every Year, invulnerable Barriers with high Towers" (*M* 28.55), while every period of time that evades this taxonomical architecture has qualities that recall Enitharmon's song as well as that of Los:

> Every Time less than a pulsation of the artery
> Is equal in its period & value to Six Thousand Years.
> For in this Period the Poets Work is Done: and all the Great
> Events of Time start forth & are conceivd in such a Period
> Within a Moment: a Pulsation of the Artery. (*M* 28.62-29.3)

As in *Europe*, this timeless space--"the pulsation of the artery" rather than the interruption of Enitharmon's song--is bracketed by iterations that describe an indiscernible instant, and that space is the region from which decisive transformations of the historical domain originate. Moreover, as in *Europe*, the iterations that mark the temporal breach are not accurate citations. In *Europe*, "Enitharmon slept, / Eighteen hundred years" (*Eur* 9.1-2), and "Then Enitharmon awoke, nor knew that she had slept / And eighteen hundred years were fled" (*Eur* 13.9-10), repeating the period of the gap as well as "Enitharmon" and "slept."[19] In *Milton*, again, the period of the gap is repeated, but its capitalization is changed: "Every time less than a pulsation of the

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[19]Similarly, the opening and closing plates of the poem, marking the start of Enitharmon's song and the second historical interruption of it are linked through repetition: first, the "secret child" "Descended thro' the orient gates" (*Eur* 3.2, 3.3) and "all the troops like shadows fled to their abodes" (*Eur* 3.4), and later "morning ope'd the eastern gate" (*Eur* 14.35) and "every one fled to his station" (*Eur* 14.36). Thus, the crossing from history into myth and from myth into history share images associated with time (the "eastern" or "orient" gates of sunrise) and space (the proper places of the different troops).

artery" (*M* 28.62) and "Within a Moment: a Pulsation of the Artery" (*M* 29.3). The breach is never quite sealed, marking the seepage across the temporal divide. Social and political change does not arise from historical evolution, the slow steady march towards civilization, but from beyond such chronological constructions in eruptions of the eternal domain through genius: "Come into my hand / By your mild power; descending down the Nerves of my right arm / From out the Portals of my Brain, where by your ministry / The Eternal Great Humanity Divine. planted his Paradise" (*M* 2.5-8).

These poems defamiliarize historiographical convention as well as historical touchstones, disrupting causal and linear constructions of history and relocating familiar historical persons and moments. Instead, the sociopolitical domain is transformed outside of such historical narratives and constituted in iterations rather than causalities and stable sequences. Milton's movement through the lapsarian world of *Milton*, embodied in its commercial and industrial landscape as well as classical militarism (see Chapter Five), traces the individual's release from a corrupt communal view of the nation, crossing through various closed spheres (*M* 33). The decay of rigid literary structure traced through the pages of *Poetical Sketches* reaches a new limit in *Milton*, shattering the communal perspective in favour of individual epiphany. Further, it marks the transition to personal epiphany rather than communal apocalypse. Just as *The Song of Los* opens the histories of *Europe* and *America* into a different frame of reference that is nominally personal (as the song of Los), just as Enitharmon's song halts the flow of history, just as the pulsation of the artery brackets prophetic transformation, *Milton* locates the effects of narrative and anti-narrative in the individual rather than in the collective that the former seeks to produce. Instead of national narratives generated by pseudo-antiquarian mythologies that resurrect the Nordic elements of British culture, Blake writes a pseudo-biography in which one national figure negotiates his way through corrupting and alien elements of the communal culture to emerge from their shackles.

Throughout these different works, Blake contests elements of the

shared national culture and narrative, displacing the pastoral in favour of the Nordic, replacing the Christian myths with unique amalgams of various mythologies that are true to none of them, and transposing Milton from the milieu of the usual biographies of the poet to a space in which the nation is constituted quite differently. In *Milton*, the poet must evade the national narrative that he helped to produce--primarily the paradigmatic tale of the national hero who dies for his nation--and so escape the communal economy of a nation bound by duty and self-sacrifice. Blake's critique of a particular brand of nationalism in *Milton* is the subject of Chapter Five, but here it will suffice to say that Milton's release is, on a fundamental level, the poet's escape from the community into personal vision. It is a personal vision that is defined by Blake's personal vision, of course, and implicated in Blake's construction of Albion, but it is figured as such in the poem. The apocalypse is not the actual destruction of the nation, but the poet's epistemological release from it--his final alienation from the communal, temporally bound, perspective. Like other nationalists who appropriated antiquarian discourse for political ends, Blake posits an inherent, latent identity that is discontinuous with the collective national identity but continuous with his notion of a culturally-specific ahistorical character. Post-antiquarian genres, from seasonal poems to histories and epic narratives, are part of the false, collective culture, and are cast off or subverted throughout Blake's corpus along with the linearity that both valorizes and defines them.

Chapter Three
"How Different the World to Them": Revolutionary Heterogeneity and Alienation

> Titus, as though shaking off his past from his shoulders like a heavy cape, began to run down the far side of the mountain, not by the track by which he had ascended, but by another that he had never known before.
>
> Mervyn Peake, *Titus Alone*

In *Jerusalem*, Blake, or rather Los, makes one of his more famous declarations: "I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans" (*J* 10.20). Critical emphasis usually falls on the imperative, however, rather than the warning which follows it. But that warning does more than establish that rational systems are limiting; it describes them as enslaving, a term that connotes institutionalized subjugation and abuses of power, and it alienates the speaker from the system by defining it as "another Mans."[1] To belong to the prevailing system is to be enslaved; to create one's own system is to be isolated from the community. While Chapter Two addressed the formal, generic conventions that support such systems and Blake's subversion of them, the present is concerned with the means by which Blake plots the separation of the individual from interpellative social paradigms in prophecies that more

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[1]For a psychological, rather than a political, view of alienation in Blake's works, see Steven Shaviro. Shaviro argues that the ironic subversiveness of Blake's poems puts the reader into an alienating double-bind:

> This schizophrenic act of interpretation takes the psychological form of an identification of oneself and one's own position with that which can only be conceptualized, nevertheless, as something external and superior to oneself. A structure of alienation can only be overcome insofar as it is simultaneously objectified, eternally fixated as a structure, as an alienation. (245)

clearly address contemporary politics. Nietzsche outlines the dynamic: "man . . . wants to live socially in the herd, [so] he needs a peace agreement," a "system" in Blake's terminology, so that "what 'truth' will be from now on is fixed; a uniformly valid and binding terminology for things is invented" (247). Various critics of this century have elaborated on Nietzsche's point, emphasizing, like Nietzsche, the "invented" quality of the norms which members of society are taught to take for granted as unquestioned truths. Roland Barthes calls them myths, arguing that they compose an attenuated repository of meaning, attenuated in that "myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it things lose the memory that they were once made" (142). Like Nietzsche's Truths, they "are illusions about which it has been forgotten that they *are* illusions" (Nietzsche 250):

> The nature of the mythical signification can in fact be well conveyed by one particular simile: it is neither more nor less arbitrary than an ideograph. Myth is a pure ideographic system, where the forms are still motivated by the concept which they represent while not yet, by a long way, covering the sum of its possibilities for representation. (Barthes 127)

This "myth" or "Truth" is, moreover, a system that is homogeneous in the sense that Georges Bataille describes in his essay, "The Psychological Structure of Fascism": "*Homogeneity* signifies here the commensurability of elements: human relations are sustained by a reduction to fixed rules based on the consciousness of the possible identity of delineable persons and situations" (137-138) and "*Homogeneous* society is productive society, namely, useful society. Every useless element is excluded, not from all of society, but from its *homogeneous* part" (138). Foucault calls it "order," writing that

> A 'system of elements'--a definition of segments by which the resemblances and differences can be shown, the types of variations by which those segments can be affected, and, lastly, the threshold above which there is a difference and below which there is a similitude--is indispensable for the establishment of even the simplest form of order. Order is, at one and the same time, that which is given in things

> as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language. (*Order* xx)

A set of symbols is thus organized around principles that are held to be fundamental and common to all of its constituent elements, as well as different from that which is fundamental and common to all of the elements which do not belong to it. This principle of homogeneity fosters conservatism, because to exile difference is to refuse change.[2] These are the systems of "Single vision & Newtons sleep" (722), in which rationalists "Reason & Compare" (*J* 10.21), governed by the requirement of homogeneity, the rationalism of either/or, and the solace of membership.

As Ault notes, "Throughout his career Blake waged uncompromising war against 'Single vision,' which he perceived infiltrating the most crucial fields of existence, binding down and artificially limiting social organization, individual fulfillment, narrative possibility, and language itself" (3). This is the homogeneity promulgated to ensure the maintenance of an order like that described by Foucault. Heterogeneity, however, can pry apart its grip. Discussing Paine's "analysis of the enslaving properties of customary power," Rothenberg suggests that by "advocating alienation, heterogeneity, and mobile alliances, Paine . . . establishes the conditions for the creation of new forms of political organization and social structures . . . that resist or dismantle the accretions of customary power" ("Parasiting America" 347, 348).[3] To exceed the bounds of the homogeneous system,

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[2]Barthes, for example, notes that

> Statistically, myth is on the right. There, it is essential; well-fed, sleek, expansive, garrulous, it invents itself ceaselessly. It takes hold of everything, all aspects of the law, of morality, of aesthetics, of diplomacy, of household equipment, of Literature, of entertainment. (148)

[3]The ideological and social links between Paine and Blake are well-established. Erdman argues that, on the basis of evidence linking both Blake and Paine with the Johnson circle which also included Godwin,

by being alienated from it, by exposing it as heterogeneous, or by moving from one system to another and so refuting its close hold on the elements which define it, is to reveal the possibility of change as well as the possibility of difference--to defamiliarize "customary power" and force the contemplation of alternatives external to the homogeneous system. The unfamiliar and the alienating, married in the various translations of Shklovsky's term, *priem ostraneniye*, and extensions of it in Brecht's "alienation effect," associate the new perspective with an external position, estranged from the familiar perspective and those who share it, just as it is in Paine's writings as analyzed by Rothenberg. Defamiliarization alienates the percipient from the semiological systems which guarantee a homogeneous society and so makes possible the critique of that society and the contemplation of alternatives--it draws the line between "my system" and "another Mans." This is what Blake is exploring in the poems that he dated 1793 and 1794, *America; A Prophecy* (1793), *Europe; A Prophecy* (1794), and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793).[4] The conflicts between different discursive systems in those texts produce the alienation and heterogeneity that each system, by itself, cannot admit: within the military, the political structure, notions of sexual propriety, or any

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Wollstonecraft and Fuseli, "We may suppose that author [Paine] and artist [Blake] met" (*Prophet* 156). Blake also wrote, but did not publish, a defense of Paine and Erdman suggests that Tharmas is modelled, in part, on Paine (*Prophet* 301-302; 299). Moreover, as Essick shows in his recent article, Blake and Paine are not only linked ideologically and socially but also share "common . . . rhetorical strategies" ("William Blake" 194).

[4]Erdman suggests that the final version of *America* "was completed a year or two later" than the date on the title page, 1793 ("Textual Notes" 802). In terms of my argument, this would be neater since the division of perspectives decays from *Visions* through *Europe* to comparative chaos in *America*, but my point depends not on the chronology of the material--in terms of when it was written or what events are being described--but on the proximity of the action to revolution, where the closer a poem is to describing a successful revolution the more transgressive it is.

other system that constructs itself as homogeneous, that which does not fit cannot be accommodated except by the strategy of exclusion that Bataille describes. In *Europe* and *Visions*, mutually exclusive systems are brought into contact so that the borders by which they divide are mapped, but their homogeneity, though briefly challenged in each text, is finally sustained. In *America*, however, those borders are not marked by unyielding battlements but exposed as they are transgressed.

Rather than marking the divide, *America* deals with the eddies in the boundary as seepage across the divide takes place: Angels descend from heaven and become historical heroes, George III changes names and shapes, and even God is exposed as ambivalent. It is in this flux within a boundary which is failing to bound that revolution is possible: it is the only "outside" which is not another homogeneous "inside," the heterogeneous space in which assumptions mingle with their alternatives. David L. Clark describes a similar space: "Irreducibly divided from itself, the field of contraries ideally defers the emergence of a fixed center, a singularity or 'Negation' (as Blake would come to call it) which would assimilate that field to an outlying or underlying unity" (93). In these poems, however, the space in which this is possible is not a separate field but a marginal space in which various systems mix, the intersection of a set of interlocking fields like that depicted in the illustration on Plate 33 of *Milton*.[5] Such a space is still implicated in the systems which intersect in it: as Derrida argues, "all destructive discourses . . . must inhabit the structures they demolish" ("La Parole Soufflée" 194), and Blake still operates within the terms of the systems which he critiques. David Gross suggests that Blake

> create[s] a poetic practice which limits the inevitable hegemonic effects of his own discourse by the very newness and unfamiliarity of his imaginative projections. What he retains from the existing mythos . . . are those aspects of human vision which he feels have survived hegemony's

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[5]In this context, it is perhaps significant that Blake represents the intersection of the four spheres in the shape of an egg, suggesting birth, potential, organicism and other positive images of change.

distortion. (6-7)

But it is not always so easy to separate the new from the uncontaminated in Blake's texts. By plotting the intersection of different systems rather than the centre of a homogeneous space, however, he helps to constitute a dynamic space in which choices can be made. This hybrid space appears briefly in *Europe*, as myth and history meet only to be separated by rationality in the form of Newton's trumpet blast, but it is in *America*, the narrative of a successful revolution, that the liberating force of the flux at the margins is realized. At the end of *America*, "the five gates of their law-built heaven . . . were consum'd, & their bolts and hinges melted" (*Am* 16.19, 16.22).

Visions of the Daughters of Albion and the Alienation of Oothoon

Visions of the Daughters of Albion is one of Blake's most explicit attacks on existing institutions. From slavery to marriage, conventional assumptions about property and propriety, rights and needs, love and power, are raised to be challenged in the conflict between the protagonists. Its central event is also controversial. Frye suggests that "Blake may have been protesting against" "that very conventional story of a romantic heroine's preference of death to dishonor [in Ossian's *Oithona*]" (*Fearful Symmetry* 238). But, despite the value of this protest, critics have still been troubled by Blake's handling of the rape. Fox suggests that Blake chose a female protagonist because "he needed a chief character who could be raped and tied down and suppressed without recourse" ("Female as Metaphor" 513) while Rajan notes that

> By figuring the Blakean paradigm through the story of a rape, the poem calls into question the very making of figures, crossing aesthetics with ethics and asking us whether it is right to use rape as a figure of something else. Blake's own complicity in this displacement is marked by the curious fact that Oothoon's rape is not simply refigured; it is never actually named in the poem. It enters the poem not only as a figure for other violations that are similarly named, but also through a

figure: the figure of Bromion's thunders. (248)

These two different views of the rape meet within the context of alienation: rape, according to contemporary understanding, could only happen to women. No man could enter the world of the rape victim except figuratively, by likening it to something else or by referring to it obliquely through clichés which everyone could decode, such as "the fate worse than death."[6] It is exclusively the Daughters of Albion, the only other women in the poem, who "hear her woes. & eccho back her sighs" (*VDA* 2.20): "Theotormon hears [her] not" (*VDA* 2.37) and Bromion can only "hear [her] lamentations" (*VDA* 3.1). The rape not only places Oothoon beyond the pale of patriarchy's paradigms of social acceptability but also beyond the experience of those with whom she is concerned, Bromion and Theotormon. Conversely, Oothoon cannot place herself outside of her experience to understand their inability to comprehend her position, the inability with which she tries to come to terms in her speeches.[7] The rape, as something which is, according to cultural codes, unavailable to male experience and inadmissible by the public face of patriarchal ideology,[8] drives an alienating wedge

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[6]Such a euphemism reflects the infection of language by ideology: this cliché naturalizes Oithona's choice and elides the agency of the rapist in the word "fate," ensuring the removal of the victim from the society which cannot acknowledge that it allows such victimization as well as protecting society from confronting the social causes of the violence as Blake does in *Visions*.

[7]I here depart from the recuperative position, articulated, for instance, by Fox, that Oothoon "passes from Innocence through Experience to a confident new vision of reality that subsumes both. . . . The whole poem may be seen as a dialectic between her comprehensive perspective and their fragmented perspectives" (*Poetic Form in Blake's* Milton 8). Oothoon's perspective may be outside of certain "fragmented perspectives" and comprehend them, but it is nevertheless still limited, as indicated by her interrogatory declamations and, more importantly, her far from confident "wailing" and lamentatory closing lines.

[8]I refer here to the many ways in which the problem of rape is denied or suppressed within broadly patriarchal ideologies. From the contention that victims of rape "asked for it"--with the implication

between the characters, leaving them to grapple with figures in their attempt to comprehend the communal implications of the event.

Even classifying the act as a "rape" is an interpretive leap that cannot necessarily be made, by the characters or by many of Blake's contemporaries. If slavery is the "master trope" of *Visions* (Hilton 78; Goslee 103), then sex is the master signified. Damrosch writes that "one can argue that the problem lies in their attitude toward sex rather than in sex itself, but I think that Blake wants us to consider both possibilities" (199), but I would suggest that Blake's notion of what "sex itself" might be is not represented in this poem. Instead, Blake offers only a clash of perspectives, none of which are granted uncompromised authority. *Visions* does not ask what sex means in any absolute sense but explores the different meanings which can be attached to it, and perhaps asks if there are any unexplored alternatives. Unwilling, or unable, to accept the premise of unlawful seizure, Bromion figures the central event as harlotry.[7] A crucial question raised by the poem is to what extent licit sex and rape are interchangeable: Oothoon is assaulted but she is labelled a "harlot" and "adulterate," while wives "turn the wheel of false desire" (*VDA* 5.27), suggesting that they are no more willing than Oothoon. If

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that the act was at least partially consensual and therefore not completely a rape as well as the assurance that anyone who is properly virtuous cannot therefore be subjected to such violence--to a reluctance to acknowledge the pervasiveness of such violence, there has been resistance to examining the unromantic consequences of the objectification and scientific, social, political and economic disempowerment of women. In *Sesame and Lilies*, for instance, John Ruskin assures his readers that women are safe as long as they remain in the domestic environment and are only in danger of violence if they transgress those terms of their confinement (101-102), locating sexual violence in evasions of the patriarchal model rather than extensions of it.

[7]As Rajan notes, mentioning Tannenbaum (188), "Since it is Oothoon who plucks the marigold, it is not entirely clear that she is raped according to then-prevailing legal definitions of the term" (*Supplement of Reading* 248).

women's desires are invisible to the paradigms through which sex is discussed, then distinguishing rape and licit sex becomes difficult except through the factors which those paradigms do recognize, such as territorial or proprietorial claims.[10] Each character interprets the act differently but within those paradigms: Bromion views it as a sign of conquest that indelibly marks Oothoon and her children as possessions (*VDA* 1.20-23), Theotormon views it as a personal loss which nature, through the pathetic fallacy, reflects (*VDA* 3.22-4.11); and Oothoon regards it as an event which has defiled her in the view of others.[11] Although Bromion declares that she is a "harlot" (*VDA* 1.18; 2.1), Theotormon's own declarations do not support that view. Oothoon speaks for Theotormon:

> And does my Theotormon seek this hypocrite modesty!
> This knowing, artful, secret, fearful, cautious, trembling
> hypocrite.

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[10]In the late eighteenth century, definitions of rape were changing as notions of female sexuality and reproduction altered. Laqueur notes that, until the 1820's, many medical texts claimed that rape could not result in pregnancy, citing, among others, Samuel Farr's assertion, "in the first legal-medicine text to be written in English (1785)," that "without an excitation of lust, or enjoyment in the venereal act, no conception can possibly take place," although such a defence probably did not succeed in court (161, 162). Bromion's assertion that Oothoon has conceived is therefore additionally insidious because it could be interpreted as his attempt to pre-empt charges of rape by indirectly claiming her consent.

[11]Goslee suggests that while "Bromion and Theotormon attempt to work out new ways of looking at their worlds, [Oothoon] works out a new way of looking at such defilement" (111), but Bromion and Theotormon are also dealing with the rape, albeit in egocentric terms. Bromion rewrites the rape by calling Oothoon a "harlot," "believ[ing] that his victim was asking for it" (Ostriker 157), as well as an object of conquest (*VDA* 1.18-2.2), while Theotormon projects his emotional response to the rape onto the natural world (*VDA* 3.22-4.11), an approach which Bromion takes up by turning his attention to the world "unvisited by the voyager" (*VDA* 4.17), arguably a euphemistic way of saying "unconquered," the "mysterious and remote world beyond his reach" (Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* 239).

> Then is Oothoon a whore indeed! and all the virgin joys
> Of life are harlots: and Theotormon is a sick mans dream
> And Oothoon is the crafty slave of selfish holiness.
> *But Oothoon is not so.* (*VDA* 6.16-21; my emphasis)

Having been "brand[ed] . . . with the name of whore" (*VDA* 6.12) by Bromion and by the values which she ascribes to Theotormon, she "is not so" but is "Open to joy and to delight where ever beauty appears / If in the morning sun [she] find[s] it" (*VDA* 6.22-23). Oothoon contrasts her view of herself with the Urizenic view she finds in Theotormon and Bromion--"How different their eye and ear! how different the world to them!" (*VDA* 5.16). Oothoon thus describes the construction of the fallen woman in various discourses and then places herself outside of those paradigms. Oothoon does not allow the sexual act to which she did not consent to inscribe her into the patriarchal paradigms by which sex is comprehended, to classify her as either wife or whore and, in either case, as the property of a man to whom her desires are irrelevant.[12] Instead, Oothoon places herself outside of those systems by declaring that she "is not so" and identifying herself as the subject, rather than the object, of desire, a classification that cannot be recognized within the patriarchal systems that she critiques. Given the prevalence of those systems in Blake's England and the only recent radical re-thinking of those systems in Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Oothoon's perspective is defamiliarizing: through her, Blake not only takes the unusual step of giving a voice to the rape victim who affronts expectations by choosing to live, but also articulates views of imperialism, marriage, and female sexuality which are not coincident with the prevailing ideologies. Placed "on the margin of non-entity" (*VDA* 7.15) by patriarchy, she is alienated from the system and therefore in a position to offer another view of it.

The scene of Oothoon's alienation from the men which concludes *Visions* is often seen as a failure, as the consequence of the men's inability to convert to Oothoon's views or Oothoon's inability to

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[12]See Goslee for the argument that Oothoon and Theotormon are married (108).

convert them. James A. W. Heffernan writes that "Oothoon remains a fascinating outsider because her attitude will not fit the structures of power and submission with which societies customarily organize themselves" yet laments that "she neither converts the men who oppress her nor liberates herself from them" (18). Thomas A. Vogler, on the other hand, suggests that "nothing will change in this story until Oothoon pays more attention to why her proselytizing (whether for free love, prophecy, or imagination) is not working" (305). Both Vogler and Heffernan assume that the desireable conclusion is a successful conversion as well as, implicitly, the romantic ending of a reconciliation between Theotormon and Oothoon.[13] What Erdman calls a "three-sided soliloquy" (*Prophet* 236), however, is not necessarily a failure. Bracher argues that each of the three figures "represents a metaphysical perspective," where Bromion is an empiricist, Theotormon an idealist, and Oothoon an "avatar of that intrinsic dynamism . . . of organic existence itself" ("Metaphysical Grounds of Oppression" 165, 166). These perspectives are fundamentally incommensurable:

> the truth manifested by this self-moving, self-transforming dimension of existence is not accommodated by the dimension of essences and absolutes, as constituted by the idealist or theocentric perspective. Instead of embracing the joy to be found in existence . . . this perspective dwells in the realm of amorphous, homogeneous, universal substance. (Bracher, "Metaphysical Grounds of Oppression" 175-176)

This incommensurability of perspectives, however, liberates one from the other in a manner suggested by Rothenberg's comments on Paine's notion of alienation:

> Paine's analysis of the enslaving properties of customary power uncovers three successive sites of alienation. First, he shows that each individual is alienated from his or her natural rights and true interests by the veil of custom. Second, in order to see through that veil, the

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[13]See also, for example, Goslee (115), Hilton (102), Wagenknecht (*Blake's Night* 206), Ferber ("Blake's Idea of Brotherhood" 444), and Fox ("Female as Metaphor" 512).

> rhetor must be alienated from the community. Finally, and most critically, the return of each individual to a perfect civil liberty requires that each be alienated from the others, since the "right of self-interest" of each member of the populace . . . must be held as inalienable property, a wedge rather than a link between individuals.[14] ("Parasiting America" 347)

Quite apart from its utility as a description of Paine's work, this passage is useful for redirecting analysis of *Visions* away from the failure of the three protagonists to resolve their differences and towards the positive implications of their mutual alienation, their liberation from the bonds of the shared lies that Nietzsche exposes. Rothenberg's "three successive sites of alienation" coincide with the plot of *Visions*. Bromion's actions and speech, legitimizing conquest, the enslavement of children, and the rape victim's status as a "harlot," reveal the denial of Oothoon's rights as well as those for whom she is a figure (particularly indigenous Americans and women) within colonial and patriarchal ideologies. Theotormon's subscription to patriarchy, insofar as he clearly views her victimization as his loss and perhaps, if Oothoon is correct, as her defilement too, leads to Oothoon's alienation from the one social relationship with which she identifies, her bond with Theotormon. Dramatically shown that her rights are not a concern and alienated from her lover, Oothoon is able to escape and so analyze the ideologies which deny her rights, to find an answer to her request, "tell me the thoughts of man, that have been hid of old" (*VDA* 3.13). In turning from her analysis in which "Theotormon is a sick mans dream" (*VDA* 6.19) to Theotormon's misery, however, Oothoon reinserts herself into Theotormon's community.[15] In

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[14]Paine here runs into the same dilemma as Blake. In his discussion of *Visions*, Ferber notes that "His passionate hatred of oppression and tyranny sometimes leads Blake into accounts of human differences that seem to threaten the very possibility of human fraternity" ("Blake's Idea of Brotherhood" 444).

[15]This suggests a possible reading of the poem's motto, "The Eye sees more than the Heart knows" (*VDA* title page). Oothoon has arguably turned from the perspective of her eye to that of her heart, from

the first two-thirds of her speech, Oothoon does not envision herself with Theotormon but stands aside to describe the limitations of others. Then, however, instead of valorizing her alienation from the ideologies which she critiques by declaring, "But Oothoon is not so, a virgin fill'd with virgin fancies / Open to joy" (*VDA* 6.21-22), she acknowledges her alienation only to deride it: "Why hast thou taught my Theotormon this accursed thing? / Till beauty fades from off my shoulders darken'd and cast out. / A solitary shadow wailing on the margin of non-entity" (*VDA* 7.13-15). It is at this point that she regards Theotormon with sympathy rather than sarcasm, viewing him as a victim rather than an agent of victimization, declaring not, "And does my Theotoromon seek this hypocrite modesty!" (*VDA* 6.16), but "Can that be Love . . . That clouds with jealousy his nights, with weepings all the day" (*VDA* 7.18). In effect, Oothoon returns to the desire she articulates in her early speech to Theotormon, "Silent I hover all the night, and all day could be silent. / If Theotormon once would turn his loved eyes on me" (*VDA* 3.14-15). After moving through the three stages of alienation, Oothoon regresses so that instead of achieving "perfect civil liberty," she turns from her condemnation of the ideologies which deny her that liberty to reaffirm her dependence on Theotormon, and "Thus every morning wails Oothoon" (*VDA* 8.11).[16]

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observing Theortomon to sympathizing with him. This is reflected in the direction of Oothoon's gaze. When she is distinguishing herself from the system which she ascribes to Theotormon, she declares that she is "Open to joy and to delight where ever beauty appears . . . there my eyes are fix'd" (*VDA* 6.22, 6.23), but when she turns to "my Theotormon," she declares instead, "I'll lie beside thee on a bank & view their wanton play / In lovely copulation bliss on bliss with Theotormon" (*VDA* 7.25-26). Quite apart from the problems critics have found in Oothoon's later declaration, it reveals a considerable narrowing of her perspective. Instead of fixing her eyes "where ever beauty appears," she directs them to follow only Theotormon.

[16]"The final portion of Oothoon's speech undermines the optimistic view of Oothoon's transcendence articulated by Ostriker (158). As Damrosch writes, "Oothoon's voyeurist fantasy . . . does not sound like something Blake would recommend" (198). Arguably, Oothoon is so alienated from Theotormon at this point--by her rape, by her critique

There is a fourth player in this drama: the Daughters of Albion to whom these visions belong. The Daughters are separated from the community which they observe, geographically but also perceptually. Oothoon is either unaware of them or does not acknowledge their presence as significant: the narrator repeats, "The Daughters of Albion hear her woes" (*VDA* 2.20), but Oothoon asserts, "And none but Bromion can hear my lamentations" (*VDA* 3.1). The Daughters, however, align themselves with Oothoon, anticipating her enslavement and lamentation (*VDA* 1.1-2) as well as repeating her "sighs" (*VDA* 2.20; 5.2; 8.13). It is not even clear whose voice is being transcribed in the poem. Oothoon's speeches after her rape are preceded by the statement, "The Daughters of Albion hear her woes, & eccho back her sighs" (*VDA* 2.20; 5.2), and not by a statement of the form, "Oothoon then said," thus leaving it unclear whether it is the original or the echo that is cited in the following lines. (There is no such ambiguity in Oothoon's speech before her rape: "Then Oothoon pluck'd the flower saying, I pluck thee from thy bed" [*VDA* 1.11].) In the poem's play of alliances and allegiances, the Daughters affirm community with Oothoon and thereby join her in her alienated perspective; they "eccho" Oothoon's sighs, suggesting a duplication of Oothoon's position rather than an allied but distinct position. But Oothoon does not hear or return that affirmation. There is a scission in the world of the *Visions*, between the enslaving, hierarchical world of Bromion and Theotormon and the sympathetic one of the Daughters of Albion, and Oothoon lies between them. This hybrid world of mutually exclusive perspectives splices together irreconcilable views of the rape, sustaining the coherence of those perspectives while revealing them as choices from a range of options and, more to the point, alienating the reader from the prevailing ideologies which Bromion and Theotormon represent by inviting identification with Oothoon. Oothoon's ability

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of his views, and by his failure to accept her plea for love--that she can only take the marginal position of the spectator and procurer. The pathetic and horrific nature of her self-abnegating offer at once reveals the failure of Theotormon's system to accommodate her, the base position to which it exiles her, and her own inability to escape from Theotormon's sway.

to move between the different perspectives marks the possibility of transgressing a powerful ideology even though her reversal at the poem's conclusion suggests that escape from social bonds and the institutions which structure them can only be temporary.

Europe and the Alienation of the Narrator

A similar scission appears in *Europe*. Such scissions remind us that Blake's multiperspectivism not only offers an assemblage of perspectives that dissipates the authority of any single view, but also calls attention to the ruptures between those perspectives. The inescapable incommensurability submerged in the prefix, "multi," characterizes the space in which the percipient cannot rest, even for a moment, in another's perspective: the intersticial domain has neither ideology, nor ruler, nor constitution, and so has implications for the production of shared perspectives in general. In *Europe*, as in *Visions*, there are two perspectives that are closely identified with characters within the poem, in this case Enitharmon and Urizen. In the Prophecy, however, the border between systems is not marked by a character within the poem who turns from one to the other, but by the narrator. The narrative perspective switches from Enitharmon's domain to that of Urizen, marking their alienation from each other through oppositions which include myth/history, speech/writing, private/public, family/society, and union/division, as well as linear/circular.[17] The Prophecy begins with the end of the Urizenic conflict (*Eur* 3.4), then it turns to Enitharmon's family reunion, but Enitharmon falls asleep and Urizenic strife returns, and then that conflict ends as Enitharmon awakes, only to be resurrected when Enitharmon again stops singing. The realm of Enitharmon and Los is one of singing, reunion, rejoicing, and family, but the world of Urizen is Europe, ruled by written texts, divisive conflict, howling, and sociopolitical relationships. The mythic section begins by noting that "Enitharmon saw her sons &

[17]See Swearingen, "Time and History in Blake's *Europe*," for a discussion of linear and circular time in the poem. See Mitchell for a set of related oppositions in other works by Blake ("Visible Language" 68).

daughters rise around. / Like pearly clouds they meet together . . . And Los . . . joy'd in the peaceful night" (*Eur* 3.5-7), while the historic section opens as "Shadows of men in fleeting bands upon the winds: / Divide the heavens of Europe / Till Albions Angel smitten with his own plague fled" (*Eur* 9.6-8). In *Theory of Religion*, Bataille argues that the distinction between body and spirit leads to the positing of two distinct worlds as "the unreal world of sovereign spirits or gods establishes reality, which it is not, as its contrary. The reality of a profane world, of a world of things and bodies, is established opposite a holy and mythical world" (37), and *Europe* neatly follows this division. But there are limited incursions across the boundary between myth and history as Orc moves between the two worlds and there are crucial interruptions by the excluded domain in the mythological and historical sections.

The text divides oral from written language, myth from history, centripetal from centrifugal social forces, a parent from an anonymous and absent authority, and rejoicing from oppression, sustaining what Foucault calls the "sympathy-antipathy pair" (*Order* 25).[18] There is no direct communication between these two worlds. For those who inhabit history, the mythic is always mediated, whether through a copy of

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[18]This opposition between the mythic and historic sections, where the former is associated with "sport" (*Eur* 14.32) and the latter with "strife" (*Eur* 15.11), is reinforced by the visual components of the engravings. Plates 12 and 14, spoken by the historical voice and Enitharmon respectively, have the same spatial organization, with a design about six lines deep halfway through the text, and substantial designs along the righthand margin and the bottom of the page. The historical text of Plate 12, however, is surrounded by spiders, spiders' webs, flies, and a figure praying, while the ahistorical text of Plate 14 is bordered by plants, vines, birds, butterflies, caterpillars, and snakes. The snakes, however, are separated from the rest of the images and confined to the borders around the passage at the bottom of the plate, in which the cessation of Enitharmon's song is described (*Eur* 14.32-37). The illustrations thus reinforce the celebratory nature of Enitharmon's song and the text's envisioning of history as a trap, while visually inviting a comparison of the two plates in those terms.

Urizen's book (*Eur* 11.3-5), "the clouds of Urizen" (*Eur* 12.32), the "flames of Orc" (*Eur* 12.32), or Albion's Angel, who alone can both see Urizen (*Eur* 11.1-2) and be seen by the Europeans (*Eur* 12.5 6). Similarly, for those who inhabit myth, history is always indistinct, and viewed rather than engaged, as Orc can only "hear the howling shadows" (*Eur* 12.22) and Enitharmon can only dream history. Prescriptive, secondary discourse is the only element common to both, but in both instances it appears as an interruption of mythic song, and it is when Enitharmon stops singing that history supersedes myth (*Eur* 9.4; 14.32). The mythic is sustained discursively, by Enitharmon's song, and it falls into history when Enitharmon is silenced. While it has been argued that Enitharmon is responsible for the historical interlude of *Europe*, that history constitutes the "corrupt centuries of Enitharmon's reign" (Ostriker 161), Enitharmon is asleep during and unaware of that history: for her, "eighteen hundred years were fled / As if they had not been" (*Eur* 13.10-11). By beginning with history falling into myth and ending with the myth's fall into history, Blake denies either category the power to bound the other, and frames the narrative with points of flux that are dramatized in Orc's movement between the two domains. Their distinctness is reinforced by the distribution of spoken and written texts within the poem. All of the speeches in *Europe*'s Prophecy are contained in the parts where Enitharmon is awake, taking place after she is introduced into the scene, if not spoken by Enitharmon herself, while the Preludium is addressed to her. Conversely, utterances in the historic section are inarticulate and supplanted by written texts, as the speeches of the mythic characters are replaced by "Howlings & hissings, shrieks and groans, & voices of despair" (*Eur* 12.34), and the people are prescribed by inscriptions, "Shut up" (*Eur* 10.22), by Urizen's "brazen Book" (*Eur* 11.3), "volumes of grey mist" (*Eur* 12.3), "secret codes" (*Eur* 12.15), "windows wove over with curses" (*Eur* 12.27), and other textual closed gates (*Eur* 12.28). The only prescriptive passage in the part where Enitharmon is awake is the heavens' reply, which calls for the establishment of Christian religion and its cult of chastity (*Eur* 5.2-9), and it, like Urizen's book, is what "Kings and Priests had copied on Earth" (*Eur* 11.4), as the king Rintrah and the priest Palamabron are

sent to repeat the heavens' command (*Eur* 5.5). The prescriptive language of negatives, "Thou shalt not" (*Eur* 12.28) and "Forbid" (*Eur* 5.8), is associated with secondary texts and the silence of Enitharmon, occupying the breaks in Enitharmon's calls to her children and involving the repetition of the heavens' reply or the copying of the Urizenic text (*Eur* 11.3-4). The indeterminate multivocality of the mythic section is thus juxtaposed with the univocal Urizenic commands of the historical section and the orality of the mythic part with the writings of the historical part. These writings are only cited when they are employed as limitations on the masses by the literate, the ruling classes with access to "secret codes," so that they work to establish an oppressive hierarchy, a divisive structure that stands in stark contrast to the celebratory reunion in the mythic section. The opposition characterized by Bataille in *Theory of Religion* is thus maintained with the homogeneity that he describes in his essay on fascism, sustaining the coherence of the two domains--except on Plate 5 and Plate 12.

On Plate 5, Enitharmon's celebratory invitation to her children is interrupted by a prescriptive passage:

> Arise O Orc from thy deep den,
> First born of Enitharmon rise!
> And we will crown thy head with garlands of the ruddy vine;
> For now thou art bound;
> And I may see thee in the hour of bliss, my eldest born.
> The horrent Demon rose, surrounded with red stars of fire,
> Whirling about in furious circles round the immortal fiend.
> Then Enitharmon down descended into his red light,
> And thus her voice rose to her children, *the distant heavens reply*. (*Eur* 4.10-18; my emphasis)
> Now comes the night of Enitharmons joy!
> Who shall I call? Who shall I send?
> That Woman, lovely Woman! may have dominion?
> Arise O Rintrah thee I call! & Palamabron thee!
> 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. (*Eur* 5.1-9)

Arguments which blame Enitharmon for the oppression of history rest on assigning this speech to her, so that it is "Enitharmon [who] instructs Rintrah and Palamabron to 'forbid all Joy'" (Kowle 94), but the evidence for this reading is ambiguous given the absence of quotation marks, as the controversy about the earlier lines attests.[19] Moreover, the speech on Plate 5 is inconsistent with the other speeches that can be ascribed to Enitharmon with greater certainty. Mark Anderson notes that the speech sometimes "seems to be contradictory" (131) in the context of Enitharmon's previous speech, while Johnson and Grant remark that the first summoning of Rintrah and Palamabron, on Plate 5, contradicts Enitharmon's previous call for Orc to arise (127*n*). There are also other contradictions between the prescriptive speech (*Eur* 5.1-9) and the speeches which frame it (*Eur* 4.10-14; 8.1-12). The prescriptive voice refers to Enitharmon in the third person (*Eur* 5.1) and does not refer to its progeny, although that is the convention of all other calls to arise, before as well as after the historical interlude, which clearly identify the caller as the parent of the addressee. Moreover, if both speeches are Enitharmon's, then Enitharmon calls Rintrah and Palamabron twice (*Eur* 5.4; 8.1, 8.2), and gives them two different sets of orders: the prescriptive voice orders them to "Go . . . Forbid all Joy" (*Eur* 5.5, 5.8), and the other tells Rintrah to bring others (*Eur* 8.3; 8.7; 8.8) for rejoicing. In the second mythic section, Enitharmon even complains when one of her children leaves, asking "O Antamon, why wilt thou leave thy mother Enitharmon?" (*Eur* 14.16). The speech that is cited to condemn

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[19]There are (at least) three possible divisions of the lines 3.9-4.14 among the speakers: Erdman has Los speak lines 3.9-14, the sons of Urizen speak lines 4.3-9, and Enitharmon begin on line 4.10 (266*n*); Bloom contends that Los quotes the sons of Urizen, and that they do not speak for themselves, so that Los speaks lines 3.9-4.9, and then Enitharmon begins ("Commentary" 904); Johnson and Grant suggest that all of the disputed lines could be spoken by either Enitharmon or Los (126*n*).

Enitharmon is thus subverted and contradicted by the two speeches which frame it as well as other statements by Enitharmon, and those speeches are clearly ascribed to the parent of Orc. The verb tenses of the line which introduces the passage, moreover, assign the speech which precedes it to Enitharmon and the speech which follows it to the heavens: "thus rose her voice to her children, the distant heavens reply" (*Eur* 4.18). It is thus the heavens which command Rintrah and Palamabron to "Go! tell the human race that Womans love is Sin" (*Eur* 5.5) and "Forbid all Joy" (*Eur* 5.8), and it is Rintrah's parent (*Eur* 8.8) that asks Rintrah to "bring all [his] brethren" (*Eur* 8.8) and envisions Rintrah as his "eyes rejoice" (*Eur* 8.12). It is the Urizenic heavens that interrupt and disrupt "the night of Enitharmons joy" (*Eur* 5.1) through prescription, just as, after Enitharmon has collected all of her children for "enormous revelry" (*Eur* 14.34), the children's songs "Wak[e] the stars of Urizen" (*Eur* 14.33), and song is transformed into weeping (*Eur* 14.36), night is transformed into day (*Eur* 14.35), the gathered children are dispersed (*Eur* 14.34), and again the text slips into history. Enitharmon brings her children together while the heavens tell them to go and utter divisive commands, Enitharmon calls for songs and revelry while the heavens transmit prescriptive texts that "Forbid all Joy," so that history is articulated as an interruption and dispersal of the mythic, implying that the two cannot coexist. This prescriptive passage, spoken by the heavens rather than Enitharmon and apparently ignored by her since her own contradictory invitation to Rintrah and Palamabron does not mention it, is arguably the first intrusion of the historic into the mythic. It introduces the Urizenic heavens, prescription from above, division, the scattering of Enitharmon's children rather than their collection--all the features of the historical interlude in Enitharmon's dream and the fall into history at the poem's close.

In Plate 12, the border between the two domains is transgressed from the other direction: "Albions Angel howl[s] in flames of Orc" (*Eur* 12.12), "The Guardian of the secret codes forsook his ancient mansion, / Driven out by the flames of Orc" (*Eur* 12.15-16), and "Between the clouds of Urizen the flames of Orc roll heavy / Around the limbs of Albions Guardian" (*Eur* 12.32-33). In the middle of the plate,

the scene turns from Albion to the mythic figures:

> 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
> Enitharmon laugh'd in her sleep to see. (*Eur* 12.21-25)

Again, the mythic is associated with rejoicing rather than prescription, as the mythic characters intrude on the historical narrative.[20] Orc then finds the "trump of the last doom" which he had been "Seeking" (*Eur* 12.13) at the beginning of the next plate (*Eur* 13.1). He is, however, unable to "blow the iron tube" (*Eur* 13.2)--it is silent. Newton "blow'd the enormous blast" (*Eur* 13.5) and instead of an apocalypse which will "awake the dead to Judgment" (*Eur* 13.3), the cycle begins again, as Enitharmon continues her call to her children. The mingling of the mythic and the historic which marks the collapse of the latter's boundaries presages the possibility of apocalypse, the potential to end history. After the completion of Enitharmon's song, the two domains again meet as "in the vineyards of red France appear'd the light of [Orc's] fury" (*Eur* 15.2) and the "strife of blood" (*Eur* 15.11) which again promises the possibility of the apocalypse closes the poem. Orc, however, is unable to make the "trump of the last doom" speak, and Newtonian rationality takes hold until the next opportunity. Newton's trumpet blast re-marks the boundaries between myth and history, reasserts "Single vision & Newtons sleep" (722), so that "Enitharmon woke" and "her song proceeds" (*Eur* 13.9, 13.15). While Orc is never fully able to engage the historical world--he is inarticulate throughout the poem, being silent and unable to blow the trumpet--he is able to move physically between the two domains. He rises to Enitharmon during the mythic section (*Eur* 4.11), his flames surround the lower world of Europe during the historical

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[20]The reference to Enitharmon's laughter has often been identified as her response to the oppression of the Europeans rather than their liberation, the cause of Orc's laughter three lines earlier. For my argument against this identification, see Chapter [*].

section, and he descends again at the end of *Europe*: "terrible Orc . . . Shot from the heights of Enitharmon; / And in the vineyards of red France appear'd the light of his fury" (*Eur* 14.37-15.2).

The text grafts the two worlds together, but constructs no homogeneous, unhybridized space that can contain them both or allow them both to be unsilent, commenting on their inability to accommodate the other without compromising their presumed self-contained completeness and homogeneity. Like Oothoon, we are left at the border of either/or. But unlike Oothoon, we do not move through these systems but around them. History and myth are, by the poem's definition, unaware of each other, and so to be aware of both is to be excluded from both. There is, however, the apocalyptic promise that contact between the two domains creates the conditions in which the boundaries that separate them can be destroyed. By associating the transgression of the boundary between myth and history with Orc, the figure of revolution, as well as the end of war (*Eur* 3.4), the conditions for apocalypse (*Eur* 12.13), and the French Revolution (*Eur* 15.2), Blake identifies the compromise of the boundary with radical, and potentially liberating, social change, the change that, as discussed in the previous chapter, erupts in the instant between temporal divisions.

America and the Alienation of the Reader

It is in *America*, however, that such divisions are radically compromised. *America*, which represents the point at which successful revolution is possible, takes place in a context in which the borders between myth and history are constantly being marked by transgression rather than being indiscernibly opaque, impermeable and unseen barriers, as in *Europe*. Orc not only enters the historical world in *America* but is able to speak in it, an achievement unique to *America* among the poems of the early 1790's. If "silence is a form of suppressed or concealed speech" (Peterfreund 680), Orc's articulateness is a sign that he has escaped containment. But Orc is not, as in *Europe*, the only figure able to do this. Blake moves figures across the boundaries of discursive y constructed systems through what Rothenberg terms "mobile alliances" and so questions their inevitability. These transgressions, moreover, are manifested through

changes in appearances and names which implicate them in spectacles of power. In *Shakespearean Negotiations*, Stephen Greenblatt contrasts a "power that dreams of a panopticon in which the most intimate secrets are open to the view of an invisible authority," described by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, with an "Elizabethan power [that] depends upon its privileged visibility" (64). At a critical moment in the Prophecy, authority is exposed to public view in a manner that it does not control and the rebelling population stages a counter-spectacle which dramatizes the change in the configuration of power, manipulating the two types of theatrical power described by Foucault and Greenblatt to unmask traditional authorities and establish new ones. Informing this manipulation of visibility is the masquerade, a site of spectacular disguises which popularized the crucial innovation that appearance is not a reliable marker of identity, an innovation which threatened contemporary hegemonic practices and assumptions. As Castle's study of eighteenth-century masquerade shows, the masquerade not only involved assuming a different identity but required the assumption of an identity opposite, in hierarchical terms, to one's own:

> Costume ideally represented an inversion of one's nature. At its most piquant it expressed a violation of cultural categories. If one may speak of the rhetoric of masquerade, a tropology of costume, the controlling figure was antithesis: one was obliged to impersonate a being opposite, in some essential figure, to oneself. (*Masquerade and Civilization* 5)

This was clearly threatening to the *status quo*, and opponents "unanimously castigated its disorienting, anti-taxonomic force" (Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* 79): "Without the principle of opposition, the ordering principle of civilization itself, the classification of entities became impossible," and so the masquerade made possible "a convulsive negation of every form of ideological discrimination" (Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* 78, 79). Identity could be assumed with the evening's costume, leaving no relic of the sumptuary laws to mark class, occupation, gender, or distinctions of

birth.[21] And each masquer began as an equal cipher, as a ticketholder unencumbered by marks of social status.[22] One commentator remarked, "All state and ceremony are laid aside; since the *Peer* and the *Apprentice*, the *Punk* and the *Duchess* are, for so long a time, upon an equal Foot" (qtd Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* 30).[23] While the masquerade was criticized as a "prolonged, scandalous deceit," the "explicit sign of a society shot through with illusion and deception" (Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* 82, 79), it also revealed the arbitrariness of the hierarchy that its critics sought to establish as natural and rational.

This is not only a challenge to social order but to linguistic order: William Keach argues that the Romantics also tried to come to terms with the distinction between arbitrary and motivated language through the trope of apparel, where arbitrary language is to thought what clothing is to the body, and motivated language is to thought what the body is to the soul (24-27). The masquerade foregrounds the arbitrariness of signs, as language or clothing--or titles. Part of Paine's attack on customary power involves discrediting the authority of aristocratic titles, treating them as "dangerous abstractions" (Essick, *William Blake and the Language of Adam* 64) or constructions that are falsely naturalized (Rothenberg, "Parasiting America" 346).

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[21]As Castle notes, cross-dressing was not uncommon at masquerades (*Masquerade and Civilization* 46-47; 63-64): Horace Walpole had a "predilection for the costume of an old woman" (*Masquerade and Civilization* 73).

[22]Anyone with a ticket could attend a masquerade, and the price was often not prohibitive (Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* 29).

[23]The masquerade continued throughout the Romantic period and, even after the suppression of the events noted by Castle, was often represented in literature as a dangerous and transgressive site. In Mary Brunton's novel, *Discipline* (1814), for instance, there is a debate about the illicitness of masquerades in which it is asserted that "At a subscription masquerade, indeed, one might meet with low people" and "the very use of masks is to banish the privileges and the restraints of personal respectability" (48).

In *Common Sense* (1776), Paine begins his discussion of hereditary titles with the statement, "Mankind being originally equals in the order of creation, the equality could only be destroyed by some subsequent circumstance" (71), while in *Rights of Man* (1791-1792) he argues that "That . . . which is called aristocracy in some countries, and nobility in others, arose out of the governments founded upon conquest" (104). The latter remark, published two years before *Europe*, economically raises crucial questions about the natural authority claimed by the ruling class. The arbitrariness of the name of the class under consideration is emphasized by the initial phrasing, "That . . . which is called aristocracy," and by Paine's offer of a culturally-dependent synonym, "nobility." Moreover, the hierarchy which the aristocracy presumes is inverted by the identification of the aristocracy, in this passage and throughout Paine's text, with the low, with conquest rather than heredity, with brutality rather than civilization, incompetence rather than superiority, and arbitrary power rather than natural right. In Paine's rhetoric, even the symbols of power are arbitrary and, by implication, deceptive (Paine depends heavily on the notion of an originary, natural state which precedes and is superior to contemporary political organization).[24] For example, the figure of "the sword assum[ing] the name of sceptre," emblematizes the rise to power and subsequent legitimization of "a race of conquerors" (*Rights of Man* 92). Later, Paine asks,

> after all, what is this metaphor called a crown, or rather what is a monarchy? Is it a thing, or is it a name, or is it a fraud? . . . Doth the virtue consist in the metaphor, or in the man? Doth the goldsmith that makes the crown, make the virtue also? Doth it operate like Fortunatus's wishing-cap, or Harlequin's wooden sword? Doth it make a man a conjuror? (*Rights of Man* 146)

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[24]Paine, for instance, discredits the aristocracy by characterizing the law of primogeniture as "a law against every law of nature, and Nature herself calls for its destruction" (*Rights of Man* 104). See Essick regarding Blake's response to Paine's assumption of a natural ground ("William Blake" 200-202).

Paine thus challenges the authority of the ruling class by classifying its power, and its signs of power, as arbitrary while challenging, through inversion, the portrayal of its power as natural. These are defamiliarizing devices that offer a new view of the distribution of power in English society that disrupts the expectations founded by the prevailing political rhetoric through the mechanisms that conservatives feared in the masquerade, especially inversion, the exposure of arbitrary naming, and radical equality.

These devices are put to similar uses in *America*. In his discussion of *Europe*, Bloom points out that the figure of

> Albion has much to do with [George III and Pitt]; in the historical allegory he is to be identified with them, or very nearly. But in Blake as in Spenser the political allegory and the moral allegory or mythic meaning tend to exist on intersecting but quite distinct levels. (*Blake's Apocalypse* 154).

There is not one Albion in *Europe* and *America*, however, but a series of related figures that includes Albion's Angel, Albion's Guardian, Albion's Prince, "Angel voice" (*Am* 10.1), the "King of England" (*Am* 4.12) and, perhaps most confusingly given Bloom's identification, Albion's Angels (*Eur* 9.12; 9.14). These avatars coexist without merging into a single identity, sustaining the dependence of identity on context: the martial King is a Guardian, the religious dogmatist is an Angel and the thwarted hierarch is a Prince, as Blake transforms the historical figure, George III, to suit the specific role he must play in a particular context. This fracturing of identity to enable quick, fluid transitions from Prince to Guardian to Angel suggests that names and identities are context-dependent, relating to function and circumstance rather than constant inherent qualities.[25] In a cancelled plate to *America*, a longer version of Plate 4, Blake describes the metamorphosis of one Albion figure into another:

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[25]Swearingen makes a similar point about *Jerusalem*: "Blake's 'giant forms' are not clearly defined entities with predictable functions. Each functions differently in different textual environments" ("Figural Politics" 127).

on his cliffs stood Albions wrathful
Prince
A dragon form clashing his scales 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,
Reveal the dragon thro' the human; coursing swift as fire
To the close hall of counsel, where his Angel form renews.
(*Am* 3.14-17, b.1-2)

While Plate b is primarily concerned with George III's consultation with his "Lords & Commons" (*Am* b.9), recalling Satan's consultation with the rest of the fallen in *Paradise Lost*, the first two lines of the plate also indicate a connection between Albion's Angel and Albion's Prince that is not made in the uncancelled version. In the Prophecy proper, Albion's Angel, Albion's Guardian, and Albion's Prince operate in their own spheres of activity, but in the cancelled plate Albion's Angel, Albion's Prince, and George III intersect: in moving from the "cliffs" to the "hall of counsel" this figure metamorphoses from "dragon form" to "Angel form" and arrives at the place "Where George the third holds council" (*Am* b.9). The engraving for Plate 4 retains the implication by depicting a figure in trailing robes that visually echoes the neighbouring figure of a dragon, graphically introducing the metamorphosis that was described verbally in the cancelled plate. As the figure moves from context to context, and geographically from the "cliffs" to the "hall of counsel," its form, its outward appearance, as well as its name, changes.

These transformations disrupt not only the determinacy of identity but also the relationship between body and spirit which, according to Bataille, informs the construction of myth and reality. If one figure can have the form of a dragon (a mythical beast), an angel (a non-corporeal spirit), and a man (a real, corporeal being), then the absolute distinction between body and spirit as well as myth and reality collapse in that figure. Such distinctions are also compromised when the "thirteen Angels" descend from heaven to stand beside "Washington & Paine & Warren" (*Am* 12.2, 12.7), recalling the myth, described in Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*, that Odin would join

the fray during battle to "inflame" the living warriors (92), and also recalling Orc's participation in the conflict.[26] There are similar disintegrations elsewhere in the text, as the parallelism on Plate 11 suggests that God, the "pitying Angel," and the "crawling villain," are the same figure (*Am* 11.13, 11.14) while Orc's speeches are composed of a series of reversals and paradoxes, from the freeing of captives and the rebirth of the dead, to the temporally problematic assertion that "The Sun has left his blackness . . . And the fair Moon rejoices in the clear and cloudless night" (*Am* 6.13-14), to his claim that "letchery" "May find [Virginity] in a harlot, and in coarse-clad honesty / The undefil'd tho' ravish'd" (*Am* 8.10, 8.11-12). Familiar classifications, from myth/history and spirit/body to virgin/harlot and day/night, as well as key assumptions that are derived from aligning such oppositions, such as "God is good" and "the King is the rightful ruler," are complicated and then peeled away, challenged in such a way that the reader must reevaluate her identification of the figure and the semiological systems which are being employed. If the statement "God is good" is not necessarily true, then the Angel's condemnation of Orc as "transgressor of God's Law" (*Am* 7.7) can be read as praise. Sceptres, uniforms, and animal shapes which are assumed "Sometimes" (*Am* 1.13), are all arbitrary, and therefore subject to change, just as the classifications regarding myth and history or virginity and harlotry are. Consequently, when power is revealed to depend on such signs it too becomes subject to change. If the sceptre is not an expression of an inherent regality but an arbitrary sign that grants significance within a political power structure, then the sceptre can be passed from one person to another. If God is not necessarily the ultimate beneficial authority, then the divine right of kings can be replaced by another method for selecting rulers.

The use of superficial symbols to determine a role within a

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[26]As I argue in "'Empire is No More': Odin and Orc in *America*," Mallet's description of Odin's participation in battles, as translated by Bishop Percy, is remarkably similar to Orc's contribution to the conflicts in *Europe* and *America* (27), but the Thirteen Angels are also types of Odin here, following the same pattern in which a flaming mythic figure joins a real battle.

system rather than to express an essential identity is fundamental to an important turning point in the narrative of *America*: the dozen or so lines that contain the speech of Boston's Angel exposing God as a masquer, the disrobing of the Angels, and their subsequent descent "from out their heav'nly heights" (*Am* 12.5). Linda Colley notes that uniforms became particularly important towards the end of the eighteenth century because they served two functions, operating as a kind of masquerade dress which turned the less than imposing figure into a martial spectacle and as an inscription of the wearer into a position of authority (185-187). So, while an "insignificant head is hidden under a martial plumed hat" (qtd Colley 186), concealing defects which depart from the military ideal, the hierarchy which distributes power within the military is clarified: "the Board of Admiralty issu[ed] new and exhaustive dress regulations whereby 'the distinctions of rank in the service are rendered more clear and becoming'" (Colley 187). This twofold project informs the pivotal passage in Blake's *America*:

> What God is he, writes laws of peace, & clothes him in a tempest
> What pitying Angel lusts for tears, and fans himself with sighs
> What crawling villain preaches abstinence & wraps himself
> In fat of lambs? no more I follow, no more obedience pay.
> So cried he, rending off his robe & throwing down his scepter.
> In sight of Albions Guardian, and all the thirteen Angels
> Rent off their robes to the hungry wind, & threw their golden scepters
> Down on the land of America. indignant they descended
> Headlong from out their heav'nly heights, descending swift as fires
> Over the land; naked & flaming are their lineaments seen.
> (*Am* 11.12-12.6)

The rebellion of Boston's Angel begins with an argument that exposes the discrepancies between the apparent identity of authority figures (their rhetoric, their names, their clothing) and the actual actions of

those figures. The response of Boston's Angel to these hypocrisies is to revolt by "rending off his robes & throwing down his scepter / In sight of Albions Guardian, and all the thirteen Angels / Rent off their robes" (*Am* 12.1-3). After this preliminary disrobing, the Guardian is overthrown by the disarming of the troops, as "The millions . . . threw off their hammerd mail, / And cast their swords & spears to earth, & stood a naked multitude. / Albions Guardian writhed in torment" (*Am* 15.4-6). Casting off marks of power--sceptres, robes, swords, and so forth--constitutes a refusal to be oppression's delegate, a refusal to empower the Guardian by following his orders and wearing his uniforms, and it follows a revisionary characterization of the oppressor's attire. As symbols of power, uniforms, titles, and formal orders inscribe the bearers into a chain of command in which they are both oppressed and oppressing, but they do not indicate an essential power. The description of God marks the disjunction between clothing and identity as a contradiction between words and actions. By casting off the marks of power that were granted to them by rulers, the Thirteen Angels deny the power of Albion's Angel over and through them, becoming something other than the rulers' delegates and altering their appearance to reflect their new allegiances. The disrobing is thus not only an act which reflects identity but an act which constitutes it: to cast off their clothes is to reject the authority in which that clothing is implicated and redefine their identity as rebels.

Orc reverses the actions of the soldiers, while employing the same assumptions, by trying to transcend his shackled body by clothing himself in various figures of regal power: "Sometimes an eagle screaming in the sky, sometimes a lion, / Stalking upon the mountains, & sometimes a whale I lash / The raging fathomless abyss; anon a serpent folding" (*Am* 1.13-15). As Rodney M. Baine notes, "Orc is obviously asserting his power and importance by identifying himself with the most powerful forces in nature: the lion, king of beasts; the eagle, king of the air; the serpent, king of reptiles; and the whale, monarch of the seas" (130). Orc's unapparelled self, however, is not associated with such power in the Preludium: "feeble my spirit folds. / For chaind beneath I rend these caverns" (*Am* 1.17-18). Like the uniforms of the British troops, the robes of the Angels, and the

aristocratic costume worn by a middle-class masquer, Orc's animal shapes are empowering to those who accept their importance but not continuous with his naked self. The female figure of the Preludium attempts to prescribe Orc's power through language by limiting the shapes to specific regions and to her own field of perception: "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" (*Am* 2.12-14). The female defines Orc in terms of her own world, characterizing him as what she sees, as her suitor, and as "the image of God . . . fall'n to give [her] life" (*Am* 2.8-9). Against Orc's empowering definition of himself, the female offers a definition of Orc that empowers her at least as the one around whom he is defined. Albion's Angel offers a third series of types to describe Orc (*Am* 7.3-6), a series that demonizes Orc and so legitimates the "Angel"'s opposition to him, declaring, "Art thou not Orc . . . Blasphemous Demon, Antichrist, hater of Dignities, / Lover of wild rebellion, and transgressor of God's Law" (*Am* 7.3-7). Each figure characterizes Orc in a way that empowers the one who is characterizing: representation is a vehicle for appropriating power, and specifically for taking it from the one being represented. Similarly, Boston's Angel dramatically rebels by "rending off his robe & throwing down his scepter. / In sight of Albions Guardian" (*Am* 12.1-2) and the "British soldiers" do the same by "thr[owing] their swords & muskets to the earth . . . in sight / Of Albions Angel" (*Am* 13.6, 13.7, 13.9-10). They seize control over their own representation and stage a counter-spectacle that contradicts the authority of Albion's Angel by placing the Angel in the position of the spectator of a scene in which his military power dissolves and so contradicting the Renaissance configuration of spectacular power. After the eradication of sumptuary laws, the vogue for peasant dress established by Marie Antoinette, and the popularity of masquerades, clothing no longer operated as a guarantor of social identity and it became part of a symbolic system in which identity could be manipulated.[27] The female, Orc, Albion's Angel, Boston's Angel, and

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[27]Peacock tries to recoup this certainty in his novel, *Crotchet Castle*: "Her apparel was rustic, but there was in its style something

others are all trying to empower themselves or disempower another by manipulating the systems that determine identity. At the same time, however, the visible signs of power were turning from the visibility of the authority to the visibility of those over whom power is exercised in the transition noted by Greenblatt. Albion's Angel fails to control both kinds of spectacular power, lamenting, "America is darkned; and my punishing Demons terrified" and "clouds obscure my aged sight" (*Am* 9.3, 9.12), while seeing only "The terror," Orc, and the rebellion of Boston's Angel and his soldiers. The Angel sees only the spectacles which establish the failure of his control.

Amidst this swirl of changing names, modified forms, and layers of disguise, are figures battling for power by trying to control the spectacular representation of power in titles, uniforms, and other signs. There is a value system implicit here: the rebels generally disrobe, suggesting the casting off of the artificial power structure as Paine proposed, while hegemonic figures are associated with clouds and shadows that conceal. After the soldiers throw down their weapons "in sight / Of Albions Angel" (*Am* 13.9-10), for instance, the Angel regains some control after he "enrag'd his secret clouds open'd . . . and burnt outstretched on wings of wrath cov'ring / The eastern sky, spreading his awful wings across the heavens" (*Am* 13.10-12). The description of Urizen on the final plate of the poem is a catalogue of shrouds as the figure that took "fiery joy" and "perverted [it] to ten commands" (*Am* 8.3) is "in thunders wrap'd," "flag'd with grey-brow'd snows," as well as "clothed in tears & trembling shudd'ring cold" as he "Hid[es] the Demon red with clouds & cold mists" (*Am* 16.3, 16.5, 16.8, 16.13) until the French Revolution. Blake thus echoes those who condemned the masquerade by identifying costume and masks with deceit and the abuse of power--although such conservatives would have

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more *recherché*, in its arrangement something more of elegance and precision, than was common to the mountain peasant girl. It had more of the *contadina* of the opera than of the genuine mountaineer" (221). The manner of the clothing's arrangement rather than the clothing itself identifies the wearer, but it is nevertheless as certain as the sumptuary laws in its ability to locate and authenticate the class of the clothing's wearer.

certainly hesitated to suggest that nakedness indicates honesty--and he uses conventional assumptions about appearance to inculcate into the poem a clear sense of which side we are supposed to favour. But by staging the battle for power as a control over names and appearances, Blake exposes the terms of the conflict in an unconventional way. Despite the references to soldiers and arms, Blake's battles are not martial: the central figure for the battle here sets the diseases of the hegemony against the sterilizing fires of Orc and the rebels, characterizing the hegemony as the force which compromises boundaries by invading the body politic. The viral figure for battle thus produces a negative hybridity that subverts that which Blake valorizes rather than the positive variety that subverts that which Blake opposes (see Chapter Six). Apart from this figure, the battle's direction is plotted in the ongoing reversals and inversions, from the liberation of slaves to the builder who drops his hammer (*Am* 6.6, 14.16). In *America*, opposing ideologies collide and hierarchies on a wide range of subjects, from political and religious authority to chastity and slavery, shatter and are overturned. Blake does not address the establishment of a government in the United States, nor in France, but retains as his focus the dynamic that results from the collision between two fundamentally incompatible ideological camps which nevertheless share the recognition that the terms of battle are semiological.

By including different systems in these poems, Blake produces a text which is radically different from the Urizenic model. The examples of Urizenic texts offered in *Europe* involve commands that are addressed directly to the reader: "Thou shalt not" and "Fear" (*Eur* 12.28). Such dictates seek to bring the reader under the text's control, not only by seeking to alter the reader's behaviour but also by making the reader an implied one, already anticipated within the text and contained by its pre(in)scription. In *Visions* and *Europe*, however, the reader is placed in an alienated position from which it can be seen that the assumptions which govern the homogeneous societies that are represented do not operate naturally or totalize the field; the reader is a spectator of mutually exclusive systems and, in being able to see the different systems that are fundamentally unable to

recognize each other, is placed on the edges of them all. The reader has access to the *Visions'* "three-sided soliloquy" (Erdman, *Prophet* 236), eavesdropping on the speeches unheard by characters within the text, while the reader of *Europe* is placed outside of the mythological and historical domains that the narrative perspective tries to separate. In *America*, the reader is even more alienated by the constantly marked but never limiting boundaries between myth and history. This alienation does not create a new system, but it does mark that crucial first step towards the recognition that the prevailing system is "another Mans."

Locating the Alienated Reader

The sympathetic construction of Oothoon is something of a trick. Fox suggests that "It is certainly true that Oothoon speaks for Blake in this poem, that she is as noble in its context as ever Los is in the final poems (more noble: she does not make mistakes)" ("Female as Metaphor" 513), while Ostriker declares that Oothoon is "a heroine unequalled in English poetry before or since" (158). These qualities (nobility, the apparent coincidence of views with the author, heroism, intelligence, courage, and so forth), particularly when juxtaposed with those of a rapist and a whiner, invite the reader who is looking for a figure with whom to identify to take Oothoon's part. The reader, like the Daughters, is thus placed in a position outside of all three systems as well as nudged towards sympathizing with Oothoon as she moves through different, mutually exclusive perspectives, so that the reader can follow at once the narrator's and Oothoon's unfamiliar perspectives on fundamental social institutions. But then Oothoon declares that she will "catch for thee girls of mild silver, or of furious gold" (*VDA* 7.24). Where is the reader now? While Oothoon has been speaking of Theotormon in the third person and herself (usually) in the first person, it is easy for the reader to follow conventional literary practice by searching for a figure with whom to identify and select the most, if not the completely, sympathetic Oothoon. But in turning to the second-person form of address, Oothoon not only implicates the reader just as commandments of the form, "thou shalt not," or gestures such as "gentle reader," do, but locates the reader

elsewhere. On Plate 7, she asks "Why dost thou seek religion" and "Why hast thou taught my Theotormon this accursed thing," as well as declares, "thou seekest solitude," "be thou accursed from the earth," and "I'll lie beside thee on a bank" (*VDA* 7.9, 7.13, 7.10, 7.12, 7.25), before closing with a return to Theotormon's proper name (*VDA* 7.26). This one character, "thou"/"thee," is characterized, in series, as one who seeks confining structures, one who criminally imposes confining structures, and one who accepts the avails of Oothoon's confining structures, "silken nets and traps of adamant" (*VDA* 7.23). If Blake is positing a (heterosexual) male reader, if only implicitly (as well as practically, given the rarity of his manuscripts and the select distribution), Oothoon's offer to "catch for thee girls" and "lie beside thee" is at once a compromise of her heroic status, because she is serving Theotormon's desires and denying her own, and an inscription of the reader into Theotormon's Bromion-like position in her fantasy. Our identification with Oothoon, already problematic because of the different perspectives that she expresses, from her plea to Theotormon that she is "pure" (*VDA* 2.28) to her critique of marriage and other social institutions to her offer to trap women for him, is further compromised by her use of pronouns which include the reader in the male positions which she decries. It is here that Blake comes closest to Brecht's "alienation effect," prohibiting the audience's easy identification with characters and, in doing so, subverting the pervasive, familiar, practice of identification.[28]

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[28]There is a further implication that is beyond the purview of this chapter but needs to be mentioned. This is a rare case of a poem for a predominantly, if not exclusively, male audience in which the most sympathetic, fully-developed, as well as the most vocal and articulate, character is female. In that context, Blake's complication of the reader's identification with Oothoon not only disrupts identification in general and continues the shifting of perspective that I have discussed, but resists the "cross-dressing" implied by male readers' identification with a woman. Such defenses of the male reader's gender-position are common in the period, from the segregation of novels with female protagonists as women's literature, written for and by women, to Wordsworth's location of the reader in the position of the gentlemanly narrator and spectator.

In *Europe*, there is no figure with which to identify. The indefinite assignment of the speeches in the first mythic section, the overwhelming violence of the historic section, the quick descriptions of Enitharmon's children in the final mythic section, and the inarticulateness of Orc, prohibit the identification of a clear protagonist or hero. The reader is instead faced with an alternation between extremes of familiar dichotomies, as the narratorial perspective switches abruptly from one set of characters to another. The reader is thus shown that each system is self-contained and unaware of its alternative, functioning as homogeneous societies like that defined by Bataille. But the reader, aware of the alternative, is also shown that neither totalizes the field as it believes it does. The reader, moreover, by being aware of both is placed outside of both, and occupies a liminal space in which s/he is aware of myth and history but part of neither. This is crucial, because it is at the points where revolution approaches that the boundary between the two domains is compromised and the reader is placed in the position of always seeing those domains as compromised. In *America*, this liminal space is all-inclusive as there is no homogeneous space in which the reader can rest except briefly. The rape depicted in the Preludium also unsettles any alignment with Orc, particularly since he appears as hypocritical as the God of which Boston's Angel complains by seizing the female in the Preludium and condemning bonds in the Prophecy. The marginality of the reader places the reader in a potentiallv liberating place as long as the reader is not drawn to the centre through an identification that incorporates the reader into a single ideological perspective.

The reader sees and is alienated from both halves of the "sympathy-antipathy pair." The strange language and names, the revision of history, and the articulation of radical viewpoints are defamiliarizing and estranging, placing the reader, like all spectators, on the margins of the domains being represented. This is finally what we can take from Blake's description of *A Vision of The Last Judgment* (1810): "I have represented it as I saw it[.] to different People it appears differently [p 69] every thing else does" (*VLJ* 555). Besides referring to fallen vision as fractured and fallible, Blake sets apart his vision, and the vision of every other

individual, denying, in a fundamentally alienating way, the possibility of a shared vision. This is not, as I have argued with reference to alienation in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, necessarily negative because it also operates as a liberation from the perspective of others. In "Blake's Idea of Brotherhood," Ferber notes Blake's discomfort with simple equality, suggesting that "Perhaps equality bore connotations offensive to his love of uniqueness, the minute particularity, of each individual" (438). Pluralism is, in one sense, a condition of the fallen world, but it is also a diversity worth celebrating and engaging. By dramatizing this plurality of vision and perspective in *Visions*, *Europe*, and *America*, Blake places the reader not only outside of one system but outside of a set of systems, disrupting any simple "sympathy-antipathy pair." The reader necessarily occupies the intersection of the different systems represented in Blake's poems, at the margins of all and included in none. Alienated by a world which is not only constituted through words on a page and an unconventional book, but which also uses unusual names, stages generally recognizable events in unfamiliar ways and denies the reader a surrogate through whom to be introduced to this new world,[29] the reader is held back from the text. It retains its unfamiliarity, its strangeness, and its estranging effect. The reader is placed in the space in which revolutionary transgressions of the homogeneous societies are possible, the space from which both halves of the "sympathy-antipathy pair" can be engaged in a context that suspends identification with either.

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[29]J. R. R. Tolkien, for example, introduces his reader to Middle Earth through the hobbits, Bilbo and then Frodo, whose parochialism makes them almost as ignorant of the world outside of the Shire as Tolkien's readers.

Chapter Four

"And None Shall Gather the Leaves": Unbinding the Voice in *America* and *Europe*

Fós ní ghéillfinn, caoch mar a bhí mé
Do ghlór gan éifeacht aon a mhaígh é,
Ach magadh nó greim gan feidhm, gan chéill.
Gur aithris a broinn dom deimhin gach scéil.
Níor chomhrá leamhais ná dúrtam bréige é,
Ná dúirt-bean-liom-go-ndúirt-bean-léi é,
Ach labhair an bheart i gceart 'is in éifeacht.[1]
Brian Merriman, *Cúirt an Mhean-Oíche* (c. 1780)

Blake's innovative use of media and radical politics are well-established, but are rarely linked. In *America* and *Europe*, however, Blake ties his critique of gender paradigms to his subversion of bibliographical practices through the childbirth metaphor, a trope in which art meets the politics of gender and the body meets the book. The production of texts that totalize the field of social relations and the convention of linearity that totalizes the narrative are thus mapped onto the females' assimilation into the dominant gender codes and the unified identity that those codes presume. On the verge of being incorporated into a system that views them only as fecund wombs, the females of the Preludiums resist that assimilation by complicating their identities through the addition of a voice that is productive in ways that exceed, and are alien to, gender codes, generating the same

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[1]Patrick C. Power translates this passage from Merriman's *The Midnight Court* as follows:

Yet blind as I was, I wouldn't yield
To the substanceless voice of those who made speech,
A purposeless foolish mocking or baiting,
Till the truth of the tale by her womb was related.
'Twasn't frivolous gossip or lying chatter,
Or woman-tells-woman-it type of yarn,
But the deed spoke out with truth. (523-529)

kind of destabilizing hybridity as that discussed in the previous chapter. The voice not only articulates their alienation from those codes, but marks that alienation by its very existence--these women do not belong to the domain of the familiar. As in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Blake produces a female character that defamiliarizes prevailing assumptions about gender from a position on the margins of that totalizing system. Through the childbirth metaphor, moreover, the implications of such resistance are extended to the reader's assimilation into the totalizing paradigms that govern the hegemonic text. Blake aligns mass-produced texts with the alienated uterus through which the women are reduced to silent fecundity, thus implicating them further into a vilified assimilation. Moreover, just as the women resist their reduction to reproductive receptacles by rendering their identity self-alienated, an assemblage of parts with varying interests, Blake resists his works' implication in the production of readers as reproductive receptacles, passively repeating what they are told, by splitting his texts into an assemblage of textual and visual parts with varying significatory interests. The Preludiums of *America* and *Europe*, through the childbirth metaphor, establish a crucial link between the discursive incorporation of individuals into an ideologically-invested norm and the normalizing effects of ideologically-invested discourses on individuals.

The Childbirth Metaphor and Blake: Defamiliarizing Gender and Reading

Western discourse about creativity is pervaded, and partially determined, by the construction of a homology between intellectual and biological creation: the mind conceives a work, is pregnant with it, or gives birth to it, while biological conception is described as the materialization of an idea.[2] The field of these analogies is complicated by fluctuations in the discursive domains of which it is the intersection, by differences in notions of maternity, paternity, the mechanics of reproduction from conception to childbirth, the

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[2]See, for example, Castle ("Lab'ring Bards"), Susan Stanford Friedman, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Thomas Laqueur and Patricia Parker.

mechanics of non-biological creativity from inspiration to public reception, the relationship between the creator and the work at each of those stages, and numerous others. In her essay, "Lab'ring Bards: Birth *Topoi* and English Poetics 1660-1820," Castle shows that women's procreative role was held to be a passive one in the eighteenth century and that the use of the procreative function as a metaphor for artistic production altered profoundly as poetic theories changed. Enlightenment writers, defining the poet as one who is "free from physical constraint, free to construct rational worlds of discourse," use the metaphor in pejorative contexts to describe the work of failed poets, while Romantic authors, favouring an "organic theory of art," use the metaphor positively to describe their own work (Castle, "Lab'ring Bards" 202, 203). When these poetic theories collided with eighteenth-century models of gender as well as with related assumptions about procreation, the similitude between biological and intellectual creativity was subordinated to the imperative to differentiate male from female creativities, "divid[ing] *labor*," as Susan Stanford Friedman notes, "into men's *production* and women's *reproduction*" (75).[3] In Mary Whateley's words, "But hark!--my darling infant cries, / And each poetic fancy flies" (30-31). The homology was thus fractured into a divisive paradigm by which women were denied access to a textual power which (male) authors could monopolize, recursively defining the terms of that textual power. Blake, at the leading edge of the transformation described by Castle, accepts the devaluation of maternity but in terms that were not fully consistent with contemporary models of gender and also serve to challenge the distribution of textual power.

Blake complicates the childbirth metaphor by representing women who are named only "female" yet resist biological reproduction and articulate their resistance through an alternative mode of creativity: the females speak, supplementing their uterine identities by

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[3]A number of poems in Lonsdale's anthology address the assumption that domestic and literary occupations for women were mutually exclusive as well as the favour that social opinion granted to the former.

appropriating a non-biological mode of production from which they are excluded by the paradigm which genders creative labour. Blake thus renders them too complex to be comprehended within the absolute terms of the law, "Verses are only writ by men: / I know a woman cannot write" (Barber 34-35). Moreover, the females' role in procreation is disparaged not because it is coarsely corporeal but because it functions as a figure for a model of reading that Blake opposes, one in which the reader is the passive receptacle of a text that is disseminated by the author. To read passively is to follow the text, to copy it, and thus for the reader to become aligned with "women's *reproduction*" rather than "men's *production*." To reinforce this emphasis on copying, the sexual violence of the Preludiums is described in terms which recall the technical language of printing, implicating it in the mass (re)production of texts that facilitates the exercise of authoritarian control through the dissemination of prescriptive texts to a wide readership.[4]

Blake goes still further in contesting the passive receptivity of the reader as well as its corollary, the hermeneutic control of the author. He fragments his text visually in ways that contradict conventional logical groupings, rendering it too complex to be comprehended definitively and therefore resistant to passive reading. Heterogeneity offers an avenue through which enforced homogeneity, the rule of paradigms that are defined by absolutes such as "women cannot" and propagated by the replicated text, can be transgressed. As Rothenberg notes in her essay on Paine, heterogeneity and related qualities "refuse totalizing gestures and undermine essentialisms," "destabilizing organized systems" ("Parasiting America" 351, 344). Heterogeneity repudiates the universality, absoluteness, and coherence upon which prescriptive models depend and so questions their authority.

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[4]I use "dissemination" throughout this chapter not in the Derridean sense, but in an etymologically-aware one, as a "sowing of seed" that suggests the impregnations and plantings of texts, by male figures, in *America* and *Europe*. It also links this chapter to the next, where images of published texts' ability to revitalize the political domain, including representations of published words as scattered seeds, are discussed.

In *America* and *Europe*, females do not necessarily wish to be mothers, women can be intellectually creative, printing is akin to sexual violence, the author can relinquish, at least in part, his authority, the text need not be a coherent expression of the author's position, and the reader need not yield to the author's dictates. Blake's advocacy of heterogeneity and active reception unsettles the conventional distribution of power on the level of politics by proposing an engaging, untotalizable population that generates ideas of its own rather than bowing to those of an elite, a proposal that has much to do with the radical politics of Paine. But my concern here is with the ways in which this mechanism is played out on the level of reading, renegotiating the configuration of power in the relationship between reader, author, and text by deforming the childbirth metaphor through a critique of the reduction of women to fecund beings that is indebted to another member of the Johnson circle, Wollstonecraft. Repeatedly transgressing the conventions of the childbirth metaphor, as well as related constructs which govern the introduction of the text into the public domain, Blake folds the metaphor back in upon itself to challenge the assumptions about creativity and reading which inform it.

Voice Against Body: Mapping Alienation through Differentiation

In the Preludiums to *America* and *Europe*, Blake depicts females who are subjected to sexual violence. The female of *America* is raped by Orc and the female of *Europe* is forced to give birth repeatedly against her will. As Steven Bidlake has recently argued, Blake "criticism persistently seeks to contain the violence in Blake's texts so that it may be subordinated to an interpretive category or strategy capable of rendering it inoffensive" (1). It is thus a critical commonplace to identify these females with Nature, so that the sexual violence of *America*'s Preludium is transformed into the farming of land while the travail of *Europe*'s female is seen as her defining function.[5]

[5]In such arguments, which I would suggest need to be questioned, the female is associated with the earth, but Orc retains his maleness and personhood (cf. Bloom's "best hint for reading William Blake" [*Blake's Apocalypse* 119]). Erdman, for example, refers to Orc's seizure of the female in *America* as "patriots . . . making love to good

Such readings emphasize the fecundity of the females' bodies and identify the figures according to that fecundity. This approach is consistent with the conventional gendering of creative labour but it fails to account adequately for the females' resistance to being "farmed": these women are more than the sum of their reproductive parts. If the female of *Europe* is "a kind of personified womb" and that of *America* "personifies the physical earth" (Tolley 121; John Howard 116), then the females must have non-uterine characteristics which are recognized as indicators of personhood. It is to the elision of these characteristics, alien to the definitions of femaleness that inform the preceding characterizations, that I wish to turn attention in order to disentangle the females' involvement with different types of creativity and Blake's configuration of those creativities.

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft maintains that women are naturally weaker than men physically but that they are educated to be intellectually weaker by men who, "considering females rather as women than human creatures," wish "to make them alluring mistresses" (79). Wollstonecraft thus complicates female identity to include an asexual intellect: as physical beings females are women, inferior, and potential victims, while as thinking beings females are human, equal, and potentially unoppressed.[6] In *Europe* and *America*, the doubled status of females as both women and human beings is articulated through the distinction between the womb and the voice, where the

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earth" (*Prophet* 261), Bloom argues that "The silence of the shadowy female identifies her with nature, barren when not possessed by man" ("Commentary" 902), and John Howard writes that the female "partly personifies the physical earth of the American continent" as well as being, for Orc, "the matrix to be inseminated" (116). The female of *Europe* is similarly described. Michael J. Tolley, for instance, calls her "a kind of personified womb" (121), Leonard W. Deen identifies her as "the Eternal Female who seems all womb" (61), and Bloom refers to her as "the mother of all that is mortal in man" (*Blake's Apocalypse* 147).

[6]For discussions of Wollstonecraft and the victimization of women in Blake's texts, see, for example, Fox ("Female as Metaphor"), James A. W. Heffernan, Anne K. Mellor, and Alicia Ostriker.

latter is potentially a means of liberation from reduction to the former because it operates outside of the assumptions under which such reductions are made. This distinction is implicated in the separation of the corporeal and the incorporeal, and the hierarchization of those terms that allows the privileging of non-corporeal creativity and the gendering of creative labour noted by Friedman. Blake, however, disrupts such Cartesian dualism. As in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in which Blake argues that "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that calld Body is a portion of Soul discernd by the five Senses" (4), the body/spirit opposition does not describe an antagonism between two wholes. Orc complains, "I fold, feeble my spirit folds. / For chaind beneath I rend these caverns" (*Am* 1.17-18), indicating that the "I" can refer to the body as well as the spirit, and that the two terms operate synergetically. The distinction between the corporeal and incorporeal is a discursive vehicle for articulating incommensurable aspects of the self rather than an ontologically valid stratification, much as the paradoxical definition of light as both a massless wave and a waveless mass provides a paradigm through which to divide incompatible evidence into two coherent sets of data.[7] The coercion of the body is not merely the manipulation of an object, like

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[7]Under the heading, "Wave-Particle Duality," Paul A. Tipler writes that "light, which we ordinarily think of as a wave motion, exhibits particle properties when it interacts with matter. . . . It might be tempting to say that [it] is both a wave and a particle, but the meaning of such a statement is not clear. In classical physics the concepts of waves and particles are mutually exclusive" (984). Similar problems arise when the relationship between the non-corporeal and the corporeal aspects of a human being is addressed, and the problems are complicated by the ideological bias of the terms that can be applied to each aspect, or to their sum--even the division along corporeal lines is itself ideologically implicated. I will use "self" to refer to the sum, as a term with less baggage than most, and "subject" to refer to the non-corporeal aspect, unless a term is offered by the passage under discussion, because the usage of "subject" is the most consistent with the position that I perceive the females to represent, namely being caught within a discursive framework that they try to engage, and loosen, through language. In this regard, I am particularly indebted to the writings of Emile Benveniste and Silverman.

the womb, but an appropriation of a subject's body, "a portion of Soul," with implications for that subject.

Through the situation of the figures' identity in their sexual features, it has generally been assumed that the female speakers in the Preludiums to *America* and *Europe* are the same character. While the speakers are both "nameless" (*Eur* 1.1; *Am* 1.4), "shadowy" (*Eur* 1.1; *Am* 1.1), and "female" (*Eur* 1.1; *Am* 1.4), the male speaker of the Preludium to *The [First] Book of Urizen* is also nameless and "shadowy" (*BU* 2.4). Being nameless and "shadowy" is a feature of all three Preludiums' protagonists, rather than of the females in particular, and it is at best a tenuous basis for equating the two figures, somewhat like assuming that the "the dark-haired man" in two separate works is the same character.[8] The females are identical only in their sexual utility. To view them as the same figure is to fail to see beyond their reduction to their sex, to characterize them "rather as women than human creatures," in Wollstonecraft's words. While equating the two figures, James E. Swearingen argues that "The 'nameless female' represents nature not as it might be in itself, but nature as already interpreted and available to human agency. . . . Patriarchal intentions have already determined the female as nameless, a shadowy indeterminate something" (112). Both characters have been hermeneutically reduced to beings that are definite, from the narrator's perspective, only in their sex, but this interpretation of the characters as nameless and

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[8]For the argument that the females are one character, see especially the influential work of Damon (369). Damon's work is followed, with apparent unanimity, on this point. Taking up Damon's equation of the females, however, leads to an awkward genealogy in which the female is the daughter of Urthona in *America* (1793) and of Los in *Europe* (1794). Although Los is the name given to a manifestation of Urthona in *The Four Zoas* (1797) and *Jerusalem* (1804) (see Damon 246, 426-427), Los refers to Urthona in the third person in *Europe* (3.10), so that it is necessary to use the late poems--despite the lack of supportive evidence, as well as evidence to the contrary, in *Europe* and *America*--to construct a genealogy in which the two females can be equated. The descriptor, "shadowy female," is not capitalized in *America* and *Europe* as it is in the later works, *Milton* and *The Four Zoas*.

shadowy female bodies is challenged within the texts by the females' speeches.

In *Europe*, Blake apparently authorizes this reductive interpretation by providing only the noun "female" for the speaker's naming, but this reduction of her to "female" is presented as neither a politically neutral act nor an adequate representation of her identity. In arguing for her release from childbirth, the female describes childbirth as painful for her (*Eur* 1.15) and a contravention of her will (*Eur* 2.1), but she begins by associating labour with the effacement of her identity and of her name in particular. The closing lines of the Preludium demonstrate the validity of her concerns:

> And thus her voice arose.
> 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 [travail]! (*Eur* 1.3-6; my emphasis)
> I see it smile & I roll inward & my voice is past.
> She ceast & rolld her shady clouds
> Into the secret place. (*Eur* 2.16-18)

In "the secret place," her "place may not be found," and so the Preludium's conclusion fulfils the female's prophecy regarding what will happen if she gives birth again--the "I" becomes "faint with travel" (*Eur* 1.6). The female's plea, and the evidence of its failure, recalls Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, in which Oothoon expresses the fear that she will be "cast out, / A solitary shadow wailing on the margin of non-entity" (*VDA* 7.14-15). Ferber suggests that the female's fear of losing her name is "an odd fear in one who had no name to begin with" ("Blake's *America*" 82), but this argument reverses the chronology of the passage: the narrative tense places the female's speech in the past ("And thus her voice arose" [*Eur* 1.3]). In the narrative present, from the narrator's perspective, she is "nameless," but in the narrative past, from her perspective, she did have a name, and one that she valued. To revise Swearingen's comment, "The 'nameless female' represents [the female] not as [she] might be in [her]self, but [the female] as already interpreted," by a system which understands, and uses, her only as a uterus.

The female's disappearance, moreover, is simultaneous with the passing of her voice. The "I" which speaks actively seeks to overturn the effacement of her name and identity by articulating a cogent argument that maps the oppressive nature of the female's physical fecundity on a personal and a social level: "the overflowing stars rain down prolific pains. . . . I sieze their burning power / And bring forth howling terrors, all devouring fiery kings. / Devouring & devoured" (*Eur* 1.15, 2.3-5). The speaker also issues an imperative to Enitharmon, declaring, "Ah mother Enitharmon! / Stamp not with solid form this vig'rous progeny of fires" (*Eur* 2.7-8). Far from being "passive" or lamentatory (Fox, "Female as Metaphor" 513; Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse* 147), the speaking "I" seeks to gain control over the female's identity, particularly in the form of the body's release from childbirth, and it attempts to do so through the power of language. In the conventional alignment of the mind/body duality with word/womb, speech becomes a means for contesting the female's confinement on one side of the binary oppositions; by producing words, the female puts her foot in the door of masculine power, as well as outside the confines of feminine disempowerment. The female even appropriates the childbirth metaphor's displacement of fecundity from the (feminine) uterus to the (masculine) mind by referring to her "lab'ring head" (*Eur* 1.12). Ultimately, however, the opposition between womb and voice is not a vehicle for transcending the division of labour implicit in the childbirth trope, but an articulation of the dependence of each term on its antithetical stance towards the other term: labour erases her name, her speech seeks to end her labour and, at the end of the Preludium, her labour ends her speech. The female's predicament exposes the gendering of creative labour that Friedman describes by representing a fecund womb and an articulate voice as mutually exclusive terms, yet the female, at the point in which the Preludium is

set, is capable of both types of activity.[9] Still in possession of her name, her synergetic heterogeneity has not yet been reduced to a passive, unipartite anonym.

The fragmentation of a female into voice and womb is more explicitly marked in the Preludium to *America*, in which Orc "si[illegible]es] the panting struggling womb" (*Am* 2.3), not the female as a whole. Allegorical readings of the Preludium have elided the female's subjectivity, particularly by inscribing her rape into a ritual with a wider compensatory significance and by maintaining the heroic status of Orc through the naturalization of the rape as "desire fulfilling itself" (Doskow 176).[10] The distinction between whole and part is, however, emphasized by Blake's use of pronouns. It is neither "he," "she," nor "they" that enjoy the sexual seizure, but only the objectified womb--"It joy'd" (*Am* 2.4). The female's voice is explicitly differentiated from the seized womb in the introductory phrase, "then burst the virgin cry" (*Am* 2.6), which depends upon the same distinction that Blake employs in the Prophecy[11]: "find . . . in coarse-clad honesty / The undefil'd tho' ravish'd in her cradle night and morn . . . Because the soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd" (*Am* 8.11-14). In both the Preludium and the Prophecy, the seized body is distinguished from an unwilling incorporeal aspect of the self, the

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[9]This ambivalence is reflected in contradictions w[illegible]thin the speech itself, as the female's complaint is punctuated by suggestions of complicity and compensation: "Unwilling I look up to [illegible]aven! unwilling count the stars . . . I sieze their burning power" (*Eur* 2.1, 2.3); "I am drown'd in shady woe, and visionary joy" (*Eur* 2.12).

[10]The rape has been associated with various events of mystical significance. Behrendt, for example, asserts that "the 'rape' is a necessary rite of passage that frees both figures into a more enlightened perspective" ("'This Accursed Family'" 41); Erdman writes that "This ritual copulation reunites man and earth" (*Prophet* 261); and Tannenbaum associates it with the Incarnation, as "a rape and a birth, signifying . . . the Word again made flesh" (143).

[11]Throughout, I use "Prophecy" to indicate the portion within *America* and *Europe* that is designated as such rather than the entire work.

"cry" and the "soul," that can transcend the treatment of the body with which it is connected while retaining an investment in how that body is treated. This division is not absolute: like the Orc of the Preludium, whose spirit is "feeble" (*Am* 1.17) because of his physical chaining, and the female of *Europe*, whose identity is erased by her own physical subjugation, the female of *America*'s Preludium is also spiritually disempowered by her physical seizure, as one of Orc's avatars, she complains, "drink[s] [her] soul away" (*Am* 2.14). The "soul" is not stained, but it is still being weakened. As in *Europe*'s Preludium, the emphasis is on a process of disenfranchisement rather than a cataclysmic loss of identity or a state prior to subjectivity--the females are never entirely soul-less or purely corporeal.

This weakening is reflected in the trajectory of the female's speech in *America*. She begins by verbally seizing Orc and defining him in terms of her own desires: "I know thee, I have found thee, & I will not let thee go . . . And thou art fall'n to give me life in regions of dark death" (*Am* 2.7, 2.9). The female inverts Orc's Petrarchan assertions of desire (*Am* 1.19-20), in which he is the desiring subject and she is the desired object, by expressing her own wants.[12] While Minna Doskow characterizes the female's assertion of seizure as "sexual possessiveness" (176), the female is only turning the tables, so to speak, on Orc, but with a difference: he seizes "It" (*Am* 2.4), and she seizes "thee"/"thou" (*Am* 2.7-9). Failing to objectify Orc fully, the female slides back into Orc's system, in which she is object and he is subject. Although the female revises Orc's spiritual transformations into figures of power by confining those figures' sovereignty to specific regions (*Am* 2.12-14), she readmits Orc's Petrarchan justification for his seizure of her by changing their activities from "screaming" and "Stalking" to "court[ing] [her] to his love" (*Am* 1.13,

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[12]The female's complaint, "thy fire & my frost / Mingle in howling pains" (*Am* 2.15-16), presents a provocative variation on "A common Petrarchan antithesis," in which fire is associated with "love" and ice with "egotism and pride" (Saslow 208*n*). Blake, an admirer of Michelangelo, radically modifies the conventional antithesis by presenting the beloved's perspective and addressing the torment that she feels because of his fiery expressions of desire.

1.14, 2.12). While the role of suitor is conventionally servile, the concern of the courtship is "his love" and overturning her resistance to it. By reconstructing Orc as the desiring subject and herself as the desired object, she falls back into his discursive model and discards her characterization of him as her self-sacrificing captive (*A* 2.7-9). It is after this abandonment of her first exclamations, foreshadowed by her continued recognition of his status as a person ("thee"), that she asserts that one of her suitor's avatars is "drinking [her] soul away" (*Am* 2.14).

By tracing her use of pronouns, the disappearance of her "soul" can be mapped. Her last use of "I" appears in the line after she laments the loss of her soul, as she exclaims, "O what limb rending pains I feel" (*Am* 2.15), but the only pronoun in the next line is "thy" (*Am* 2.16), indicating Orc's possession, and in the last line the suffering of which she complains is divorced from her "I" entirely: "This is eternal death; and this the torment" (*Am* 2.17). As when the narrator writes, "It joy'd" (*Am* 2.4), her physical condition is pointed to as an object rather than as a set of feelings which belong to a subject. From saying "I" three times in one line, as well as expressing knowledge and agency (*Am* 2.7), to referring to her pain as an object (*Am* 2.17), from verbally seizing Orc "to give [her] life" (*Am* 2.9) to submitting fatalistically to death and suffering (*Am* 2.17), from constructing Orc as desired object (*Am* 2.7-9) to readmitting his construction of himself as desiring subject (*Am* 2.12), the female's speech simultaneously plots the failure of her effort to control the situation and the effacement of the subjectivity that she expresses at the beginning of her attempt. While Bloom claims that Orc's seizure is sanctioned by the fact that it makes her speak, since she was "dumb till that dread day" (*Am* 1.10; *Blake's Apocalypse* 120), her voice erupts in an endeavour to reassert verbally the control that she once had physically. As long as Orc was chained she was "Invulnerable tho' naked" (*Am* 1.7), but her voice proves unable to reclaim that degree of protection and the final lines of her speech describe her exceptional vulnerability and loss of identity. Again, the "I" has become "faint" and "ceast" (*Eur* 1.6, 2.17), after "wailing on the margin of non-entity" (*VDA* 7.15).

In the Preludiums, each female is discursively divided into a womb and a voice, into two parts which have agendas--biological reproduction and verbal production--that are mutually exclusive within the terms of the gendering of creative labour, yet which coexist in a single individual. This discontinuity between sex and speaker is affiliated with other oppositions that are similarly fundamental to patriarchy, such as passive/active, desired/desiring, reproducing/producing, body/spirit, object/subject, and disempowered/empowering.[13] The females, having both a womb and a voice, as well as other features, do not exist at one extreme or another but move along the spectrums whose endpoints these oppositions define. Speaking from positions of bodily, specifically uterine, devaluation, the females express resistance to that reductive coding through speech, and employ the synergy between body and subjectivity to counter a reduction of their selves to their sex.[14] But since neither female succeeds in overturning her victimization or escaping the structure of discursive control, it is not clear if the voice can rescue the subject from a system of victimization that depends upon the vulnerability and desirability of the female body (or if it is possible to render the females purely uterine or purely vocal). Moreover, it is not clear if that is quite Blake's object. By opposing uterine and verbal creativity, Blake sustains their conventional separation and

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[13]Regarding the pervasiveness of the alignment of male/female with these and similar oppositions in Western thought since Classical Greece, see Ian Maclean (esp. 2-3, 8, 54, 62). Wollstonecraft and some of her contemporaries unsettled these oppositions by citing nurture, rather than nature, as the force which sustains such paradigms. In *Secresy; Or the Ruin on the Rock*, for instance, Fenwick suggests that women are conditioned to conform to untenable patriarchal stereotypes against their natural inclinations.

[14]This synergy is similar to what Ault calls "self-differing" in Blake's poems, where "the text announces . . . a radical, unresolvable disjunction between its totality and its divisions" (*Narrative Unbound* xiii). See also Rajan, who argues that "The 'whole,' instead of being what the parts fit into, is a perpetually shifting effect of the (part)iculars through which we view it" (*Supplement of Reading* 203).

supports the traditional hierarchization of those creativities. But by aligning that opposition with sexual violence and rebellion against it, Blake deflects part of the devaluation of women's reproduction onto the devaluers and supports the females' resistance through the valorization of verbal creativity. The voice, by expressing dissent and articulating suffering, even for the moments represented in the Preludiums, denies oppression the concealing cloak of homogeneous acquiescence and demonstrates the illegitimacy of the reduction of women to essentially identical female bodies. By speaking, the females create themselves as heterogeneous entities over which physical force cannot exert complete control, discursively naming and constructing alienated aspects of their selves from which they can criticize and resist their forced confinement to their sexual category.

The Childbirth Metaphor in the Industrial Age: The Mass Reproduction of Books

The females, however, are not just entangled in discursive constructions of verbal production and biological reproduction. They are also implicated in an intersection of those two types of creativity: textual reproduction. In the Preludiums to *Europe* and *America*, the discourse in which biological and non-biological creativity are rendered homologous is applied to a critique of publishing rather than writing: biological reproduction is aligned with the copying, the re-production, of a prior text and, as the vehicle of prescriptive hegemony, it is opposed to free expression.[15] The discussion of the Europeans' textual imprisonment begins with a reference to Urizen's "brazen Book / That Kings & Priests had copied" (*Eur* 11.3-4) while Orc describes his destruction of the "stony law" as the tearing of a book (*Am* 8.5-6). The copied Book homogenizes the social discursive field through material and intellectual mechanisms of

[15]Mitchell argues that an "iconographic code" operates in Blake's texts, a code which is articulated by a series of aligned binary oppositions, which include "mechanical" and "hand-crafted," "Book" and "Scroll," "law" and "prophecy," as well as "writing" and "speech/song" ("Visible Language" 68).

replication--the mass reproduction of texts and the promotion of learning by rote--that are fundamentally silent and silencing.[16] Speech, however, heterogenizes that field merely by allowing discourse to operate outside of the aphasic Book. Blake submerges this position in the Preludiums: the violence that the females condemn in their speeches is described in terms which suggest the printing process, the mechanical copying of texts. The narrator's description of the female's seizure in the Preludium to *America* as well as her spoken response to it suggest the engraving of a plate, while the description of childbirth in *Europe* suggests printing, so that each female resists a stage of textual reproduction as well as the corresponding stage of biological reproduction. The Latin term for "womb," *matrix*, also refers to the mould for casting printer's type, providing a technical term through which Blake can displace the childbirth metaphor from private inspiration to public indoctrination. The females' vocal resistance to their reduction to their reproductive capacity operates simultaneously as a critique of the replication of the silent and silencing Book.

In the Preludium to *Europe*, the female's description of her children recalls Blake's association of engraved books with fire, as in the Printing House of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Erdman suggests that Los's reference to his sons' "bright fiery wings" (*Eur* 3.8) is such a reference, noting that "Blake consistently calls his works children. Winged thoughts are thoughts put on paper. The pages (wings) are illuminated (bright) and etched with acid (fiery)" (*Prophet* 267, 267*n*). The "shadowy female" uses similar language as well as the jargon of printing with reference to her children. She recalls Erdman's association of fire with etching in her references to the "burning power" from which she "bring[s] forth . . . fiery kings" (*Eur* 2.3-4), the "progeny of fires" and "myriads of flames" (*Eur* 2.8, 2.9), and she mentions "fold[ing] the sheety waters" (*Eur* 1.13). She also associates her children with impressed paper: "Stamp not with solid

[16]For discussions of Blake's position(s) regarding the mechanical reproduction of texts, see, for example, Mitchell ("Visible Language"), Eaves (*Theory of Art*), and Paul Mann.

form this vig'rous progeny of fires. . . . [T]hou dost stamp them with a signet; then they roam abroad" (*Eur* 2.8, 2.10). "Stamp[ing] with solid form" suggests the printing process, since "forme" is a typesetter's term for type locked in a chase for printing. Further, "stamp[ing] . . . with a signet," in order that the text can "roam abroad," recalls the licensing of texts for publication in the latter part of the eighteenth century: the Stamp Act of 1765 required texts to be stamped to indicate that taxes were paid before being circulated to the public (Feather 184). Thus, stamping with a solid form and stamping with a signet, printing and then paying the tax that permits regulated circulation, are paralleled, connecting the printer's stamping of the plates with the state's certification of the book. By associating the female's children with books, and with state-sanctioned books in particular, the Preludium anticipates the prescriptive and authoritarian writings of the Prophecy: Urizen's "brazen Book," the Guardian's "secret codes," and the commandments (*Eur* 11.3, 12.15, 12.28). Imaged as mass-reproduced books, these children are "howling terrors, all devouring fiery kings" (*Eur* 2.4). The female's forced reproductive activity propagates both tyrants and the tyrannical texts which empower them.

The seizure of *America*'s female also recalls the mechanical reproduction of texts. While the Preludium to *Europe* describes printing, the Preludium to *America* suggests etching, which is done by coating the plate in acid-resistant wax, scoring the design into the plate through the wax, immersing it in acid to eat away the exposed metal, then removing the wax and covering the plate with ink, filling the grooves left by the acid.[17] The female recalls the corrosive scoring of cold metal by acid, and the language with which that process is described in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in her complaint, "thy fire & my frost / Mingle in howling pains, in furrows by thy lightnings

[17]This is not to suggest that Blake is describing his own method of producing plates, which remains a mystery to scholars but clearly underwent many refinements (see Bindman [13-15]). The Preludium seems to refer to etching in general, although Blake's own work is implicitly indicated.

rent" (*Am* 2.15-16). The etching process is described allegorically by the rape itself, in which Orc's "wrists of fire" (*Am* 2.2) penetrate a clouded figure, the Orc-resistant clouds are removed (*Am* 1.20, 2.4), and then the "first-born smile" (*Am* 2.4) is produced, "As when a black cloud shews its light'nings to the silent deep" (*Am* 2.5). This description of the "first-born" suggests the practice of filling the plate's furrows with black ink for printing and also recalls one of the images of childbirth in the Preludium to *Europe*, "the dark cloud disburdend in the day of dismal thunder" (*Eur* 1.7). The female, moreover, refers to "roots that writhe their arms into the nether deep" (*Am* 2.11), suggesting the scoring of the design onto the plate through the wax, and a pun on "writhe" and "write."[18] The oppressiveness of her engraving is semantically reinforced by the Prophecy: the female is "in furrows by [Orc's] lightnings rent" (*Am* 2.16) and Washington, just a few lines later, complains about "the furrows of the whip" (*Am* 3.11), "the opressors scourge" (*Am* 6.11) to which Orc refers; the process causes "howling pains" (*Am* 2.16), anticipating the howling that occurs throughout the Prophecy. The final line of the Preludium, "This is eternal death; and this the torment long foretold" (*Am* 2.17), can thus refer to the character's physical anguish and/or the text which follows, since "foretold" is the literal meaning of "prophecy," the title attached to the next section. The suffering of the shadowy female thus foreshadows the sufferings of the Prophecy, and is connected to those sufferings through engraving: her en-graving, as her ongoing "eternal death" (*Am* 2.17), is the type of the suffering that appears on subsequent pages.

The females' reduction to silenced wombs that are allusively connected to printing plates enacts the oppression of the individual voice through the replication of the authoritarian text. The authoritarian text, like "curses of iron" (*Eur* 12.27), confines and

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[18]"The word "writhing" appears in *America* in contexts which suggest this double usage of writ(h)ing. "Writhing in pangs of abhorred birth" (*Am* 9.17) suggests the childbirth trope for writing, while "They grovel on the sand and writhing lie" (*Am* 13.5) suggests both palimpsestic writing on sand, a recurring Romantic image, and duplicitous writing in a double pun on "writhing lie."

silences the reader, forcing compliance to its dictums. The male of *Urizen*'s Preludium embodies the implications of such a text: receptive, passive, and an auditor, the shadowy male only uses language, for three lines, to identify himself as a submissive copyist and encourage the violence of authority rather than condemn it. While the male implores, "fear not / To unfold your dark visions of torment" (*BU* 2.6-7), and then falls silent, the females defer their silencing and contextualize it. The association of stages in the printing process with the sexual utilization of the females over their vociferous protests implies that, at its inception, the mass reproduction of texts is implicated in reductive and confining structures of power. These structures include not just those that limit women's role in creativity to that of identical vessels which receive another's "idea" passively but also those that view the populace as a collection of identical vessels which are, like *Urizen*'s copyist, to receive the hegemony's Word passively.

Tearing Up the Replicated Text: The Reader Against the Book

By examining images of reproduction within the context of the childbirth metaphor, I do not wish to counter the equation of the females with Nature by an equation of the females with Reproductive Mechanisms. At issue here is not an allegory, where "the shadowy female" can simply substitute for different concepts, but a tension between competing discursive forces--including constructions of gender, maternity, writing, reading, individuality, and personal liberty--which struggle to control the definition of the females and the different forms of creativity with which they are connected. To stretch a metaphor, just as the printing press "stamp[s] . . . with solid form" to produce essentially identical texts, patriarchal discourse stamps women with uterine form to produce essentially identical beings. Similarly, if those identical texts are read passively rather than creatively, so that the reader, like the fecund female in contemporary medical discourse, merely receives the disseminated text rather than engages it, then the reader is also being "stamp[ed] . . . with solid form," parroting the text and subscribing to its dictates in the same

way as every other compliant reader. Such duplication would be anathematic to Blake because of its repetition of dogma and silencing of difference on terms to which he objected, homogenizing and tyrannical impulses for which the Book of Urizen is a figure. The Book of Urizen represents that which initiates and sustains prescription by constraining readers to replicate certain dictums, overtly through legislation and covertly through indoctrinating reading, and thus generates the coherent and uniform discursive space that Blake resists. Edward Larrissy writes that "Education--the subjection of youthful inspiration to dead, systematic book-learning--seemed useless to Blake" (102). He goes on to argue that, in *There is No Natural Religion [a]*, Blake's condemnation of education articulates a congruence between senses and the book because "they are both obstructions to Imagination" (103). The body and the book are both vehicles of restraint, facilitating the binding of what Blake privileges as the legitimate core of human activity, the Imagination. In the Preludiums, Blake conjoins these two sets of constraints, rather than permitting one system to represent the other: the book is not an analogue for the body, nor vice versa, but both are prescribed within a discourse that suppresses creativity in favour of the passive reception which was held to define the female role in reproduction.

In *Areopagitica*, Milton employs a homology between the body and the book to argue that there is no authoritative Truth, but only partial truths that cannot be authoritatively evaluated. In condemning censorship, Milton rejects the notion that authorities have special access to the Truth by maintaining that Truth was fragmented at the ascension of Christ and will not be pieced together until Christ's return:

> when He ascended . . . then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhoon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and *scattered them to the four winds.* From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth . . . imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down *gathering* up limb by limb.

(*Areopagitica* 175; my emphases)

In *America*, Orc repeats the imagery, and language, of *Areopagitica* in declaring that he will "scatter religion . . . To the four winds as a torn book, & none shall gather the leaves" (*Am* 8.5-6). But while Milton anticipates the eventual reconstitution of Truth as a positive event, Orc depicts its ultimate destruction as positive and denies anyone the opportunity of re-gathering its torn fragments--the leaves "shall rot on desart sands . . . To make the desarts blossom" (*Am* 8.7-8). Bloom parallels Orc's speech with the distribution of the poet's words in Percy Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind": "Scatter . . . my words among mankind! / Be through my lips to unawakened Earth / The trumpet of a prophecy" (Shelley 66-69; Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse* 123). The emphasis on "mak[ing] the desarts blossom" and overturning tyranny, however, more closely recalls an earlier text, Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*: "Men of abilities scatter seeds that grow up and have a great influence on the forming opinion; and when once the public opinion preponderates, through the exertion of reason, the overthrow of arbitrary power is not very distant" (99*n*). Orc, however, makes an important departure from Percy Shelley's and Wollstonecraft's models. Shelley's poet employs the didactic mode in which the writer persuades his readers to accede to his viewpoint by distributing copies of a text that retain his intended meaning. Wollstonecraft's version, while placing more emphasis on the role of the public, still retains the primacy of texts by "Men of abilities." But Orc repudiates the aims of that hermeneutic project by scattering the "torn book." For Orc, and arguably for Blake, the fecundity of the text lies not in its ability to replicate the progenitor's perspective but in the destruction of its power to limit others' perspectives. While noting the same premise as Milton, the impossibility of special access to Truth, Blake valorizes the pluralism which freedom from a unified and fixed Truth offers rather than lamenting it as a condition of the fallen world. Orc's utopia does not depend upon the reproductive fecundity of the womb or the printer's matrix, but upon the innate productivity of a world that is not stultified by the Book and, in Larrissy's phrase, "dead, systematic book-learning": "The fiery joy, that Urizen perverted to ten commands . . . That stony law I stamp to dust . . . to renew the

fiery joy, and burst the stony roof" (*Am* 8.3, 8.5, 8.9). Orc's utopia is heterotextual, and it is the scattered body of Osiris that provides a figure for a radically different model of proliferation, a model that is based on the pluralism that is allowed by fragmentation rather than the dissemination of a single, uniform, "stony" textual Truth. Like Paine, he favours "the production of heterogeneities in a strategy to dissolve consolidated forms of power" (Rothenberg, "Parasiting America" 351), fragmenting the text so that the legibility of the author's message is compromised and with it the requirement that the reader recover that message rather than generate a new one.

Blake, of course, presents this position in a book. This contradiction pervades Blake's work and is variously accommodated: Mitchell, for example, argues that Blake's texts do not present themselves as authoritative ("Visible Language" 62) while Gross suggests that Blake's "awareness of language's power can only aid his counter-hegemonic purpose" (20). But self-consciousness about employing an authoritarian medium, whether the book or language itself, does not exculpate the texts from the charge of authoritarianism. To accept a text's claim to be non-authoritative is to accept the authority of that claim. In *Europe* and *America*, however, Blake goes beyond self-consciousness about his media by following Orc's commands and tearing up his own texts, thus subverting the authority of the medium that he cannot entirely escape. Orc insists that "none shall gather the leaves" (*Am* 8.6), suggesting the technical term, "a gathering," for the collection of printed sheets into book form, and recalling the many references to binding in these two works, but Blake neither bound nor gathered *Europe* and *America*. Rajan notes that by not binding the leaves of his texts, Blake "makes his parts movable" and allows for a variety of arrangements rather than a single, authoritative sequence (*Supplement of Reading* 203). Moreover, addressing the division of Blake's texts into prefaces, preludiums, and mottoes, she argues that "Segmentation . . . creat[es] spaces between texts that act as frames," so that "the preludium is stopped from functioning as the major premise in the poem's argument because its voice is placed outside the text of the prophecy" (*Supplement of Reading* 258). In *Europe* and *America*, this textual compartmentalization

and decentralization extends beyond generic classifications. Blake not only refuses to gather the leaves of *Europe* and *America* and divides the texts into prefatory and core material: he divides the lines of those parts with spaces that are filled with designs, from trailing ivies to figures six or more lines deep, he divides speeches by printing them on separate pages, and he divides pages of texts by interposing full-plate designs. Blake's illuminated works in general subvert the conventions of the book by making them visual artifacts as well as verbal ones, but these two prophecies are visibly different, more emphatically disrupting the characterization of the text as a unified verbal entity. The text of *America* is visually broken into at least thirty sections: more than half of those interruptions are within a plate, including four where a major figure is drawn in the break (3, 4, 11, 14), and five plates have twelve lines or less (4, 5, 7, 10, 12). Although the designs which divide them are typically less pronounced than those in *America*, *Europe* is even more fragmented, being visually broken into approximately forty-five sections. Visually, particularly when compared to the contemporaneous *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, the texts of these poems appear to be torn apart, challenging their reduction to a verbal entity without a physical component, just as the females' speeches challenge their reduction to a corporeal entity without a verbal component.

This fragmentation of the book also marks the dissolution of the text. In these two prophecies, Blake often breaks apart passages that would be grouped together in a conventional, uninterrupted, narrative line. *The [First] Book of Urizen* is divided only when chapter and verse dictate, mirroring the submissiveness and unobtrusiveness of its shadowy male in its use of those typographical markers which are too conventional to be noticeable. But the divisions in *America* and *Europe* resist such a Urizenically controlled pattern, just as their shadowy speakers do. For instance, in *America*, a figure riding a swan flies between the assertion that "Bostons Angel cried aloud" (*Am* 11.3) and the Angel's speech (*Am* 11.4-15), while the description of what Boston's Angel does as he speaks appears on the next plate (*Am* 12.1-12), separating the identity of the speaker, the speech, and the speaker's actions, with the latter two being "movable," as Rajan puts it, because

Plate 12 of *Europe* (from Bindman's *Complete Graphic Works of William Blake*)

Boston's Angel is not mentioned by name in either segment. Similarly, in *Europe*, while logic might group together the lines which describe the torment and howling in Europe (*Eur* 12.1-21), those which describe the mythic figures' reactions (*Eur* 12.22-25), and those which describe the textual imprisonment of the Europeans (*Eur* 12.26-31), the breaks are staggered so that the last line of each logical grouping is attached to the next group: the line, "Thus was the howl thro Europe" (*Eur* 12.21), is divided from the rest of the description of Europe (*Eur* 12.1-20) by a design about six lines deep, and grouped with the description of the spectatorship of Orc, Palamabron, and Rintrah (*Eur* 12.2?-24); the description of Enitharmon's viewing of the conflagration (*Eur* 12.25) is divided from the lines which describe the responses of her sons (*Eur* 12.22-24) by ivies and insects, but connected with the description of the Europeans' imprisonment. This visual division of the lines has guided interpretation of the poem, as many have criticized Enitharmon for having "laugh'd in her sleep to see" (*Eur* 12.25) the suffering of the Europeans,[19] but Orc, the ostensible hero of the piece, "rejoic'd to hear the howling shadows" (*Eur* 12.22). By grouping Enitharmon's response with the suffering of the Europeans, instead of the mythic figures' reactions to the expulsion of Albion's Angel and Guardian, the engraving invites a reading of Enitharmon's laughter that is different from that which would be offered by a continuous text, a text in which Enitharmon's reaction could be grouped with the reactions of her sons. The visual organization of Plate 12 deflects the division of the lines according to the status of its characters as mythic or historic but does not disallow it, offering instead two contradictory readings, one guided by visual groupings and one guided by verbal content.

A similar contradiction is contained in the generic classifications of the texts: both *Europe* and *America* are subtitled, "a Prophecy," yet are divided into two parts titled, "Preludium" and "A Prophecy," placing the Preludiums inside as well as outside of a "Prophecy" and calling into question the point at which prophecy

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[19]See, for example, Bloom (*Blake's Apocalypse* 157), Erdman (*Prophet* 269), and John Howard (144).

begins. Such radical segmentation disrupts attempts to authorize one reading over another by breaking the text into various, overlapping collections of parts in which no one part dominates, collections which are governed by contradictory keys. The texts can be divided into mythic and historic action, passages spoken by the narrator and those spoken by actors, visually delineated sections, preludiums and prophecies, as well as visual and verbal components. Readers are not only denied authorial sanction for a specific reading, but for the very existence of a reading in which all of the pieces can be combined into a seamless whole that is not a collation of parts, where each part has its own coherence. As Blake writes in "On Homers Poetry," "when a Work has Unity it is as much in a Part as in the Whole." To read *Europe* and *America* as whole poems is to elide the seams in the works, to skip over the swans, ivies, insects, and spiders' webs that fill, and draw attention to, the gulfs that separate parts of the texts. These gulfs not only tear the book up physically, but conceptually, distinguishing the mythic from the historic, and the womb from the voice. Blake, in effect, hews apart the corpus of his own text, so that, rather than "dead, systematic book-learning," readers are offered opportunities "To make the desarts blossom" (*Am* 8.8).

Blake thus appropriates the homology between biological and non-biological creativity to address the politics of the copied text, offering, for both the self and the book, heterogeneity as a means by which hegemonic prescription can be undermined. Heterogeneity proliferates centres of identity--as the definition of the self or as the meaning of the text--so that no one part can dominate the whole and no part can be discarded as incompatible with, or irrelevant to, the governing meaning or the paradigm which determines priority within a communal culture. Through references such as "limb rending pains" (*Am* 2.15), "my soul" (*Am* 2.14), "my lab'ring head" (*Eur* 1.12), "my limbs" (*Eur* 1.13), and "my voice" (*Eur* 2.16), each female discursively constructs a non-uterine body and a non-uterine subjectivity while articulating the investment of her non-sexual aspects in the treatment of her sexual features. When they speak of their non-uterine position(s), the females scatter their words as well as aspects of

their identities and so evade the gathering, the interpretive binding, of those portions into a stifled self that is only sexually creative and significant. When Blake visually scatters his words within the space of his book, he produces a textual model that provides an alternative to that of the gathered and binding Urizenic Book, a model that is decentralized rather than hegemonic, both in the fragmentation of its text and in its relinquishment of the author's hermeneutic control. There are complications: Blake retains the construction of the female sex as passive and powerless even as he turns that construction against the enforcement of passivity and powerlessness, he retains bookish conventions even as he contests the power of the conventional book, and he uses his artistic control to subvert the power of authors and authorities. But the designs, the unorthodox textual divisions, the unbound leaves, and the contesting voices disrupt the univocality and the requirement of passive reception that characterize the authoritarian Book, compromising the power of the dominant paradigms in which Blake's works remain implicated. While the aphasic Book is countered by the unbound voice, the "Singing" (*Am* 6.13) of freed captives, it is also undermined by the torn book. The scattered text is unbound, and unbinding, and it contributes to the generation of meaning through the dissolution and defamiliarization of univocality and unity rather than their dissemination.

Chapter Five

Self is the medium, least refined of all
Through which opinions searching beam can fall;
And, passing there, the clearest, steadiest ray
Will tinge its light and turn its line astray. . . .
But 'tis not only individual minds
That habit tinctures, or that interest blinds;
Whole nations, fooled by falsehood, fear, or pride,
Their ostrich-heads in self delusion hide.

Thomas Moore, *The Sceptic* (1809)

Blake's first published epic *Milton*, is usually read as a formally-interesting spiritual autobiography, representing Blake's relationship with his bardic and mystic precursor, Milton,[1] as well as his vision of spiritual, if not apocalyptic, renovation or apotheosis,[2]

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[1]Frye goes as far as to suggest that "For Blake . . . to imitate Milton is to imitate Jesus, just as, for Virgil, to imitate Homer was to imitate 'nature'" (*Fearful Symmetry* 322). The power of this reading of *Milton* is such that the poem is central to Bloom's formulation of the dynamics of poetic influence. As early as 1971, Bloom wrote that it is the "anxiety of influence" that Blake "had labored heroically to overcome in *Milton*" ("Blake's *Jerusalem*" 75). In *Anxiety of Influence* (1973), Bloom depends on Blake's poem for a language to discuss that anxiety, from applying the States to the stages of "Poetic Influence" (30) to identifying the Covering Cherub with "creative anxiety" (36). William Dennis Horn argues that "For Bloom this story [*Milton*] stands as a type for the dynamics of influence in which the newcomer can overcome his belatedness only by assimilating and then correcting his precursor" (73). This issue is too fundamental to Blake criticism to enumerate fully the more interesting examinations of it, but Joseph Wittreich's study, *Angel of Apocalypse*, warrants special mention. Jackie DiSalvo pays scant attention to *Milton*, but traces Milton's influence through the rest of Blake's corpus.

[2]Critics vary on the degree of secularity of this individual renovation. Frye, for instance, suggests that "*Milton* is an individual prologue to the omen of something universal coming on. The Last Judgment lies on the distant horizon and is prophesied in the final

in a fragmented, multi-perspectival poem.[3] Blake's personal identification with the poem is such that it is common in Blake criticism to find one of the poem's narrators referred to as Blake himself.[4] Such readings provide valuable insights into the main plot--

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line of the poem" (*Fearful Symmetry* 323) and calls it "the great poem of individual awakening" (*Study of English Romanticism* 38). Bloom maintains that "Milton . . . is shown casting off his own selfhood and moving toward a visionary emancipation that Blake desires as his own" but that "What belonged to religious convention or 'moral virtue' in the historical Milton is of no help to Blake, nor was it to Milton himself, in Blake's view" ("Commentary" 909). Erdman argues for a more secular version of apocalyptic renovation, a "*mental* liberation" after which "Blake" is "mentally ready for the Great Harvest," which has apocalyptic overtones (*Prophet* 423; also see Sandler), while Frosch argues that, "In *Milton*, Blake expands his analysis of the obstructions within the imagination" (41).

[3]Damon argues that "The act of the poem is one, but the causes are so complex that Blake had to invent an original structure, to suggest the simultaneousness of all the material. He introduced material without any preparation, abruptly changing the subject over and over" (280). More recently, critics have noted that this narrative fragmentation is also a fragmentation of narrative perspective, or "the shifting of visionary perspectives" (Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse* 310). In her important tudy on this subject, *Poetic Form in Blake's* Milton, Fox writes,

> Two particular structural principles seem to me to grow in influence throughout Blake's career until they culminate in *Milton*: the principle of simultaneity, by which the duration of the entire action of the poem is defined as a single unmeasurable instant, and the principle of multiple perspectives, by which every facet of that action is analyzed from the point of view (or points of view) of every major character. (6)

Wittreich extends the discussion of multi-perspectivism to the illustrations (28ff) while Frosch argues that Blake's use of multiple perspectives arises from an "anti-perspectivism" (116).

[4]Bloom, for instance, writes, "Blake goes with Los to the gate of the city of Golgonooza. . . . One point of this incident is to show us that Blake is now distinct from Palamabron" (*Blake's Apocalypse* 334). While refuting the "readiness of even sympathetic readers to confuse a

or, rather, the central incident--of the poem, but they necessarily marginalize the context of Milton's quest for self-annihilation and reunion with his emanation, and that context is historically and nationally specific. In *Milton*, Blake not only subverts the prevailing national narrative formally, as discussed in Chapter Two, but explicitly critiques the cultural roots which inform it. These cultural origins are, like the bookish tyrants of *Europe*, propagated textually through the printing press. But it is not books generally, or the Book of Urizen symbolically, that Blake condemns in *Milton*. Instead, Blake singles out "The Stolen and Perverted Writings of Homer & Ovid: of Plato & Cicero" (*M* 1)--classical texts. Blake contends that classical texts infect English culture with classical paradigms and values, particularly false gods, imperialist militarism, and sacrifice. By doing so, Blake shows a sensitivity to the hegemony's dependence on classical models in its promotion of duty and self-sacrificing heroism during very trying times. As Colley has so demonstrated so well, the endless military conflicts of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century created a financial and personal burden on a relatively small nation that would have been hard to sustain were it not for the effective delivery of a particular national model in which sacrifice for the good of England was intensively valorized. That way of thinking about the subject's relationship to the state was circulated through classical texts and engravings modelled on classical subjects that represented heroic self-sacrifice on the nation's battlefield, as well as through the recuperation of Shakespeare and Milton as the quintessential English poets. Blake clearly establishes a connection between the classics and the new national bards: "Shakspeare & Milton were both curbd by the general malady & infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the

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poet's life and his imagination," Frye maintains that "There are . . . border-line cases where it is impossible wholly to separate art and biography, and Blake's *Milton* is one of them" (*Fearful Symmetry* 326, 327). It is my position that the "I" of the poem is always distinct from Blake; while the poem contains some references which suggest a correspondence between a figure in the poem and the historical Blake, their signification is transformed by their poetic context.

Sword" (*M* 1). Milton, recently recuperated as a national martyr and as the author of the quintessential national epic, is an ideal figure to enact Blake's own nationalist solution: to cast off that which is not English.

Milton and Nationalist Martyrdom

While there are many references to British geography, Albion, British historical figures, commerce, and political issues in the poem, they have often been marginalized or elided in Blake criticism as the scale of the poem is limited to the poet and extended to a mythological meta-reality. In *Blake's Apocalypse*, Bloom universalizes the nationalist specificity of the poem, writing that

> The Miltonic division between heat and light, the casting out of desire by reason, has in Blake's reading of history a prime responsibility for the natural religion of eighteenth-century culture, its rejection of imagination and embrace of abstract reasoning in the religious sphere. . . . The poem *Milton* is not written to correct *Paradise Lost* so much as to invoke Milton as a savior for Blake and for England, and therefore for mankind.[5] (308)

While Joseph Wittreich still emphasizes the religious rather than the political aspects of the poem's reconfiguration of empirical reality in *Angel of Apocalypse*, his reading of *Milton* does acknowledge the nationalist component. However, like Bloom, he quickly makes the transition from the national to the universal:

> Milton . . . provides Blake with a precedent for celebrating the English as the second chosen people and the poet as their deliverer. He began *Paradise Lost* by equating England with Israel and himself with Moses. Blake, therefore, introduces *Milton* with a lyric that makes similar claims. England, he promises, will be the great

[5]By "universalizing," I refer not only to Bloom's expansion of the poem's relevance from England "to all mankind," but to the unspecified nationality or nationalities of the "eighteenth-century culture" to which he refers.

> agent in the apocalypse and the poet--a new and more successful Moses--will be the nation's awakener and guide. (*Angel of Apocalypse* 239)

This view of Milton as an important player in a specifically national epic, however, was developed in the latter years of the eighteenth century. While Milton was "anathematized" in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* (Lucas 12) as well as characterized as a regicide apologist, and while his authorship of *Paradise Lost* was omitted in Bayle's *A General Dictionary* (1697) (Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse* 271),[6] Milton would later be recuperated as the hero of Protestantism and English liberty and it is that "Milton" that sits at the core of Blake's epic. As Wittreich notes, Blake's "idea of Milton returning as England's saviour, dramatized on plates 1, 16, and 42, yet woven through the entire poem, finds analogues in Cowper and Hayley, in Wordsworth and Coleridge" (*Angel of Apocalypse* 43-44).[7] Milton, however, is not a

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[6]Regarding the reception of Milton's support of regicide during the eighteenth century, see, for example, King, Lucas (46), and Wittreich (*Angel of Apocalypse* 272). Pre-Romantic discomfort with Milton's politics extended to his works. The epic was characterized as a purely "formal achievement" by John Dennis, and, in an illustrated edition of *Paradise Lost*, "the radical intention of Milton's work is . . . deliberately subverted, or undercut" (Lucas 17, 16).

[7]See, for example, Wordsworth's sonnet, "London" (1802). It succinctly conveys Milton's nationalist importance and inflection:

> Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
> England hath need of thee: she is a fen
> Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
> Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower
> Have forfeited their ancient English dower . . .
> Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
> And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power. . . .
> Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea;
> Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
> So didst thou travel on life's common way,
> In cheerful godliness. (1-5,7-8,10-13)

In "Critical Leapfrog: Wordsworth's Canonical Ambivalence," Paul Keen uses this sonnet to begin his discussion of Wordsworth's ideological transition from radicalism to a more Burkean position, noting that "the

generic national saviour, but the hero of a particular nationalism. Milton's function as saviour is entangled with the nationalism which lifted Milton from the literary and ideological margins that he inhabited in the decades that followed his death and, in *Milton*, with Blake's discomfort with that nationalism. At the end of the eighteenth century, Milton was appropriated to serve an English, Protestant iconography that was disseminated and promoted to support a nationalist agenda that included militarist expansion and commercial exploitation. That agenda was validated by the belief, reinforced by Milton's writings, that England had a divinely-sanctioned mission. While Frye argues that "though [Blake] symbolizes humanity by the name of his own nation, his 'Albion' has nothing to do with the frantic jingoism which a confused idea of the same symbolism might easily develop, and has developed in our day" (340), the poem, I would argue, has everything to do with "frantic jingoism"--or rather, everything to do with critiquing one brand of patriotism in favour of another.

In the eighteenth century, Milton, as a figure for the English national subject, was caught between two irreconcilable views of the nation. First, there was "royal national government" that "taught English people to look to the central government rather than to lord and priest" (Shafer 35). In this system, most prominent during the Renaissance, the monarch was the focus of nationalist sentiment and political power. The royal system was later subverted, however, most dramatically in the execution of Charles I, by a view which defined the nation as a relationship between its populace and its institutions, arguably in recognition of the shift of power, economic and intellectual, towards a broader base. This revised view of the subject's fealty facilitates the generation of a nationalism that transcends class differences--or at least appears to do so--through the

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emblems used to suggest the chivalric golden age . . . are the reconfigured symbols of the entrenched class structure which Wordsworth had earlier opposed" (21), so that "the history of the injustices of an ossified class structure, which a younger Wordsworth reacted against, is subordinated to a vision of history as a lost heritage whose ideals the current age has failed" (24), a heritage in which Milton is a central figure.

unifying ideologies of Protestantism, cultural supremacy (euphemistically coded as "civilization"), and commercialism. In a sense, nationalism was Protestantized: rather than defining the monarch as the bodily representative of the nation and the mediator through whom each subject expresses nationalism, each subject of the state could have a personal, unmediated relationship to the nation by embodying on a personal level a commitment to nationalist ideologies that were ostensibly equally available to all. As Colley argues convincingly in *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, the promotion of a Protestant national identity facilitated a kind of "mass patriotism" (28) and a renovation of the monarchy's position:

> The Hanoverian kings . . . did not rule primarily because of who they were. Nor because of who their ancestors had been. Parliament had brought them to the throne, and Protestantism kept them there. They were essentially serviceable kings, occupying their office because they catered to the religious bias of the bulk of their subjects. (47)

The hegemony still set the agenda, but they did so under the guise of an allegiance to institutions--the Anglican church, the Parliament, and the commercial infrastructure--that they reverenced as much as those outside of the aristocratic oligarchy. It is this brand of nationalism which became more powerful during Blake's lifetime, particularly after the French Revolution and during the wars that ensued.[8] And it is a

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[8]Besides Colley, see, for example, Boyd C. Shafer (especially 121-122). The Schofield incident is relevant in this context, not because Blake's swift dismissal of the soldier from his Felpham garden and his anxiety over the ensuing trial for sedition gives us a deeper sense of Blake's anti-militarist feeling during the years that he wrote *Milton*, but because of the larger dynamic at work. As G. E. Bentley Jr. has recently argued, "the journal of John Marsh, among other documents, indicates that popular support for the military in Sussex in 1803 and 1804 was very muted" (88). Bentley suggests that it may be that popular sense that it was the militia who were the invasive threat, not the French, that lay behind the enthusiastic "uproar" which greeted Blake's acquittal (88). (As Colley documents extensively, many regions of Britain were less than enthusiastic when it came to supporting the

brand of nationalism that was particularly amenable to non-aristocratic heroes who displayed great devotion to fundamental institutions. Thus, instead of being rejected as a regicide apologist, Milton could be rehabilitated as a national martyr, described by Behrendt as "the preeminent exemplar of the visionary bard who sacrificed comfort, health (and eyesight), and contemporary fame in service to his country" (*Reading William Blake* 154). A self-sacrificing, decidedly Protestant, parliamentarian could be a powerful figure in popular nationalist discourse--just as a sacrificed, decidedly aristocratic, Protestant King had been a powerful figure in the elitist nationalist discourse in which Milton had been represented very differently.

This emphasis on Milton as a self-sacrificing patriot is particularly important to the new nationalism because of the emphasis on national martyrs in its iconography, an iconography that was communicated through a medium important to both Blake and *Milton*--painting. Behrendt identifies Blake's *Milton* not as a spiritual (auto)biography but as a form of history painting within the apotheosis tradition "that fuses topical and biblical allusion [in] an apocalyptic view of war" (*Reading William Blake* 154, 155). Such paintings were not, however, just produced to generate transcendence but, as Colley has shown, were used to generate political consensus through visual propaganda (178-182). This propaganda was effective because it employed compelling iconography and was reproduceable for the masses via engravings. It promoted duty, sacrifice for the national good, and other qualities that served particular political aims, such as facilitating the hegemony's "claim that its status was founded on service to the nation" (Colley 170). Colley argues that Benjamin West's *Death of Wolfe* "caused a sensation" because it "took classical and Biblical poses of sacrifice and brought them into the British here and now," "start[ing] a vogue for paintings of members of the British

national military.) The Schofield incident was arguably, as Bentley submits, "not so much *Rex v. Blake* as *Rex v. Vox Populi* or *The Military v. the People*" (88). The Schofield incident exhibits the popular perception of the military as invaders of gardens, of Felpham, and of Sussex, indicating the alienation of the military from the populace.

officer class defying the world, or directing it, or dying in battle at the moment of victory" (179). Blake resists the assimilation of the national subject into the self-sacrificing posture, complaining in his Annotations to Reynolds' *Discourses* that "A History Painter Paints The Hero, & not Man in General" (Anno. 652). Colley, moreover, demonstrates that the notion of the dutiful British subject who sacrifices all for the good of the nation was developed at the same time that Protestantism became a crucial divine validation for Britain's commercial and military power under the rubric of neo-classical stoicism and solidarity.

The hegemony in Britain justified its existence in an age of radicalism and revolution through this nation-producing cult of self-sacrifice.[9] The view of the hegemony as dutiful servants of the nation was so well-established in this period that it became a powerful rubric in the Victorian era, giving rise to Rudyard Kipling's notorious phrase, "the White Man's burden," in a poem of that name. In *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Thomas Hughes articulates it concisely in Arthur's description of his near-death epiphany: "I was beginning to see my way to many things, and to feel that I might be a man and do a man's work. To die without having fought, and worked, and given one's life away, was too hard to bear" (243).[10] As early as 1784, however, the paradigm

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[9]I take the term, "cult of self-sacrifice," from O'Neil's useful article on the subject. O'Neil's comments on Italian nationalism during World War I are also applicable here: "the nation-building effort seems intimately intertwined with the cult of sacrifice. Even a peaceful, revolutionary transition to nationhood often must be elevated to heroic status with its pantheon of martyrs. The nation cannot be born without blood and suffering" (93).

[10]This valorization of sacrificing oneself for the public good is traditionally imagined from the perspective of the élite, so it is useful to append an alternative construction of the relationship between manliness, battle, and sacrifice. In a recent essay, Mikal Gilmore quotes a lecture he received from his brother Gary, later executed for murder:

> You have to learn to take things and feel nothing about them: no pain, no anger, nothing. And you have to realize, if anybody wants to beat you up . . . you have to

was being parodied. In John Boyne's *General Blackbeard wounded at the Battle of Leadenhall* (3 January 1784), a clear parody of West's painting of Wolfe, the artist "lampoon[s] the very concept of a heroic death scene" and subverts politicians' "claims to heroic status" (McCreery 177-178).[11] Blake's *Milton*, like Boyne's engraving, subverts the contemporary mythologizing of the aristocracy and martial élite. But Blake goes further, interrogating the operation of sacrifice within that mythologizing dynamic.[12] Sacrifice, including self-sacrifice, is

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> let them. You can't fight back. You *shouldn't* fight back. . . . Promise me you'll be a man. Promise me you'll let them beat you. (17)

Despite the distance of over a century, both Gary Gilmore and Hughes imagine maleness as fortitude and a willingness to sacrifice oneself to sustain the patriarchal pecking order. But Gilmore belongs to the lower classes and constructs the problem differently than Rugby-educated Hughes. Hughes' class must beat but, Gilmore's comment implies, the lower classes must allow themselves to be beaten--"you have to let them." To be a man, one must support the competitively-determined hierarchy, even if it means being the one on the bottom, and so fighting is not the same thing as "fighting back."

[11]In Boyne's print, figures in Fox's political circle, from Mary "Perdita" Robinson to Sheridan and Lord North, surround the dying Fox, including Burke "in the role of the painting's loyal Indian brave" (McCreery 178). McCreery argues that "It is both a parody on the seriousness of 'high art' and an attack on Foxite pretensions" (177), but it attacks those pretensions through an iconography with a political agenda that is masked by claims to "high art" and exposed through its incorporation into the "low" form of burlesque and engraving. By not only transferring the structural content of West's painting from a military battle to a political squabble but also transposing it generically from history painting to satirical print, Boyne inserts the sacrificial paradigm into a non-hegemonic discursive domain where alternative perspectives are more viable.

[12]Ferber tentatively points to such a reading, suggesting that Blake's critique of self-sacrifice or atonement contends that the "elect" "create themselves (their Selves) by their belief in the atonement" (*Social Vision of William Blake* 77). My aim here is to historicize that contention, and suggest that Blake was identifying an influential cultural construct rather than simply engaging a

not an isolatable construct within the poem: it is intimately linked, through the neo-classical ideology in which it is an important mechanism, to a violent economy in which, on the most general terms, destruction empowers the destroyer's clique, not least by establishing a network of debt that traps all of the nation's subjects. Self-sacrifice raises the stakes, uniting the population behind its martyrs and the ideology in whose service they are enlisted. A few decades after Blake composed *Milton*, Ernest Renan remarked upon the importance of shared sacrifice in the production of nationalism·

> More valuable by far than common customs posts and frontiers conforming to strategic ideas is the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future, [a shared] programme to put into effect, or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together. . . . [S]uffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort. A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. (19)

But self-annihilation removes individual destruction from a public economy, and ends the communal suffering that validates that suffering in the name of the national agenda.

Milton's own *Paradise Regain'd* can shed some light on this economy. Milton's Christ delivers a condemnation of imperialism that is also a condemnation of earthly glory and the sacrifice it demands:

> They err who count it glorious to subdue
> By Conquest far and wide . . . what do these Worthies,
> But rob and spoil, burn, slaughter, and enslave
> Peaceable Nations, neighbouring, or remote,
> Made Captive, yet deserving freedom more
> Then those thir Conquerours, who leave behind
> Nothing but ruin wheresoe're they rove,

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theological point.

> And all the flourishing works of peace destroy,
> Then swell with pride, and must be titl'd Gods,
> Great Benefactors of mankind, Deliverers,
> Worship't with Temple, Priest and Sacrifice;
> One is the Son of *Jove*, of *Mars* the other. (3.71-72, 3.74-84)

In his rejection of secular glory, Milton links imperial conquest with the pursuit of glory, destruction, self-aggrandizement, sacrifice, and Roman gods. In other words, he maps the same economy in which destruction empowers the destroying social group under a classical rubric, and so linking it intimately to nationalism and imperialism. This is crucial to Blake's *Milton*--and Blake's Milton.

Self-Sacrifice and the Annihilation of Nationalist Selfhood

As Milton moves towards self-annihilation, Blake describes a nation--in geographic, economic, historical, mythological, and political detail--that is being undermined and oppressed by particular constructs, from classical gods, to "Moral Law," "Milton's Religion," commerce, Satanic tyranny, and the glorification of war. In *Milton*, all of these oppressive constructs are related to, but not contained by, the Selfhood that Milton seeks to overcome. In this context, "Selfhood" functions as a sign for nationalism, as it does in Moore's poem, *The Sceptic*.[13] It is the nexus of ideological constructs which inhabit and distort identity, generating a British landscape of "Satanic mills" and sacrifice rather than a pastoral Jerusalem. Milton's rejection of Selfhood in Blake's poem is thus, on one level, the national bard's repudiation of the nationalist ideology in which he was implicated. By producing an alternative narrative of Milton that critiques this version of nationalism in favour of the pre-capitalist pastoral ideal, Blake defamiliarizes a central nationalist icon and renders the prevailing nationalist narrative alien and alienating in terms of content as well as form (see Chapter Two).

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[13]Moore's satire was published in 1809, and therefore falls in the first part of the period in which Blake's *Milton* may have been composed.

Shortly after the conclusion of the Bard's song, "Milton rose up from the heavens of Albion," "And Milton said, I go to Eternal Death! The Nations still / Follow after the detestable Gods of Priam; in pomp / Of warlike selfhood, contradicting and blaspheming" (*M* 14.10, 14.14-16). Blake's Milton, however, is himself implicated in this "warlike selfhood":

> I will go down to self annihilation and eternal death,
> Lest the Last Judgment come & find me unannihilate
> And I be siez'd & giv'n into the hands of my own
> Selfhood. . . .
> I in my Selfhood am that Satan. (*M* 14.22-24, 14.30)

Satan, earlier, is linked to the cult of sacrifice and self-sacrifice:

> Satans Druid Sons
> Offer the Human Victims throughout all the Earth, and
> Albions
> Dread Tomb immortal on his Rock, overshadowd the whole
> Earth:
> Where Satan making to himself Laws from his own identity.
> Compell'd others to serve him in moral gratitude &
> submission
> Being call'd God. . . .
> And it was enquir'd: Why in a Great Solemn Assembly
> The Innocent should be condemn'd for the Guilty? Then an
> Eternal rose
> Saying. If the Guilty should be condemn'd, he must be an
> Eternal Death
> And *one must die for another* throughout all Eternity.
> Satan is fall'n from his station & never can be redeem'd
> But must be new Created continually moment by moment.
> And therefore the Class of Satan shall be call'd the Elect.
> (*M* 11.7-12, 11.15-21; my emphasis)

with Druidic and Nordic associations,[14] as well as classical ones, Satan is aligned with various repressive and imperialist regimes as well as the "pomp / Of warlike selfhood," the Elect, the repressive portion of Milton, and the charge of "making to himself Laws from his own identity / Compell[ing] others to serve him in moral gratitude & submission." The Satanic position which Christ articulates in *Paradise Regain'd* is thus extended and ascribed to Milton's "Selfhood," a selfhood that he must annihilate.

Blake draws a clear distinction between self-annihilation and self-sacrifice. Self-annihilation is entirely personal; it is the individual's destruction of selfhood for the good of that individual. Conversely, self-sacrifice posits a social system of exchange in which "one must die for another," the destruction of the self for a good that the sacrificial individual cannot realize but someone who has not abnegated selfhood can through a public economy. Crucially, self-annihilation operates in a limited, closed system while self-sacrifice functions in an open societal one--hence Blake's references to a never-ending chain of sacrifices, "throughout all Eternity," so that Satan can "be new Created continually."[15] Self-sacrifice, in other words, binds individuals into an aggregate, linking them, as Renan's remarks suggest, through bonds of duty and obligation rather than affection. Self-sacrifice, moreover, posits a power structure in which self-abnegation draws benefits from a higher authority and, as crucially, operates in propagandist discourse as an example to be followed by others for the greater good, implicating the members of the group in a

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[14]See, for example, the identification of Satan's false exterior with "the Wicker Man of Scandanavia" (37.11) and the reference to "Satan's Druid sons" who "Offer the Human Victims throughout all the Earth" (11.7,8).

[15]This distinction has certain continuities with the formal distinction discussed in Chapter Two: self-sacrifice operates, in a sense, like a linear narrative, combining individuals into a coherent aggregate through bonds of causation; self-annihilation, however, is closed off from the whole and so its iterations are not contained within a governing narrative or causal relationship.

rigid hierarchy as well as a duty-bound unit. Colley identifies and maps a "cult of heroism" in the period, populated by men of rank "who had been indoctrinated . . . with Greek and Roman classics in which heroes sternly sacrificed their lives for the sake of honour and country" (180), and it is that cult that Blake critiques at length in *Milton*. Daniel J. O'Neil also implicates such modes of self-sacrifice in Romantic organicism, arguing that it offers

> a rejection of Lockean individualism . . . They appealed back to an older Greco-Medieval tradition that perceived man as a link in a chain or a cell in a body. Accordingly, such thinking emphasized the common good and man's duties in contrast to natural and individual rights.[16] (91-92)

As O'Neil notes, "The implication of organismic thinking is that the sacrifice of an individual or one generation for the collective well-being is not an unreasonable request; the organism survives" (92), a model with clear investments in the kinds of national narratives discussed in Chapter Two. In *Milton*, however, the individual's well-being supersedes the collective, as Milton's self-annihilation corrects, at least for him, the self-sacrificing model in which "one must die for another throughout all Eternity" (*M* 11.18), a "Human Harvest" (*M* 42.33).[17] The broader social implications of everlasting

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[16]O'Neil suggests that Burke, the Romantic period's great defender of the *status quo*, exemplified this type of thinking.

[17]This construction of the distribution of power as a sacrificial economy anticipates the rise of narratives during the nineteenth century in which aristocratic vampires feed on their inferiors. As Carol Senf notes, the vampire is used "as a kind of social metaphor, a way of illustrating political oppression" (22), and always as an aristocrat with an aristocrat's power (see Senf 41-42). This paradigm was not limited to fictional works such as Polidori's *Vampyre*, Sheridan LeFanu's "Carmilla" and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. In his "Drain Theory," Dadabhai Naoroji uses the trope of vampirism to protest the export of wealth from India. Writing in 1876, just four years after Le Fanu's tale, "Carmilla," described victims of vampires as suffering from a debilitating fatigue, Naoroji argued that "it is the exhaustion caused by the drain that disables us from building our railroads. . . . If we did not suffer the exhaustion we do . . . the case would be one of a

Satanic sacrifice, in which "one must die for another throughout all Eternity" (*M* 11.18), are elucidated further in related passages. The outline of the sacrificial system immediately precedes Leutha's self-sacrifice and that offering is emphasized by the Bard's refrain:

> when Leutha . . . beheld Satan's condemnation
> She down descended into the midst of the Great Solemn Assembly,
> Offering herself a Ransom for Satan, taking on her, his Sin.
> Mark well my words. they are of your eternal salvation! (*M* 11.28-31)

Second, the phrase, "Created continually," is a repetition that ties the passage to an earlier discussion of sacrifice that also contains the Bardic refrain, foregrounds Satan, and refers to the three classes:

> So Los spoke! Satan trembling obeyd weeping along the way.
> Mark well my words, they are of your eternal Salvation
> Between South Molton Street & Stratford Place: Calvarys foot
> Where the Victims were preparing for Sacrifice . . .
> Christ took on Sin in the Virgins Womb, & put it off on the Cross
> All pitied the piteous & was wrath with the wrathful & Los heard it. (*M* 4.19-22, 5.3-4)
> For the Elect cannot be Redeemd, but Created continually
> By Offering & Atonement in the crue[l]ties of Moral Law
> Hence the three Classes of Men take their fix'd destinations
> They are the Two Contraries & the Reasoning Negative.
> While the Females prepare the Victims. the Males at Furnace
> And Anvils dance the dance of tears & pain. (*M* 5.11-16)

"Offering and Atonement in the crue[l]ties of Moral Law": in this chain of affiliated references to sacrifice, and particularly self-sacrifice, Satan is "Created continually" through the sacrifice of

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healthy natural business. . . . [T]he railway loan . . . has revived us a little. But we are sinking fast again" (33-34).

innocents and the circulation of sin, as if it were a transferrable debt, and that sacrifice is linked to English imperialism.

This interpenetration of capitalism, imperialism, and self-acrifice in Blake's characterization of nationalism can be further comprehended through Colley's analysis of the constitution of British national identity through industrial and commercial power as well as military and imperial strength. Colley argues that commerical interests, and generally individuals' concerns for their own prosperity, often determined political loyalties, that "there was a real sense in which this commercial bonanza was dependent on government investment in naval power and imperialism. . . . [W]ar and empire indisputably played a vital part in breaking into and securing markets" (69-70). Even the rise of interest in British art is ascribable, according to Colley, to this link between a strong empire and a strong commercial base: "If Great Britain was to compete successfully with France, it needed to be able to match that country's luxury exports and cultural reputation. . . . Britain must command the arts as it commanded the seas, in both cases as a means of competing with the French" (91). It is no coincidence, suggests Colley, that France was "Britain's prime commercial competitor" as well as its opponent through decades of war (99). The arts were also encouraged through the market for engravings. Eaves notes the pattern in the promotion of engraving:

> Since the commercial spirit . . . is also the national spirit, the English merchant helps English art clarify its own identity. In the new Rome the improved Maecenas is commercial. . . . [E]ngraving was more than another department of the arts. It was the missing link with commerce: engraving, as it reproduces painting, makes painting commercial. (*Counter-Arts Conspiracy* 68)

These three values--imperial success, military power, and a strong commercial sector, particularly in the international domain--are inseparably intertwined in the constitution of British identity in the late eighteenth century. The many references in *Milton* to the commercial sector, especially its industrial component, can usefully be viewed in this context.

Constituting the Neoclassical Nation

In *Milton* moreover, Satan is identified as a state: "We are not Individuals but States: Combinations of Individuals . . . Distinguish therefore States from Individuals in those States . . . Satan & Adam are States Created" (*M* 32.10, 32.22, 32.25). It is fairly common, in discussions of this passage and others on the same subject, to limit the significance of "state" to the non-political. States are thus identified as "states of existence" or "states of mind," often in an evolutionary context, so that one passes from one state to the other as one moves towards Eden.[18] While Blake does associate states with embodiment (*M* 32.10-29) and identifies four states--Beulah, Alla, Al-Ulro, and Or-Ulro--that are located in different regions of the body, the so-called "doctrine of states" is complicated by Blake's use of the term in political contexts, a usage that is usually ignored or acknowledged only to be dismissed. Edward J. Rose, for example, writes,

> A "State," of course, can be read politically as a nation," [*sic*] and a "Class" can be read sociologically as a *class* of society. Both readings are obvious. The point here is that "Israel" is already identified in Blake's symbolism with *Art* as "Egypt" is with *Nature* or *Empire*. (15)

But what is the connection between "Nature," "Empire," and "State"? As Esterhammer notes in "Blake's *Jerusalem* and the Language of Constitutions,"

> Throughout Blake's work, the term 'state' seems more strongly influenced than has been realized by, first, the

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[18]Damon, for example, defines "States" as "stages of error" (386); Fox argues that "Each of these units [i.e. states] shelters a collection of fallen individuals, who pass successively from unit to unit, 'state' to 'state,' until they may pass beyond states altogether" (*Poetic Form in Blake's* Milton 141); Frosch suggests that it is Blake's "literal contention that worlds, total fabrics of internal and external being, are as fluid and interchangeable as psychic states. The state of mind is instead the new way in which we are to see ourselves in relation to our condition" (94); and Bloom contends that "The State of Milton . . . is a state of self-annihilation" (*Blake's Apocalypse* 349).

> state as a political entity and, second the state-ment as a linguistic entity. In a historical period when Blake heard of political states being created and abolished all around him, in revolutionary France, in all parts of Europe, and throughout the British Empire, political connotations are close at hand.[19]

Blake is using clearly polysemic language here and generating a complex framework that is both ontologically and politically implicated. Damrosch writes of the doctrine that

> the invention of states represents a decisive change in Blake's myth, and I think an unfortunate one. Instead of showing that all parts of the self must be rehabilitated and harmonized, he now defines the qualities that he dislikes . . . as illusory and external to the self. (154)

But this is precisely what interests me about it: Blake represents characters under the sway of external, cultural forces throughout his work, from the female characters in *Visions*, *America*, and *Europe* to the pestilential errors of *Jerusalem*, but the doctrine of the states attempts to define and organize those forces into an intracultural topography. They are not simply "external to the self" but map systems which the self inhabits, including political systems (sometimes embodied in the constitutions about which Esterhammer writes), or states. Thus the Seven Angels not only declare that they are "not Individuals but States: Combinations of Individuals" (*M* 32.10), but also claim that they "were combind in Freedom & holy Brotherhood" (*M* 32.15) while defining themselves against "those combind by Satans Tyranny" (*M* 32.16), placing the radicalism associated with the French and American revolutions against the British nationalism that fought both.

The conditions under which these "Individuals" were combined also determine the definition of their lineaments: the Seven Angels have "Human Form / Because [they] were combind in Freedom & holy Brotherhood / While those combind by Satans Tyranny . . . are Shapeless Rocks" (*M*

[19]Esterhammer also addresses Rose's easy certainty about what a "nation" means (*Creating States* 203n).

32.14-17). In his analysis of Blake's valorization of line, Eaves makes an observation that is, I would argue, particularly relevant to this passage in *Milton*:

> The distinguishing mark of these mental copies is clear and determinate outline, which the whole force of training, experience, and imagination teaches artists to separate from the blurry cultural ghosts and demons that haunt their minds. Demons . . . are external forces that take up internal residence--a kind of mental parasite that causes the host to be unlike itself. (*Theory of Art* 29)

Not only does the latter remark strongly suggest the various mergings of *Milton*--such as "Los had enterd into my soul" (*M* 22.13), "He hath enterd into the Covering Cherub" (*M* 23.14), and the notorious, "Milton entering my Foot" (*M* 21.4)--but the former suggests the "Shapeless Rocks" of tyranny which must be superseded by Milton and his State.[20] Plate 32 of *Milton* defines two States: one, the Angels', is constituted under the ideals of radical politics, has members who therefore have definite form, and gives Milton "vision & dream beatific" (*M* 32.2); the other, Satan's, is constituted under the tyranny of one who "destroyed the Human Form Divine" (*M* 32.13), has members that are "Shapeless," and causes both "Sacrifice" and "Chains of Imprisonment" (*M* 32.17). Satan, who is identified at length with the classical, restrictive model, creates a political state of self-sacrifice and bondage--similar to that which the hegemony promoted by valorizing classical heroism and restraint. This breaks down the human form, just like the diseases that infect Albion in *Jerusalem* and the alienated baggage that is "Cast off" at the end of *Milton* (see Chapter Six). In *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, roughly contemporary with *Milton*, Blake makes a related argument:

> Nations Flourish under Wise Rulers & are depressd under foolish Rulers it is the same with Individuals as Nations

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[20]See also Eaves: "The picture of emotion as shapeless is embedded in a number of familiar ideas about art: in the usual eighteenth-century definition of sublimity, for instance, where strong, impetuous emotion is associated with vagueness" (*Theory of Art* 59).

> works of Art can only be produced in Perfection where the Man is either in Affluence or is Above the Care of it. . . . this is A Last Judgment when Men of Real Art Govern & Pretenders Fall. . . . [R]eflect on the State of Nations under Poverty & their incapability of Art. (*VLJ* 561)

While Percy Shelley argues that the architects of what is good in society are poets--not only artists of all kinds but "the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society and the inventors of the arts of life" (*Defense* 482)--and that a decay in social life is coincident with a decay in drama (*Defense* 492), Blake is more apocalyptic and binary: there is not an evolutionary cycle of rise and fall but "Wise Rulers" creating vital societies and "Real Art" while "foolish Rulers" achieve the converse. Nevertheless, both poets share the contention that sociopolitical culture and artistic culture are mutually determining. Satan, in this context, is not just the rational selfhood which interferes with vision, described in *A Vision of the Last Judgment*:

> I have . . . represented those who are in Eternity by some in a Cloud. . . . [T]hey merely appear as in a Cloud when any thing of Creation Redemption or Judgment are the Subjects of Contemplation, tho their Whole Contemplation is concerning these things the Reason they so appear is The Humiliation of <the Reasoning & doubting> Self-hood. (*VLJ* 563)

Satan is also the tyrannical and "foolish Ruler," and his rule has particular features and origins, embedded in culture and the origin of the state. As the "Selfhood" of the national bard which must be annihilated, the Satanic tyrant is at once the model that infects Albion and the political state that results from that infection.

This perceived conflict between true artistic creation and destructive militarism resonates with contemporary nationalist discourse. In his essay, "On the Edge of Europe: Ireland in Search of Oriental Roots, 1650-1850," Joseph Th. Leerssen outlines a pattern that is useful to the present discussion:

> The Canaanites driven from Israel; the Phoenicians, supplanted by the Greek expansion; the Carthaginians,

> dispossessed by the Romans; and the Gaels, subdued and belittled by the English; in each case, the Phoenicio-Gaelic tradition is 'runner-up', unlike the victors who have their day and then decline, they are perennial, and form a tradition which links all these phases of Western civilization . . . an orientalist tradition of civility, starting with Solomon's temple . . . a tradition which elevates their cultivation over the military efficiency of their oppressors. An anti-classicist attempt is thus made to impugn the Graeco-Roman tradition as an intolerant, imperialist one, and to link its victims, from Phoenecia to Ireland, into a great tradition in its own right. (100, 101)

In *The Laocoōn*, it should be recalled, Blake describes the classical statue as "יה & his two Sons Satan & Adam as they were copied from the Cherubim / of Solomons Temple by three Rhodians & applied to Natural Fact. or. History of Ilium." Blake's anti-classical position is not, of course, fully coincident with the Phoenicianism described by Leerssen, being more concerned with the Gothic than the Gaelic. But as a politicized construct in which the Graeco-Roman tradition is aligned with English imperialism and militarism while an orientalized tradition is aligned with culture and civility it has useful parallels to the political vision of *Milton*. As discussed in Chapter Two, this anti-classicism also had historical support in the rise of gothic nationalism. In his study, *National Identity*, Smith notes that neo-classical movements "swept through Europe" (87) in the late eighteenth century, characterizing "classical antiquity as a plateau of civilization that was being realized again in modern Europe but on an even higher plane" (88)--and it was that neo-classical imperialism to which Blake objects so strenuously in *Milton*.

In the epic, Blake explicitly identifies militarism with imperial classical roots, particularly those of Rome, Greece, and Troy. The Trojans are not only identified with the founding of Rome and, through Virgil's *Aeneid*, aligned with Rome's conflict with Carthage in ways that resonate with Leerssen's observations. The Trojans also played an important role in the nationalist establishment of England's imperial

genealogy through Geoffrey of Monmouth's claim that Brutus, the great grandson of Aeneas, was the first king of England.[21] After listing a series of powerful nations, beginning with "Italy Greece & Egypt" (*M* 14.6), Blake's Milton complains, "The Nations still / Follow after the detestable Gods of Priam; in pomp / Of warlike selfhood" (*M* 14.14-16). The Trojan deities are consistently aligned with egotism. Milton concludes his condemnation of the nations with the assertion, "I in my Selfhood am that Satan" (*M* 14.30), while the narrator sees within Milton's "Selfhood deadly" (*M* 37.10) "the Gods of Ulro dark" (*M* 37.16), who number "Twelve" (*M* 37.17, 37.34) and include "Saturn, Jove, & Rhea" (*M* 37.33)--and "the Twelve Gods are Satan" (*M* 37.60). In both passages, selfhood, specifically Milton's selfhood, Satan, and the Trojan gods are linked. Rintrah and Palamabron also condemn the Trojan deities by associating them with self-centredness: "Asserting the Self-righteousness against the Universal Saviour, / Mocking the Confessors & Martyrs, claiming Self-righteousness . . . With Laws from Plato & his Greeks to renew the Trojan Gods, / In Albion" (*M* 22.42-43, 22.53-54). Even Greek music is condemned, identified with Natural Religion in Rahab and Tirzah's temptation of Milton (*M* 19.46-47). In Los's vision of oppression and apocalypse, the Trojan gods again appear. In this context, however, their historical alignment is clarified. Los laments,

> Lambeth ruin'd and given
> To the detestable gods of Priam, to Apollo: and at the
> Asylum
> Given to Hercules, who labour in Tirzahs Looms for bread,
> Who set Pleasure against Duty: who Create Olympic crowns

[21]The story of Brutus appears in Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century text, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, and was regularly cited by English writers over the next five hundred years, from Layamon, who penned a poem named *Brut* (c. 1200), to William Warner's *Albion's England or Historical Map of the Same Island* (1586) and Milton's *History of Britain*. Brutus is represented as the conqueror of the indigenous population, but the founder of the writer's people, so that the English are not the descendants of brutes, so to speak, but the imperial Brutus.

To make Learning a burden & the Work of the Holy Spirit:
Strife.
T[o] Thor & cruel Odin who first reard the Polar Caves
Lambeth mourns calling Jerusalem. she weeps & looks abroad
For the Lord's coming, that Jerusalem may overspread all
Nations. (*M* 25.48-55)

The Lord is Albion, "our friend and ancient companion" (*M* 25.62). In this context, the Trojan deities are not identified just with militarism and egotism, but with cultural formations from capitalism to the valorization of restraint, classical education, and nationalism. The subsequent reference to Odin further ties the classical gods to imperialism. As I have noted elsewhere, contemporary scholarship on northern mythology and antiquities claimed that Odin was not a god but an exile from Asia (Warton xx; Bell 233) who participated in a Scythian revolt against the Roman empire and escaped to Northern Europe after it failed (Mallet 79). Moreover, Odin is vilified in Mallet's *Northern Antiquities* for being a conqueror of Northern Europe, despite his anti-imperialist activities against Rome.[22]

Milton narrates the self-annihilation of a sacrificial selfhood, ending the sacrificial chain of Protestant martyrdom that Milton began ("They weave a new Religion from new Jealousy of Theotormon! / Miltons Religion is the cause: there is no end to destruction!" [*M* 22.38-39]). But it also narrates the annihilation of neoclassical, pro-imperialist, nationalism:

making War upon the Lambs Redeemed
To perpetuate War & Glory. to perpetuate the Laws of Sin
. . .
Shewing the Transgresors in Hell, the proud Warriors in
Heaven:
Heaven as a Punisher & Hell as One under Punishment:
With Laws from Plato & his Greeks to renew the Trojan Gods,
In Albion. (*M* 22.44-45, 22.51-53)

This emphasis on the infection of "Albion" by classical gods is a

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[22]See my note, "'Empire is No More': Odin and Orc in *America*," esp. 28.

recurring one and it is tied to Blake's critique of sacrifice. Blake is condemning not just classicism and militarism, but the political iconography prevalent at the time and used to promote sacrifice to the state, particularly on the battlefield. Colley ascribes much of this iconography to classical models and their dissemination in the school system: "patriotism of a kind was embedded in the classical curriculum. The emphasis on Greek and Roman authors and ancient history meant a constant diet of stories of war, empire, bravery and sacrifice for the state" (167-168). Colley goes on to examine the ways in which the Classics were peculiarly suited to justifying the class system and English imperialism:

> Classical literature was doubly congenial because the kind of patriotic achievement it celebrated was a highly specific one. The heroes of Homer, Cicero and Plutarch were emphatically men of rank and title. As such, they reminded Britain's élite of its duty to serve and fight, but in addition, affirmed its superior qualifications to do both. And the classics had a further practical advantage. The societies that they celebrated were emphatically dead. Consequently, they could inspire without being in any way threatening. (168)

Blake's nemesis, Reynolds, "made his fortune by capturing and even accentuating [national arrogance], borrowing the pose inspired by the classical statue *Apollo Belvedere* and using it for a succession of portraits of high-ranking British males" (Colley 178). It was the classical model of self-sacrificing aristocrats, the "Great Benefactors" and "Deliverers" of England, to use the language of Milton's Christ, that lay behind a "vogue for paintings of members of the British officer class . . . dying at the moment of victory" (Colley 179). Such works, widely distributed through prints, promoted a view of the élite as nationalist martyrs, giving their lives to save their country. In *Milton*, Blake repeatedly attacks the influence of classical models on British nationalism and culture and offers in its place his own construction of proper national identity: "We do not want either Greek or Roman Models if we are but just & true to our own Imaginations," and so contest "the detestable gods of Priam," including

Apollo, "Who set Pleasure against Duty" (*M* 1, 25.49, 25.51). In other words, Milton's self-sacrifice was a terribly classical thing to do--and not, for Blake, very English. Satan is constructed as the nexus of these negative features and is the embodiment of the propaganda being distributed during the Romantic period to promote a dutiful populace. He is a tyrant who follows the classical gods, Selfhood, the destroyer of definite form, a Urizenic dictator from the élite, and a promoter of self-sacrifice. Satan, in other words, figures the classically-inspired hegemony, marking the interpenetration of culture and politics in the pursuit of glorious empire. Satan is not simply Milton's Selfhood, but national egotism, the cipher which contains the hegemonic ideologies that were dressed up, through neoclassical heroism, as popular nationalism. To rephrase Milton's declaration by way of illustration, and with apologies to Frye, "I in English nationalism am that frantic jingoism." I am not suggesting that easy equivalences should be drawn between Selfhood and nationalism or Satan and jingoism, but that Milton, Satan, and the renovation envisioned in *Milton* are implicated in the national renovation represented in the Preface's lyric in ways specific to a critique of the prevalent contemporary nationalist ideology and iconography.

<u>"No Part of Me": Nationalist Art(ifice)</u>

At issue here are the implications of the art chosen to represent and propagate national ideals to forge a shared nationalist sense of self. In *Milton*, Blake invalidates not only the classical origins of those models but the "English" productions on which they are based. In examining Britain's urge to compete with France on cultural terms, Colley refers to a number of contests held to encourage and uncover native artistic talent which in turn created a vogue for nationalist collections.[23] The artistic values, moreover, were classical. As Eaves notes, English art was placed in genealogical descent from Roman art (*Counter-Arts Conspiracy* 23), just as the English nation was rendered a distant cousin of Rome through claims of a shared Trojan

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[23]Both Colley and Eaves also point to the establishment of national academies in the period.

descent, and the classical style formed the basis of artistic education in the period; moreover, when collectors abandoned national works they turned to classical artifacts. It is in this context that Blake declares, in the Preface to *Milton*,

> Painters! on you I call! Sculptors! Architects! Suffer not the fashionable Fools to depress your powers by the prices they pretend to give for contemptible works or the expensive advertizing boasts that they make of such works. . . . We do not want either Greek or Roman Models if we are just and true to our own Imaginations.[24] (*M* 1)

Blake counters not just classicism, but the promotion of classicism that was, at the time, guiding nationalist aspirations. The "fashionable Fools" are "Hirelings in the Camp, the Court, & the University who would, if they could, for ever depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War" (*M* 1). Such an assertion goes beyond a reference to the establishment's support of the Napoleonic Wars, to the promotion of a national identity that was bound up in militarism, self-sacrifice, a sense of national mission and a broad asceticism in which Milton was specifically implicated.

Blake does not limit his critique to the content of the propaganda but also condems its forms, particularly epic. As Behrendt shows in "'The Consequence of High Powers': Blake, Shelley, and Prophecy's Public Dimension," biblical prophecy was written from the margins and classical epic from the centre, the former seeking to transform society by returning it to lost values and the latter celebrating society's fulfillment of its values and auspicious origins. As discussed earlier, the relationship between the present society and its defining origin or, rather, the perceived governing paradigm of the current society and the perceived governing paradigm of the origin is

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[24]Bloom suggests that "The distinction between the Classics and the Bible here is clearly Miltonic in origin," pointing to a passage in *Paradise Regained* in which Jesus gives Hebrew art priority over Greek (4.331-364) ("Commentary" 909). See Paley for a broader range of sources for such a view ("Wonderful Originals") as well as Leerssen's argument for an oriental tradition that counters Greco-Roman Classicism.

fundamental to this opposition. The historical timeline is reduced to a comparison of the endpoints, and complicated by the different constructions of those endpoints that can be distilled from the "facts." Geoffrey Hill, for instance, suggests that the myth of the "Norman Yoke" places the Magna Carta in a list of concessions which the oppressed Saxons "extorted from their rulers" (57), so that English history becomes defined by the struggle for liberty. Milton's epic vision was no different, functioning as a construction of national origin that some of Blake's contemporaries found unsettling. As Lucas puts it,

> epics coincide with or are about the birth of a nation, and in common with other citizens Dryden does not wish to stir up trouble by re-opening the question of how the English nation in which he and they live has come to be formed. . . . Milton's epic ambitions were not for the honour of the nation as Dryden and Johnson after him understood the term. Milton had the forming of a very different nation in mind. (14)

In *The Tremulous Private Body*, Francis Barker suggests that Milton's essay, *Areopagitica*, by arguing that texts should be evaluated and censored after they are published, inaugurates a new model of the relationship between state and subject:

> in the Miltonic 'state'--that set of relations marked out in *Areopagitica*--it is already possible to detect the outline of that modern settlement which founds itself on a separation of realms between the public arena of the state apparatus and another domain of civil life. . . . The subject . . . may do as he pleases up to the point of transgression where its activity will be arrested by the agents of the apparatus who patrol the frontier between the two spaces. (46)

These are the seeds of the surveillance that Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish*.[25] Barker argues that transferring the

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[25]In *Shakespearean Negotiations*, Stephen Greenblatt contrasts a "power that dreams of a panopticon in which the most intimate secrets

censorship of the text from before until after publication places upon the publisher the onus of self-discipline--he should police himself or suffer the consequences rather than be warned in advance that a work is unacceptable. Barker goes on to suggest that Milton identified self-discipline as an English characteristic: "all of Milton's descriptions of social life emphasize the stability, maturity and sobriety of the English nation" (46). Thus, by writing laws with certain expectations of the subject, "The state succeeds in . . . pre-constituting that subject as one which is already internally disciplined, censored, and thus an effective support of domination" (Barker 47). Blake anticipates this Foucauldian observation in his parenthetical remark, "Temperance, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, the four pillars of tyranny" (*M* 29.49). Milton, in other words, arguably helped to construct a national identity that was founded upon a dutiful people following, almost inexorably, a religious epic narrative that he himself, with his self-sacrifice and "epic 'true virtue and valour'" (Lucas 45), embodied. But Blake associated duty and similar restraints with bondage and slavery. Just as Milton constitutes a national identity in his writings that is innately dutiful, Blake outlines a national identity that has been corrupted by fundamentally foreign writings that promote dutiful behaviour--including Milton's.

In the Preface to *Milton*, he writes,

> Shakespeare & Milton were both curbd by the general malady & infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the Sword. . . . We do not want either Greek or Roman Models if we are just and true to our own Imaginations, those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live for ever, in Jesus our Lord. (*M* 1)

Classical "Models" have infected English literature, even its most exemplary poets, and so deflected that tradition from individuals' imaginative visions. This deflection, according to the Preface, affects the governing classes of national society, including the

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are open to the view of an invisible authority," described by Foucault, with an "Elizabethan power [that] depends upon its privileged visibility" (64).

military, the aristocracy, and the broader artistic community. Blake's Preface argues for England's return to a pastoral ideal purged of classical corruption, specifically rejecting the militaristic and artistic paradigms, and institutions, that he identifies with that alien influence. Hence, in *Milton*, Blake's first published epic, the poet begins with a condemnation of the cultures which produced the models, both poetic and ideological, upon which English literature's notions of epic are founded. "The Stolen and Perverted Writings of Homer & Ovid, of Plato & Cicero, which all Men ought to contemn," declares Blake in the Preface, "are set up by artifice against the Sublime of the Bible" (*M* 1). Milton, along with Shakespeare, is accused of being infected by such artifice. In the opening address of *Jerusalem*, "To the Public," Blake returns to the same poets and again condemns a verse form, this time blank verse:

> When this Verse was first dictated to me I consider'd a Monotonous Cadence like that used by Milton & Shakspeare & all writers of *English* Blank Verse, derived from the modern bondage of rhyming, to be a necessary and indispensible part of Verse. But I soon found that in the mouth of a true Orator such monotony was not only awkward, but as much a bondage as rhyme itself. . . . Poetry Fetter'd, Fetters the Human Race! Nations are Destroy'd, or Flourish, in proportion as Their Poetry Painting and Music, are Destroy'd or Flourish![26] (3)

In his address, Blake thus makes an equation between Milton and Shakespeare, a nationally-specific form of verse, and bondage, linking free verse form to national vitality. As in *Milton*, artistic forms are linked to destructive and restricting national cultures: "For we have

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[26]Erdman suggests that the composition of *Milton* and *Jerusalem* overlapped and that the Preface to *Milton* in particular might be of later date ("Textual Notes" 809), so linking that Preface to an early plate in *Jerusalem* is not necessarily anachronistic. However, I would suggest that similarities between the genre and concerns of the two plates are sufficient grounds for placing them in conjunction; if they are not contemporary, the later plate is arguably an allusion to the earlier, though we may never know which was which.

Hirelings in the Camp, the Court, & the University who would, if they could, for ever depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War. . . . believe Christ & his Apostles that there is a Class of Men whose whole delight is in Destroying" (*M* 1). In one of the poem's final plates, Blake associates the impoverished versifier with destructive power on a national level:

> To cast aside from Poetry all that is not Inspiration,
> That it no longer shall dare to mock with the aspersion of Madness
> Cast on the Inspired, by the tame high finisher of paltry Blots,
> Indefinite, or paltry Rhymes; or paltry Harmonies;
> Who creeps into State Government like a catterpillar to destroy![27] (*M* 41.7-11)

This (op)press(ion) of the human imagination--a pun that Blake uses himself (*M* 25.6)--is not only tied to the promotion of war but the creation of nationalism. The poem is traversed by references to nations, especially references to the division of the population and the globe into such political organizations. In the same passage that describes the action of the press on human consciousness, that action is linked to both the existence and production of nations:

> The Wine-press on the Rhine groans loud, but all its central beams
> Act more terrific in the central Cities of the Nations
> Where Human Thought is crushed beneath the iron hand of Power.

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[27]It is tempting to suggest that Blake's description of the uninspired was influenced by Robert Southey's appointment to the position of Poet Laureate in 1813. Our inability to fix a date for the poem at once makes it possible to speculate and difficult to assert: the first three copies of the poem are printed on 1808 paper and Erdman suggests that the plates were engraved in 1809-1810, but the fourth copy was printed on 1815 paper; plate 41 is common to all four versions and Erdman's dating of the plates is contingent on the assumption that *Milton* was nearly complete when Blake wrote "Public Address" ("Textual Notes" 806).

There Los puts all into the Press, the Opressor & the
Opressed
Together, ripe for the Harvest & Vintage & *ready for the Loom*. (*M* 25.3-7; my emphasis)

you must bind the Sheaves not by Nations or Families.
You shall bind them in Three Classes: according to their Classes
So shall you bind them, Separating What has been Mixed
Since Men began to be *Wove into Nations* by Rahab & Tirzah
. . .
When under pretence to benevolence the Elect Subdud All.
(*M* 25.26-31; my emphasis)

They became Nations in our sight [Los's] beneath the hands of Tirzah. (*M* 24.16)

This use of weaving to figure the combination of individuals into political states is not simply another iteration of the connection between form and state. Inscribed weaving (*textere*) is also used to figure the social structure of the combined state:

My Garments shall be woven of sighs & heart broken lamentations
The misery of unhappy Families shall be drawn out into its border . . .
I will have Writings written all over it in Human Words
That every Infant that is born upon the Earth shall read
And get by rote as a hard task of a life of sixty years.
I will have Kings inwoven upon it & Councillors & Mighty Men. (*M* 18.6-7,12-15)

There is a complex of related figures here, producing a symbology in which a nation is produced when the populace is oppressed or "Subdud" and then woven into a hierarchical structure governed by Kings and "Mighty Men." The garment is a constitution, establishing the national order which contains and restrains the population, and it is such a garment that Milton, in Blake's rewriting of his life, must cast off.[28]

[28]Cf. Paine's discussion of the language of English and French constitutions, and the significance of other writings when discussing

At issue here is not just the relation between form and content, or propaganda and political consensus, but the modelling of the perceptual domain through cultural artifacts. The division of societies into technologically or artistically competent cultures only begins to grasp this. Blake's *Milton* not only condemns classical and commercial paradigms, but offers new models that redefine the world-as-(patterned)-text. In the context of a critique of the infection of the national body by Greek and Roman texts and models, Blake's re-visioning of space, time, mythology, the relationship between the individual and the state, and the formation of nations cannot be purely aesthetic in function. As an exercise in modelling, *Milton* ranges from physics to commerce, from geography to history, and from wine-making to war. In Blake's later writings, the emphasis on national affiliations in *America* and *Europe* is extended and transformed. Rather than Americans and Daughters of Albion, the engravings *Laocoön* and "On Homers Poetry"/"On Virgil," as well as *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, posit national ideologies that are communicated through cultural artifacts that are historically specific. In *America* and *Europe*, Albion's Guardian oppresses the British and American peoples, via the meta-national Urizenic book, but in these later works, "Greek or Roman Models" constrain "our own Imaginations" (*M* 1) and "Desolate Europe with Wars" ("On Homers Poetry") through a variety of works that are named: in "On Virgil," the culprits are "Homer Virgil & Ovid"; in *Milton*, the list is extended to include "The Stolen & Perverted Writings of Homer & Ovid, of Plato & Cicero" as well as "Shakspeare & Milton [who] were both curbd by the general malady & infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the Sword" (*M* 1). Blake thus historicizes the development of paradigms to which he objects, returning to the model of infection that appears in "Gwin, King of Norway" and locating the responsibility for human actions in cultural forces rather than abstracted or supernatural ones. In *Milton*, Blake describes this process explicitly, or rather as explicitly as he can, writing, "This . . . is the Printing-Press / Of

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the French state (esp. 111-116). Paine asserts that "As Mr Burke has not written on constitutions, so neither has he written on the French revolution" (115).

Los; and here he lays his words in order above the mortal brain, / As cogs are formd in a wheel to turn the cogs of the adverse wheel" (*M* 27.8-10). In *Milton*, however, Blake does not simply engage the issue of cultural hybridity and the political force of culture. He is specifically concerned with the political iconography which supported a particular brand of English nationalism so well described by Colley--militarist, dutiful, self-sacrificing, imperial, and hungry for glory. Through "Albion," Blake separates national identity from that brand of nationalism: that nationalism, or "jingoism," does not serve Albion but Satan, and it is not derived from English traditions but from classical ones. The nationalism which government propaganda, and the rehabilitation of Milton, circulated to interpellate the population into a sense of community that valorized a willingness to sacrifice for that community's defining political agenda is thus defamiliarized in the sense of being framed as a non-familial strain infecting the proper national familiar and family. In *Milton*, Blake's resistance to interpellation into governing communal paradigms--the linearity of writing in the artistic community, national narratives in the pseudo-antiquarian texts, models of social relations in *Europe*, *America*, and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, codes of gender and authority in the Preludiums, and prevailing models of political health--is reflected in the putative origin and exemplar of certain nationalist paradigms escaping his own error, and casting off that which is "Not Human."

Chapter Six

"Artfully Propagated": Hybridity, Disease, and the Transformation of the Body Politic

> When nations are to perish in their sins,
> 'Tis in the church the leprosy begins:
> The priest whose office is, with zeal sincere
> To watch the fountain, and preserve it clear,
> Carelessly nods and sleeps upon the brink,
> While others poison what the flock must drink;
> Or waking at the call of lust alone,
> Infuses lies and errors of his own:
> His unsuspecting sheep believe it pure,
> And tainted by the very means of cure,
> Catch from each other a contagious spot,
> The foul forerunner of a general rot.
>
> William Cowper, "The Expostulation" (1782)

In the preceding chapters, I have argued that Blake's texts present the unfamiliar, contradicting powerful cultural paradigms from nationalism to bibliographical codes in his texts by rendering the culturally-constituted space hybrid. Here, however, I wish to examine more closely the ways in which Blake represented the mechanisms through which discursive products affect the cultural-political domain by investigating and characterizing not "how to do things with words," but how words do things to us. It is this mechanism, or rather the premise that it operates, that not only binds together Blake's radical politics, his innovative approach to genre and media, and the power he ascribed to the bardic voice and the Book of Urizen alike, but also binds Blake to his time. Models of the propagation of ideas in the public domain are legion, but I want to focus here on one figure that is used to great effect in Blake's verse, that of disease and, occasionally, its medical opposite, the restorative. Such "restoratives" are represented propagating virally through the body politic whether their precise function is to cure a specific "disease"

or to envigorate a public body that suffers from a more inchoate or broadly-defined problem of sociopolitical health or vulnerability. Restoratives succeed on the basis of their analogous relationship to that which they fight; the distinction between a revitalizing text and a corrupting one is determined ideologically and enforced through the powerful medical connotations of disease, pestilence, cancer, and other unseen, and then largely unmanageable, threats.

What I shall term the vital/viral model of textual propagation divides discourse on terms that are at once unimpeachable and extremely vulnerable. Although they appeal viscerally to the will to survive, they are vulnerable to critique and reversal because the boundary between viral and vital discourse is slippery in a way that its informing medical analogue is not. Words like "plague" and "cancer" do not conjure up images of ambiguous evil in a medical context, but signal little more than opposition in a political one. Matters became more complicated during the Romantic period with the rise of interest in the Eastern practice of vaccination, from various reports from Europeans visiting the orient to the start of Edward Jenner's experiments in 1796.[1] A folk practice in Britain as well, it was known

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[1]According to Peter Razzell, the "first medical account to appear in England was that written by Dr Emanuel Timoni, an abstract of which was published in the *Philosophical Transactions* in 1714" (*Conquest of Smallpox* 2). Timoni, a doctor in Constantinople, was quickly followed into print by Peter Kennedy (*An Essay on External Remedies* [1715]), Jacob Pylarni ("*Nova et tuta excitandi per transplatationem methodus; nuper inventa et in usum tracta*" in *Philosophical Transactions* [1716]), and, most famously, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in a letter (1717) (see Razzell, *Conquest of Smallpox* 2-3). In 1721, Montagu had her daughter inoculated in London (Razzell, *Conquest of Smallpox* 1). "Jenner's first experiment in vaccination took place on the 14th May, 1796, when he inoculated James Phipps with cowpox taken from the hand of the milkmaid Sarah Nelmes" (Razzell, *Edward Jenner's Cowpox Vaccine* 8), and two years later he began to publish his findings in works such as *An Inquiry Into the Causes and Effects of the Varioliae Vaccinae* (1798), *Further Observations on the Variolae Vaccinae Or Cow-Pox* (1799), *A Continuation of Facts and Observations Relative To The Variolae Vaccinae or Cowpox* (1800). Jenner's decision to add the colloquial term for the disease to the medical one suggests a sense of a wider,

in eighteenth-century Pembrokeshire as "buying the smallpox" (Razzell, *Conquest of Smallpox* 1). Vaccination involves using a "vital" disease to ward off a similar "viral" disease, and so provides a useful paradigm through which to figure the competition to control the sociopolitical domain through circulated discourses rather than legislative ones. While legislation offers external restraints through an institutionalized system of punishment and threat, circulated discourses, through the viral/vital metaphor, offer a means by which ideological constructs, from values to laws, can be internalized by each member of the community. In *The Triumph of Life*, Percy Shelley mixes, somewhat uncomfortably, vaccination and the vital/viral paradigm:

> "their living melody
> Tempers its own contagion to the vein
> "Of those who are infected with it--I
> Have suffered what I wrote, or viler pain!--
> "And so my words were seeds of misery--
> Even as the deeds of others. (276-281)

In Blake's corpus, one can trace a general movement towards a vaccination model within an ongoing concern about ideas that are "artfully propagated" (*PA* 576). In his earlier texts, Blake emphasizes the eradication of textual disease, often related to external, legislative constraints, through sterilizing fire. But in his later works, *Jerusalem* in particular, Blake turns to a model in which vital and viral texts compete to control the political body. Instead of the "red flames of Orc" (*Am* 14.11) destroying the "plagues" of the hegemony (*Am* 14.20), Blake offers "print" (*J* 3.9) that will erase the textual

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non-medical audience for his studies. Razzell's study of Jenner's work, *Edward Jenner's Cowpox Vaccine*, has a satirical engraving on its cover that depicts a vaccination taking place while small cows burst out of the bodies of surrounding recipients of the vaccine. Unfortunately, the engraving's source is not provided and I have been unable to locate it, but it is very much in the style of Romantic period prints and displays an interesting, and here relevant, anxiety about transgressing the division between animal and human through the introduction of *cowpox* to human subjects.

errors of various groups and establish his own notion of "harmony" (*J* 3.10)--a vaccination. But there is a danger in this. By framing his own political solution in terms that are so close to the systems that he is resisting, many of the gulfs between them are closed. While the renovated Albion that Blake imagines in *Jerusalem* is greatly different from the contemporary state of affairs, there is little difference between the means by which each prevails. In *Jerusalem*, the only distinction between Blake's transformational and harmonizing publication and the Old Testament laws that he condemns in Chapter Two, between the poet's imagined colonization of the globe by Albion and his condemnation of the colonizing spread of rationalism and other systems incommensurable with his own, is the slippery one of the boundary between viral and vital discourse. I wish to focus on three issues in the following pages: first, I wish to trace, very briefly, the operation of the vital/viral paradigm of propagation in relation to the circulation of texts, particularly as it appears in the Romantic period; second, I shall examine some exemplary passages in Blake's writings in which this paradigm is at work; third, I shall discuss some of the manifestations of this paradigm in *Jerusalem*, especially those with the Polypus as their locus, and the ways in which they produce contestatory hybridizations of the sociopolitical domain that enable Blake's national narrative. This chapter follows from the previous one's examination of the propagation of one disease in particular--neoclassical nationalism in *Milton*--but here I am most concerned with the application of the general notion of ideological disease as the means by which destructive forms of social hybridity are generated.

Vital/Viral Textual Propagation and Hybridity

The premise that words affect their audience has been fundamental to the ways in which Western societies have regulated published discourse, from education to restrictions on the circulation of certain texts, and from propaganda to satire, from classical times to the present. Plato, for instance, wrote in *Phaedrus* that words are "communicated orally for the sake of instruction and graven in the soul" (327). Such "inscriptions," however, often had a clear sociopolitical component, having the power to draw the reader or

auditor into the ideology of the text, as Plato's teacher found out when he was charged with distributing a "doctrine which corrupts the youth" (*Apology* 75). In Plato's *Republic*, immediately before the exclusion of poetry and drama from the perfect society on the grounds that, through mimesis, the audience will repeat the errors that they represent, Socrates is drawn into a question about the propagation of his utopia in the domain of the real. Glaucon acknowledges that they have "describe[d]" and "theoretically founded" the perfect society, but expresses "doubt if it will ever exist on earth," to which Socrates replies, "Perhaps . . . it is laid up as a pattern in heaven, where he who wishes can see it and found it in his own heart" (*Republic* 420). Desmond Lee, in a translator's note, indicates that the "literal translation of this well-known phrase is 'and seeing it, establish himself'. The alternative translations commonly given are 'establish himself as its citizen', or 'establish himself accordingly'" (*Republic* 420*n*). Thus, Socrates and Glaucon produce a utopian ideal in which "he who wishes" can behold the ideal state and will consequently, through the act of beholding, become a citizen of it--or, in Althusserian terms, become interpellated into the ideology and the community that it defines. This idea carries over into Christian theology. Visions, for instance, "present an interpretation of reality and invite the reader or listener to share it" (Achtemeier 1115), while prophecies, as Behrendt shows in "'The Consequence of High Powers': Blake, Shelley, and Prophecy's Public Dimension," were designed to redirect the audience towards their envisioned ideal.[2] Thus, in William Cowper's "Expostulation," the Jews "Receiv'd the transcript of th' eternal mind, / Were trusted with his own graven laws, / And *constituted guardians of*

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[2]The viral/vital duality appears in Derrida's description of the rhetoric that supported the valorization of religious discourse:

> Writing in the common sense is the dead letter, it is the carrier of death. It exhausts life. On the other hand, on the other face of the same proposition, writing in the metaphoric sense, natural, divine, and living writing . . . is immediately united to the voice and to breath. . . . It is hieratic, very close to the interior holy voice. (*Of Grammatology* 17)

his cause, / Theirs were the prophets, theirs the priestly call" (198-201; my emphasis).[3] Similarly, in Blake's *Jerusalem*, the mere perception of Christ and the Divine Family incorporates the percipient into that familial social structure that Blake valorizes (*J* 34.10-21). Just as the boundary between vital and viral is a slippery one, however, so is the distinction between interpellative and prescriptive: in the latter case, the assimilation of the recipient into the communicated social vision is never complete as it is in the former case. While anyone who is healthy fully embodies the definition of health, a patient with a disease never fully embodies the disease--one *is* healthy, and one *has* a disease. The characterization of contested discourses as viral or debilitating depends upon this unbreachable gap, upon positing a natural body, or a political subject, that is necessarily alienated from that which has infected or restrained it. Vital or positively interpellative texts, conversely, offer the elision of such alienation, the promise of f[illegible]lly integrated subject who has no internal conflicts.

It is because of this imputed power to implicate the audience in a particular social organization that this plowshare can become a

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[3]Cowper's poem contains many references to the power of discourse to convert the population to a particular ideology. Cowper constructs a continuum in which God's dictates define one extremity, with "Expostulation" itself nearby, and discourse which is not Judeo-Christian, whether secular or oriental, defines the other:

> To learn in God's own school the Christian part,
> And bind the task assign'd thee to thine heart:
> Happy the man there seeking and there found,
> Happy the nation where such men abound.
>   How shall a verse impress thee? by what name
> Shall I adjure thee not to court thy shame?
> By theirs whose bright example unimpeach'd
> Directs thee to that eminence they reach'd,
> Heroes and worthies of days past, thy sires?
> Or his, who touch'd their hearts with hallow'd fires?
> (650-659)

sword.[4] This power intersects with paradigms of authority, but is not contained within them. Authorities can contest the status of the circulating discourse as virus or cure, and an authorized text may circulate with the cultural weight of the authority's institution behind it, but the power of discourse to affect the cultural determination of the political subject is not contingent on any *prior* authority--therein lies its power to transform the body politic as well as individual subjects. Through the circulation of a text or speech, as those who favour political censorship fear, new authorities can be constituted. From Ovid's expulsion from Rome to the Puritans' closing of the English theatres, the hegemony sought to secure the political body against the incursions of alternative representations of society. This became particularly difficult, however, in late eighteenth-century Britain as the number of readers increased exponentially with the accessibility of the print medium. The considerable growth in the size of the reading public and the commensurate increase in its demographical complexity led to a kind of information revolution that was perceived as threatening to the *status quo* in Blake's time. Outright fear can be traced in legislation, prosecutions, and espionage throughout much of the so-called long eighteenth century, from the censorship debate out of which Milton's *Areopagitica* arose to the Stage Licensing Act (1737), the Stamp Act (1765), and the expansion of the term "treason" to include speech acts as well as physical ones in the Two Acts (1795), as well as various modulations of press restrictions in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Poor Thomas Muir was charged with merely "having lent the works of Thomas Paine" (Rev. of *The Trial of Thomas Muir* 104), and his was only one case among many. While William Godwin, in "Of Choice in Reading," asserted the power of virtue and innocence to defend against corruption by discourse, the

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[4]Thus, for example, Derrida writes, "The Socratic *pharmakon* also acts like a venom, like the bite of a poisonous snake. . . . And Socrates' bite is worse than a snake's since its traces invade the soul. . . . And when they don't act like the venom of a snake, Socrates' pharmaceutical charms provoke a kind of *narcosis*, benumbing and paralyzing into aporia, like the touch of a sting ray" ("Plato's Pharmacy" 118).

premise of censorship is that innocence itself is most vulnerable to such discourses: there is no prophylactic for such a disease and the only preventative measure is the legal equivalent of quarantine, censorship. Thus, in the indictment of William Drennan (1794), a Dublin physician, political activist, and nationalist, who was later acquitted of all charges, the publication of an address was characterized as an attempt

> to excite and diffuse amongst the subjects of this realm of Ireland discontents, jealousies, and suspicions of our sovereign lord the king, and his government, and . . . to incite the subjects of our said lord the king to attempt with force and violence, and with arms, to make alterations in the government, state, and constitution of this kingdom.[5] (*Full Report* 37-38)

Propagating outward from the private meeting in which it was written, through various hands as it is published, and finally to the public, the United Irishmen's address threatens to transform not only its readership but fundamental institutions of the state. The distinction between words and actions, between reading and being inscribed, between new ideas and new institutional orders, collapses in what the address itself terms "the witchcraft of a proclamation" (qtd *Full Report* 39). Such a collapse renders the populace uncontrollable, turning it into an unmappable heterogeneous mix of different reading histories, and so legislators and their agents sought to arrest the hybridization of the populace by preventing the circulation of different, new, or ideologically incommensurable discourses that could be instantly

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[5]Though it is primarily concerned with a call for "universal emancipation and representative legislature" (*Full Report* 41), including Catholic Emancipation, the address does ask Irishmen to take up arms to defend their rights. The call to arms, however, is specifically framed as a response to the English government's raising of the militia to suppress "all seditious associations" (*Full Report* 38), including their own.

demonized through the rhetoric of disease.[6] Disease is a powerful metaphor for the vehicle by which hybridity is generated: the history of its construction brings together the terror of the uncontrollable transmission of dangerous material, the fear of the invasive entity that not only conquers but transforms that which it invades, anxiety about the unseen and intangible, and, above all, the threat of a conversion of the political body to a different vital agenda.

The term "hybridity" has been applied in recent investigations of colonial and postcolonial politics to characterize the intrusion of the colonizing culture into the colonized cultural space, the reverse of the anxiety that Barrell traces in De Quincey's texts. Discussing Romantic nationalism in Ireland, David Lloyd suggests that

> 'hybridization' is necessarily grasped by nationalists as the paradoxically simultaneous process of multiplication or disintegration and homogenization. The flooding of the market with English commodities both disintegrates what is retrospectively constructed as a unified Irish identity and absorbs its residues into the single field of the British industrial and imperial empire. And since the only means to resist this process, in the absence of autonomous national political institutions, appears to be the formation of nationalist subjects through literary institutions, the field of popular literature becomes peculiarly fraught. (96)

Bhabha uses the term differently, using it to refer to an effect of the taxonomical imperial gaze that hoists the empire by its own petard: "If discriminatory effects enable the authorities to keep an eye on them, their proliferating difference evades that eye, escapes that surveillance" ("Signs Taken for Wonders" 97), and so "Hybridity represents that ambivalent 'turn' of the discriminated subject into a

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[6]Regarding the textual production of cultural hybridity, see esp. David Lloyd's chapter, "Adulteration and the Nation," in *Anomalous States* (88-124). Lloyd's subject, the corruption of national identity under an imperial regime, is in many ways homologous to that of the present chapter, the conflict between different constructions of national identity.

terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification" ("Signs Taken for Wonders" 98). Bhabha and Lloyd are writing about two different nations, India and Ireland, but about the same time and the same empire. Their definitions of "hybridity" differ because of the political position from which "hybridity" is being defined: Lloyd is discussing the hybridity "grasped by nationalists," the splintering of the national identity that they were trying to construct as univocal and coherent; Bhabha, however, is addressing the hybridity generated by imperialists to survey and control, taxonomically, the imperial space, that incidentally creates a colonial space so hybridized, so heterogeneous, that it cannot be mapped. In both instances, hybridity marks the loosing of control, the infection of what is knowable and totalizable by that which exceeds such limits. It is at this point that Shklovsky's notion of "defamiliarization" meets Blake's radical politics: the unfamiliar is uncontained by the dominant paradigms which plot the lines of power, and its insertion into the realm of public discourse constitutes an intervention in that domain that complicates its configuration, that renders it forever hybrid.

Drawing tropological equations between departures from social codes, the corruption of personal identity, and the physical violation of the body's boundaries was hardly new. The effects that circulate around the drink in Milton's *Comus* constitute only one example among many (although for these purposes it is a particularly apt one because it reflects moral corruption by turning its imbibers into hybrids of animal and human form).[7] But this trope carried particular power during a period of sociopolitical turmoil in which proclamations, propaganda, subversive pamphlets, and speeches fought to control the minds of the populace as well as its arms. It is arguably the Enlightenment notion that the mind is a *tabula rasa* inscribed upon by experience, to use John Locke's formulation in *Enquiry Concerning Human*

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[7]Edmund Spenser, similarly, identified the propagation of the alien political structure of the Irish--which, for instance, required that leaders be selected on the basis of merit--with suckling, writing that "first the childe that sucketh the milke of the nurse, must of necessity learn his first speach of her . . . and not only of the speach, but also of the manners and conditions" (112).

Understanding (1690), that made the proliferation of readers and readings so dangerous. David Hume, in the early decades of the eighteenth century, makes easy equations between "characters who excite blame" and those who "tend to public detriment and disturbance" while implicitly, but not subtly, drawing a simile between such "characters" and the "malignant humors" of gout as well as the "public" and the body (109).[8] Because of the anthropocentrism of Western culture, a virus or cancer is not a form of life with which humanity competes, nor even a parasite that can be deconstructively revealed as a host with the elegance of J. Hillis Miller's rhetoric, but a devouring monster that is the absolute antithesis of the only life that matters. Arguing that "The case is the same with *moral* as with *physical* ill," as well as explicitly rejecting the notion that disease is proper to the body, Hume can thus posit a "natural" recognition of what is good and evil that is as clearcut as the distinction between health and "malignant humors" to which it is implicitly compared (109-110). Use of such figures were widespread in the Romantic period. As Barrell has shown, Thomas De Quincey "figures the oriental as infection," "terrorised by the fear of an unending and interlinked chain of infections from the East" (*Infection of Thomas De Quincey* 15). De Quincey represents

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[8]Hume refutes the claim that "the WHOLE, considered as one system, is, in every period of its existence, ordered with perfect benevolence. . . . Every physical ill . . . makes an essential part of this benevolent system, and could not possibly be removed . . . without giving entrance to greater ill or excluding greater good" (108-109), comparing that approach to "preaching" to "a man lying under the racking pains of the gout" about "the rectitude of those general laws which produced the malignant humors in his body" (109). Stephen D. Cox suggests that, despite Blake's many differences with "Deists," this is one point on which Blake agreed with them, contending that there "is one respect in which Blake, at least in practice, resembles his predecessors Hume and Smith. When he admits the possibility of full human interaction, he tends, as they did, to regard it as a process in which one self is likely to be transformed by its perceptions of another self" (142). Cox's supporting quotation is particularly important here, and will be discussed in the third section of this chapter: "Strucken with Albions disease they became what they behold; / They assimilate with Albion" (*J* 39.32-33).

cultural contact as an event vulnerable to viral transmission and so invests it with far more sinister overtones than Cowper's more innocuous charge that the British imperialist has emptied out British libertarianism and "With Asiatic vices stor'd [his] mind" ("Expostulation" 372). Steven Blakemore finds that "In discussing tradition, [Edmund] Burke uses metaphors of genuine parentage and offspring--authentic blood lines--while the disruption of it is expressed in metaphors of bastard births and venereal disease" (9) that link the subversion of tradition with both disease and corruptions of genealogical lines that hybridize the ruling class, a fear of which was often expressed in similar terms during the Renaissance.[7] Blake, close to the radical movement suppressed in the 1790's and charged with treasonous utterances himself, was exposed extensively to such tropes. Between 1792 and 1806, arguably Blake's most active years, three texts were prominently published that employ, and illustrate, the vital/viral model in particularly clear ways. Two of those texts were written by acquaintances of Blake who were, as he was, members of the Johnson circle--Wollstonecraft and Godwin. The third, which almost caused a duel, was written by one of the period's best-known reviewers, Francis Jeffrey, and launches a vitriolic attack on the work of one of the period's most popular poets, Thomas Moore.

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft compares two kinds of interventions in the sociopolitical domain: "The indolent puppet of court [i.e. the monarch] first becomes a luxurious monster, or fastidious sensualist, and then makes the contagion which his unnatural state spread, the instrument of tyranny" (99), while "Men of abilities scatter seeds that grow up and have a great influence on the

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[7]For example, in Thomas Randolph's "To a painted Mistresse," cosmetics not only implicate the woman in prostitution (12), but render her "adulterate" (3), suggesting both hybridity and "adultery." But see especially Andrew Marvell's "Mower against Gardens," in which the "Luxurious man, to bring his vice in use, / Did after him the world seduce" (1-2), transforming the flowers with perfume and cosmetics (11-12), so that "No plant now knew the stock from which it came" (23), producing "Forbidden mixtures" (22) and "adulterate fruit" (25) in the "green seraglio" (27).

forming opinion; and when once the public opinion preponderates, through the exertion of reason, the overthrow of arbitrary power is not very distant" (99*n*). In both instances, the model for the distribution of discourse remains the same: an idea is produced by a singular origin (monarch or author) and then circulates through the political body, transforming it into an entity that is in part determined by that idea. But the metaphors used to figure that model are radically different: "good" ideas are vital ("seeds that grow up") and "bad" ideas are viral ("contagion"). In "Of Choice in Reading" (1797), Godwin is at pains to argue "that the impression we derive from a book, depends less upon its real contents, than upon the temper of mind and preparation with which we read it" (135), but he remains dependent on the same functional model as Wollstonecraft:

> I cannot tell what I should have been, if Shakespear or Milton had not written. The poorest peasant in the remotest corner of England, is probably a different man from what he would have been but for these authors. Every man who is changed from what he was by a perusal of their works, communicates a portion of the inspiration all around him. *It passes from man to man, till it influences the whole mass.* I cannot tell that the wisest mandarin now living in China, is not indebted for part of his energy and sagacity to the writings of Milton and Shakspear, even though it should happen that he never heard of their names. (140; my emphasis)

Despite his concern with arguing that texts are not inherently moral or immoral, he nevertheless falls into a dependence on the vital/viral paradigm:

> Books will perhaps be found, in a less degree than is commonly imagined, the corruptors of the morals of mankind. They form an effective subsidiary to events and the contagion of vicious society; but, taken by themselves, they rarely produce vice and profligacy where virtue existed before. . . . He that would extract poison from them, must for the most part come to them with a mind already debauched. (141)

Godwin constructs virtue as a prophylactic and vice as a predisposition to the disease of immoral books, while maintaining, on the basis of the innate goodness of the populace, that the influence of books which are not immoral circulates freely through the social body, and even worldwide.[10] Also at work here is the premise that corrupting books act on the population in ways which, if not literally corporeal, are best figured through physiological metaphors, while uncorrupting books act on non-corporeal aspects, such as "sagacity," "energy," or what a man "is." Again, we are healthy, and we have illnesses: vital texts, in Godwin's inflection of the paradigm, operate on a more profound and internal level than their viral counterparts.

Jeffrey provides a useful articulation of the view that Godwin tries to refute, namely that books can corrupt the virtuous, almost a decade after Godwin's rebuttal. Anonymously reviewing a volume of Moore's erotic verse in 1806, Jeffrey charges that Moore wrote the poems "for the purpose of insinuating pollution into the minds of unknown and unsuspecting readers" (132), launching "an attack upon their purity" (134) that threatens the entire social order. Noting that Moore's verse is not only dedicated to people of "rank and accomplishments" but expresses a sense of intimacy with them, Jeffrey fears that

> By these channels, the book will easily pass into circulation in those classes of society, which it is of most consequence to keep free of contamination; and from which its reputation and its influence will descend with the greatest effect to the great body of the community. . . . [I]f the head be once infected, the corruption will spread irresistibly through the whole body. (136)

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[10] I prefer the double negative of "not immoral" to "moral" in this instance because of Godwin's central argument in the essay. Godwin suggests that "good" literature excites the mind and is not necessarily moral--particularly since the moral of a piece will depend on the reader's contextualization of the work. More specifically, he writes that "Shakespear is a writer by no means anxious about his moral. He seems almost indifferent concerning virtue and vice, and takes up with either as it falls in his way" (138).

Unacceptable ideas and attitudes, once published, spread through the political body like a virus, turning that body into a monstrous hybrid of purity and corruption. It is that dangerous hybridity of Moore's poems that lies at the heart of their danger: "the coarse indecencies of Rochester and Dryden . . . can scarcely be regarded as dangerous. There is an antidote to the poison they contain, in the open and undisguised profligacy with which it is presented" (132), while "It seems to be [Moore's] aim to impose corruption upon his readers, by concealing it under the mask of refinement; to reconcile them imperceptibly to the most vile and vulgar sensuality, by *blending* its language with that of exalted feeling and tender emotion" (133; my emphasis). Moore's poetry, like Comus' drink, seduces its imbibers to bestial behaviour. As with Comus' crew, Godwin's readers must first be receptive to illicit behaviour and virtue is a sure defence--or at least it is a sure defence against anxiety about the uninhibited circulation of such ideas.

Throughout these different models of intellectual propagation, two points remain the same: the circulation of discourse transforms the domain through which it moves, or even beyond to China in Godwin's argument; ideas or texts consistent with the author's ideology propagate vitally and ideas or texts inconsistent with that ideology propagate virally. From Plato to Moore, in the secular and the sacred traditions, publicly-circulated discourse inscribes the ideology of the population, and it can inscribe incommensurable ideologies as well as familiar ones. This is a different matter from constitutional language and the "institutional speech acts" discussed by Esterhammer in the final chapter of *Creating States*, because, to a certain extent, it allows counter-hegemonic discourse the same performative power as hegemonic utterances. As the indictment of Drennan and other attempts at censorship reveals, in the so-called "age of revolution," the power of non- and counter-hegemonic discourse to reconstitute the body politic was all too clear, and the purgation of unacceptable discourse was facilitated by a medical paradigm in which good and evil are clearly delineated. Blake's transition from the purgative to the vaccination version of the vital/viral paradigm, however, puts him in a more vulnerable position. While he identifies authoritative discourse

with disease and revolutionary speech and action with sterilizing fires in his early works, by *Jerusalem* he characterizes his own work as a vaccine that will purge the political body of destructive errors that are often figured as cancerous. But in doing so he makes his own writing susceptible to his own critique of viral discourse as colonizing by making *Jerusalem* itself ontologically homologous to the works it condemns, a text that will circulate and transform the political body into something else. Instead of clearcut divisions between fire and disease or between the book and the torn book or speech, Blake offers a group of diseases that he differentiates on ideological terms only, and that taxonomy, without extra-ideological support, depends on either the prior commensurability of the readers' ideology with Blake's or a remarkably pliant readership that, against all of Blake's earlier demands for active reading, accepts what Blake writes.

Battling Infection in the Body Politic

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake includes the proverb, "Damn. braces: Bless relaxes" (9.57). Blake's resistance to restraints is a commonplace of Blake criticism, but the restraints of which Blake complains are often internalized as ideological dictates through a moral code so that, as Foucault demonstrates so well in *Discipline and Punish*, we do not deal with physical restraints that are separable from the individual. Rather, such restraints produce a hybridized subject, like the females of the Preludiums, whose codes of behaviour are located in the contested domain between nature and nurture, between what a person is imagined to be in a world without such restraints and what a person is imagined to be if subsumed within the ideology that generates those restraints, in a space where neither of those defining endpoints exist except abstractly in attempts to disentangle the mix.[11] Blake not only represents those "braces" as

[11]Those imagined beings, of course, depend on the ideologically-implicated construction of unrestrained "nature" and the social ideal towards which the restraints claim to move--one might see the choice as one between the "noble savage" and Falkland, the villain of Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, while another might see it as one between a violent

constraints that are produced discursively, as in the houses of *Europe* with "windows wove over with curses of iron: / Over the doors Thou shalt not" (*Eur* 12.27-28), but represents their removal as the burning away of a diseased shell. In this trope, the restraining discourse is a stultifying coating that inhibits the growth and health of the (political) body that remains relatively intact beneath it.

America is heavily dependent upon the vital/viral model of propagated discourse. In Chapter Four, I addressed the vital propagative model employed in *America* and its difference from models that appear in Percy Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" and Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*. To reiterate, Orc proposes a model that closely recalls the vital half of Wollstonecraft's model in which the scattered pages of the text are like seeds that "make the desarts blossom" while departing from that model in severing the connection between the author and the fertilization of the public domain. Instead of a poet spreading his word, as in Percy Shelley's ode, Orc envisions the torn text as the liberation of the individual from the conformity enforced through publication. The torn text is thus a subversion of the propagated tyrannical books whose production is described in the Preludium to *Europe* through a metaphor that recalls the other half of Wollstonecraft's model while tying the propagation of tyranny more explicitly to the publication of texts. But the torn text is also a catalyst for another level of propagation. It "renew[s] the fiery joy" (*Am* 8.9) "that Urizen perverted to ten commands" (*Am* 8.3) and it is fire that destroys the pestilence produced by the tyrants in the final conflict. Throughout the poem, "pestilence is shot from heaven" (*Am* 1.6) or, more literally, from tyrants in the cause of maintaining tyranny:

> a heavy iron chain
>
> Descends link by link from Albions cliffs across the sea to bind
>
> Brothers & sons of America, till our faces pale and yellow. (*Am* 3.7-9)
>
> Arm'd with diseases of the earth to cast upon the Abyss,

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brute and a benevolent parson.

Their [Albion's Angels] numbers forty millions, must'ring
in the eastern sky. (*Am* 13.15-16)

Albions Angel [gave] the thunderous command:
His plagues obedient to his voice flew forth out of the
clouds
Falling upon America, as a storm to cut them off
As a blight cuts the tender corn when it begins to appear
. . .
And as a plague wind fill'd with insects cuts off man &
beast. (*Am* 14.3-8)

their ensigns sick'ning in the sky
The plagues creep on the burning winds. (*Am* 15.10-11)

Disease is the weapon of the tyrant, controlling the population by limiting its health and vitality. Blake would later write, "A Tyrant is the Worst disease & the Cause of all others" (Anno. Bacon 625). But, in *America*, it is the tyrants who are most noticeably infected by the pestilence. In the early plates of the poem, the narrator declares that "Albion is sick" (*Am* 4.4) and Boston's Angel asks, "Must the generous tremble & leave his joy, to the idle: to the pestilence! / That mock him?" (*Am* 11.6-7). Moreover, during the great conflict, the tyrants are "smitten with their own plagues" (*Am* 16.18), plagues that are implicitly identified with syphilis because of that disease's current association with a remarkable susceptibility to the cold and the belief that leprosy was a late stage of syphilitic infection. The hegemony is repeatedly represented as chilled and leprous: "Pestilence began in streaks of red / Across the limbs of Albions Guardian, the spotted plague smote Bristols / And the Leprosy Londons Spirit, sickening all their bands" (*Am* 15.1-3); "Albions Guardian writhed in torment . . . teeth chattering / Howling & shuddering his legs quivering; convuls'd each muscle and sinew / Sick'ning lay Londons Guardian, and the ancient miter'd York" (*Am* 15.6-10); "the Guardians of Ireland and Scotland and Wales . . . [are] spotted with plagues" (*Am* 15.13-14); "the Bard of Albion felt the enormous plagues" (*Am* 15.16); Urizen has both a "leprous head" and "Leprous . . . limbs" (*Am* 16.3,11). Just as the Great Fire of 1666 rid London of the Black Plague, the purifying fires of Orc turn back the tyrants' pestilence

and liberate the populace. The "fiery joy" destroys the leprous hegemony but leaves undamaged the healthy political body: "Fires inwrap the earthly globe, yet man is not consum'd" (*Am* 8.15). Just as the soldiers' disrobing marks their refusal to be complicit in the British government's attempt to suppress liberty (see Chapter Three), the cleansing fires mark the purging from society of a hegemony that only inhibited the vitality of those that they ruled.

The "fiery joy" reappears at the apocalyptic resolution of *Milton* and again it destroys only that which corrupts the body politic. After Ololon descends "Into the Fires of Intellect that rejoic'd in Felphams Vale" (*M* 42.9), Christ is draped in her clouds "folded as a Garment dipped in blood / Written within & without in woven letters: & the Writing / Is the Divine Revelation in the Litteral expression: / A Garment of War" (*M* 42.12-15). The passage that follows, closing the poem, echoes the final lines of *Europe*. But I am more interested here in the lines that precede the start of the apocalypse:

> To bathe in the Waters of Life; to wash off the Not Human
> I come in Self-annihilation & the grandeur of Inspiration
> To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the Saviour
> To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspiration
> To cast off Bacon, Locke & Newton from Albion's covering
> To take off his filthy garments, & clothe him with Imagination
> To cast aside from Poetry, all that is not Inspiration. (*M* 41.1-7)

The innumerable, convoluted mergings of the preceding plates end here in a series of divisions that "cast off," "cast aside" and "take off" all that which is not proper to the identity that Blake imagines, all that which is "Not Human." Just as the American soldiers cast off their uniforms before the apocalyptic purging, Milton casts off his "false Body: an Incrustation over [his] Immortal / Spirit" (*M* 40.35-36), anticipating the moment in which Jesus "shall wholly purge away with Fire" (*M* 41.27) such alien graftings. In delineating that "false Body," Blake emphasizes pretence, just as he does in a nationalist passage from his *Public Address*:

> Englishmen rouze yourselves from the fatal Slumber into

> which Booksellers & Trading Dealers have thrown you Under the artfully propagated pretence that a Translation or a Copy of any kind can be as honourable to the Nation as An Original [*Belying*] Be-lying the English Character. (*PA* 676)

In *Milton*, however, the pretence is specifically associated with discursive inadequacies. It is the false, and pretentious, writers who infect the government of Albion:

> the tame high finisher of paltry Blots,
> Indefinite, or paltry Rhymes; or paltry Harmonies.
> Who creeps into State Government like a catterpillar to destroy
> To cast off the idiot Questioner who is always questioning,
> But never capable of answering; who sits with a sly grin
> Silent plotting when to question, like a thief in a cave;
> Who publishes doubt & calls it knowledge . . .
> These are the destroyers of Jerusalem, these are the murderers
> Of Jesus . . .
> These are the Sexual Garments, the Abomination of Desolation
> Hiding the Human Lineaments as with an Ark & Curtains
> Which Jesus rent: & now shall wholly purge away with Fire.
> (*M* 41.9-15, 41.21-22, 41.25-27)

Just as the valorization of copying generates a false Englishness (*PA* 576), the discursive failures of poets, legislators, and scientists produces a "false Body," the "Not Human." In the apocalyptic resolution to *Milton*, there is no separation of the saved and not saved, but rather the purgation of identity from that which is alien to it, leavinq only what Blake considered proper, whether to the body, religion, politics, poetics or, as discussed in the previous chapter, the nation.

Early in *Milton*, Blake suggests that this infectious error is circulated textually. Arguably, this is established in the very title: by aligning the reformation of a poet and essayist with the renovation of English society, Blake establishes a fundamental synergy between the

writer and the state. Blake raises the issue at length in the Preface to *Milton*, linking ideological sickness to fatality by again identifying tyrannical pestilence with war:

> when the New Age is at leisure to Pronounce; all will be set right: & those Grand Works of the more ancient & consciously & professedly Inspired Men, will hold their proper rank, & the Daughters of Memory shall become the Daughters of Inspiration. Shakspeare & Milton were both *curbd by the general malady & infection* from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the sword. (*M* 1; my emphasis)

The New Age will return to the "ancient" artistic order, erasing the diseasing corruption of classical militarist incursions. Satan, the representative of the pseudo-classical imperialist hegemony, is depicted propagating his view textually:

> He created Seven deadly Sins drawing out his infernal scroll,
> Of Moral laws and cruel punishments upon the clouds of Jehovah
> To pervert the Divine voice in its entrance to the earth
> With thunder of war & trumpets sound, with armies of disease. (*M* 9.21-24)

Like the divinity that purges away the "Not Human" at the end of Book the Second, Satan's texts cast off that which is incommensurable with the ideology that he seeks to propagate. Satan declares,

> I am God alone
> There is no other! let all obey my principles of moral individuality
> I have brought them from the uppermost innermost recesses
> Of my Eternal Mind, transgressors I will rend off for ever,
> As now I rend this accursed Family from my covering. (*M* 9.25-29)

Satan anticipates the model that is expounded in the final plates of *Milton* but reverses its placement of the contending ideologies, locating divinity in the exterior and his own "principles" in a privileged interiority. But the formulation of the relationship between what is proper and what is alien, and the means by which the

alien can be "cast off," remains the same. While Blake is still using the image of fire to mark the eradication of ideological disease, he here approaches a vaccination model in which two similar diseases compete to control the body politic.

The transposition of an image from *Milton* to *Jerusalem* marks a further step away from the sterilizing model to the vaccination one. In *Milton*, the complicity of texts in the propagation of infectious militarism is made explicit: "This Wine-press is call'd War on Earth, it is the Printing-Press / Of Los; and here he lays his words in order above the mortal brain / As cogs are formd in a wheel to turn the cogs of the adverse wheel" (*M* 27.8-10). The passage thus does not simply refer to the influence of texts on the subject, but harks back to the Preface: "We do not want either Greek or Roman Models if we are just and true to our own Imaginations." The Printing-Press "prolong[s] Corporeal War" because it, like the classical Models, deflects subjects from their "own Imaginations," controlling the brain as an "*adverse* wheel," at once opposed and unwilling--like a virus. Thus "The Wine-press on the Rhine groans loud . . . Where Human Thought is crushed beneath the iron hand of Power" (*M* 25.3, 25.5). Blake reiterates that passage in *Jerusalem*, referring to "ornaments" which mimic "the Wheels of Albions sons" "as cogs / Are formd in a wheel, to fit the cogs of the adverse wheel" (*J* 13.12-14). In *Jerusalem*, however, the wheels are not identified with the printing press, with the mass-production of texts, but with the distribution of systems that are fundamentally compulsive, as if the complicity of Blake's own text in such a project has become too uncomfortable to suggest when its "wondrous writing" might resolve all. The Wheels of *Jerusalem* are implicated in, often unspecified, machines that enforce rigidity of thought and political division, such as "the Wheels of Albions Sons: / Fixing their Systems, permanent: by mathematic power / Giving a body to Falshood" (*J* 12.11-13) or "intricate wheels invented, wheel without wheel: / To perplex youth in their outgoings, & to bind to labours in Albion" (*J* 65.21-22).[12] These wheels are also poisonous: "They saw their Wheels rising

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[12]There are a number of other instances, including: "the land of snares & traps & wheels & pit-falls & dire mills" (*J* 13.49); "Here the

up poisonous against Albion / Urizen, cold & scientific: Luvah, pitying and weeping / Tharmas, indolent & sullen: Urthona, doubting and despairing / Victims to one another & dreadfully plotting against each other" (*J* 38.1-4); "In opposition deadly, and their Wheels in poisonous / And deadly stupor" (*J* 74.5-6). The power of the wheels to affect, or "perplex," thought is thus characterized as sickening as well as mechanistically violent. In Eden, however, there is no sickness:

> I turn my eyes to the Schools & Universities of Europe
> And there behold the Loom of Locke whose Woof rages dire
> Washd by the Water-wheels of Newton. black the cloth
> In heavy wreathes folds over every Nation; cruel Works
> Of many Wheels I view, wheel without wheel, with cogs tyrannic
> Moving by compulsion each other; not as those in Eden: which
> Wheel within Wheel in freedom revolve in harmony & peace.
> (*J* 15.14-20)

Only the wheels of the fallen world are identified with both the textual and the tyrannic, while the Edenic resolution of difference promised by the first preface to *Jerusalem* produces cogless wheels in which all struggle has ended, and difference has been resolved. Other images of the influence of compulsive systems iterate these figures of interlocutory interlocking, of the infectious disease, surreptitious poison, and cancer. In Chapter 1 of *Jerusalem*, for example, Blake appropriates Sydney's conceit of the sugared pill, in which the

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Twelve Sons of Albion, join'd in dark Assembly . . . Became as Three Immense Wheels, turning upon one-another" (*J* 18.5, 18.8); "Why should Punishment Weave the Veil with Iron Wheels of War / When Forgiveness might it Weave with Wings of Cherubim" (*J* 22.34-35); "Albion dark, / Repugnant; rolld his Wheels backward into Non-Entity" (*J* 39.5-6); "Albions dread Wheels, stretching out spaces immense between / That every particle of light & air" (*J* 39.9-10); "to winnow kingdoms / The water wheel & mill of many innumerable wheels resistless / Over the Four fold Monarchy from Earth to the Mundane Shell" (*J* 73.13-15); "Hyle roofd Los in Albions Cliffs by the Affections rent / Asunder & opposed to Thought, to draw Jerusalems Sons / Into the Vortex of his Wheels" (*J* 74.28-30).

medicinal properties of the didactic text are surrounded by seductive aesthetic qualities: "his cold / Poisons rose up: & his sweet deceits coverd them all over / With a tender cloud . . . Listen! / Be attentive! be obedient!" (*J* 8.5-6, 8.8-9).

Throughout these references to compulsion by pestilence-like texts and disease-infested rulers, Blake's central anxiety is located at the interpenetration of the diseased and the healthy--the meshed cogs of the opposing wheels of text against as-yet-uncompelled brain, the epidermal boils and encrustations of the corrupted, the caterpillar-like destroyer of government, the military that invades the state like a disease attacks a body, and the circulation of false texts in the public domain. Or, rather, Blake marks his central anxieties by aligning his utopian ideal with health and the target of his satiric pen with disease, and so locating the line between good and bad in the mottled grey space that we all inhabit. Blake thus alienates from the political body that to which he objects, making it strange, and so facilitates the conversion of the reader to a view in which such restraints must be excised through the powerful resonances of the medical discourse that he has appropriated. The power of this trope goes beyond the simplicity of "disease is bad and health is good." Medical discourse is framed to deal with symptoms in a very particular way: it tells the patient what in his or her body does not belong or has ceased to work properly, separating the subject from a part of his or her own body through reference to the ideal body of the medical imagination.[13] Acculturated into the prevailing ideologies, Blake's

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[13]To give an example: the nausea that women experience during the early months of pregnancy has long been treated as, at best, a biological accident that women must suffer and, at worst, a woman's psychosomatic expression of her resistance to her own pregnancy. Margie Profet, however, has recently produced compelling evidence that such nausea is in fact an effective warning system that produces discomfort whenever a pregnant woman eats food that contains toxins dangerous to the embryo or fetus, particularly during the first trimester when it is particularly sensitive to such toxins. For an accessible overview of her research, see Shari Rudavsky's interview with the MacArthur Award winner.

readers must also be alienated from a part of themselves; Blake must imagine the ideal political body through which they can divide their culture's paradigms into healthy and diseased before they can purge the latter. But, by appropriating the vital/viral paradigm to affect his readers, Blake also infects his own discourse with that of the hegemony. To communicate effectively with those who have been interpellated into the ideologies to which he objects, he must graft the rhetoric of those ideologies onto his own or risk being completely obscure and failing to achieve his public ends.

Excising the Cancer: Hybridity and *Jerusalem*

The vital/viral paradigm is implicit in Deen's description of the power of *Jerusalem*'s text:

> the poem *Jerusalem* is itself a system in part, and what is a systematizing of error in it is designed to fall away, to move back so that it no longer looms in the foreground and overwhelms the mind, and can thus be seen in the perspective that reveals error. What remains when Satan is annihilated is simply the risen Albion, the great body of universal humanity, the family of men living in universal brotherhood. (228)

The circulated text marks and cures the disease and, like any good medical treatment, leaves the body pure of any taint, restored to its ideal condition. But, as I have already discussed, classifying discourse in only ideological terms makes such taxonomies sensitive to the very critique and reversal that Blake proposes: classifications that delineate what is "error" and what is "universal humanity" becomes much more vulnerable to question. While Blake criticism has usually focussed on the narrative of *Jerusalem*, the quest for the reunion of Albion and his Emanation, a mystical version of the conventional marriage plot, I wish to focus on the work's construction as an assemblage of four polemics that are directed at specific audiences.[14]

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[14]A. G. den Otter has recently traced "the rhetorical structure" of *Jerusalem* (73). While my concerns have some intersection with an informing paradigm of rhetoric--persuading an audience to accede to the orator's viewpoint--I would argue that Blake is doing much more than

By representing the Jews, Deists, Public, and Christians in particular ways, Blake makes his concern with "error," like his solution to it, culturally specific. Blake's "family of men" is fundamentally nationalist and Christian, and can only be achieved if cultural and ideological difference--named "error"--is excised from the "great body of universal humanity." *Jerusalem*, perhaps precisely because it is Blake's most "consolidated" work (*J* 3), is also his most tyrannical, plotting the assimilation of the globe into his own political and religious vision. Despite his early opposition to imperialism, Blake's *Jerusalem* envisages a kind of imaginative colonization, and religious proselytization, in which Albion's and Jerusalem's prior universality is reinstated over the national and cultural divisions of the present: "Awake! Awake Jerusalem! O lovely Emanation of Albion / Awake and overspread all Nations as in Ancient Time" (*J* 97.1-2), when "London coverd the whole Earth. England encompassd the Nations: / And all the Nations of the Earth were seen in the Cities of Albion" (*J* 79.22-23). While Los complains of those who "murder by analyzing, that [they] / May take the aggregate" (*J* 91.26-27), this is, on one level, precisely the strategy that Blake's final epic enacts in its vision of resolving differences into "harmony."[15] The return to the lost Jerusalem is

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simply "encourag[ing] his audience to make an informed decision in his favour" (74). He directs his rhetorical force against culturally-specific groups, seeking to alienate them from that which prevents their assimilation into his ideal culture by identifying those elements of their cultures with cancers, infections, and other entities that are readily defined as unmitigatedly bad. The truth and morality of Blake's vision aside, his strategies bear an unpleasant similarity to those of many tyrannies before and since.

[15]Blake's valorization of "harmony" appears to be a further departure from Blake's earlier position: "the rejection of 'harmony' common to Blake and Ossian, which we may interpret as a rejection of metaphor and allegory, can be seen as related to Blake's rejection of socially conditioned linguistic and poetic practices" (Punter 202). The fundamental difference between the "paltry Harmonies" (*M* 41.10) that Punter cites and the harmonies of *Jerusalem* is that Blake is ideologically opposed to the former and defines the latter. Harmony itself is not the problem, but the rubric under which it is generated;

repeatedly figured as the purging of the political body of invasive difference, and it is achieved through "the wond'rous art of writing" (*J* 3.4): "Therefore I print; nor vain my types shall be: / Heaven, Earth & Hell, henceforth shall live in harmony" (*J* 3.9-10).[16] *Jerusalem*, so to speak, plays "cowpox" to the prevailing "smallpox." The text itself is offered as a restorative that will not only eradicate invading viruses but establish a political body that is invulnerable to further incursions. But sustaining this model of his epic's social power requires that Blake negotiate some difficult waters, between the Charybdis that threatens to subsume *Jerusalem* in the colonizing discourse which it condemns and the Scylla that might destroy its effectiveness as a vehicle to harmonize a cacophony of cultural voices.

Throughout *Jerusalem*, corrupting influences "writhe their arms into the nether deep" (*Am* 2.11). Scofield, for example, "is like a

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like discourse, it can generate social coherence constructively (vitally) or destructively (virally), and that taxonomy is a politically-entangled one.

[16]In an essay on *Jerusalem*, Bloom makes an observation that has structural similarities to what I am addressing here:

> the poem's main concern is to outline firmly the distinction between the two kinds of suffering *in Blake himself*. It is his *own* Spectre of Urthona who must be overcome, though the self-realization necessary for such harsh triumph depends upon his recognition that precisely this psychic component won out in the spirit of Cowper. ("Blake's *Jerusalem*" 74)

Deen makes a similar observation, suggesting that, "Through Los, Blake seeks to destroy error by seeking its psychological and internal roots in his own mind" (217). My concern in the following pages is with the delineation of this distinction "in society itself," particularly British society, although the superimposition and elision of national boundaries in the poem makes such a designation suspect. Instead of "self-realization," there is the circulated text that will renovate the various audiences' perceptions of their defining paradigms. But, as Bloom's analysis shows, this operation is, on a formal level, repeated in many different contexts throughout the poem.

mandrake in the earth before Reubens gate: / He shoots beneath Jerusalems walls to undermine her foundations!" (*J* 11.22-23). Most interesting of these many invasive, and subversive, root systems is the Polypus. According to the OED, "polypus" is not only a species of tentacled marine life, but has been a common term for tumours, particularly the rhinal variety, since the fourteenth century. By the eighteenth century, it was also being applied to tumours of the heart and of the uterus. It is the latter meaning of "polypus" that resonates in *Jerusalem*. The Polypus is not represented simply as a monster, but as an invasive monster that is, at one point, explicitly identified with uterine cancer. It is also implicitly associated with tumours through its identification with the growing roots of trees and other images of creeping invasion. The Polypus thus not only refers to a member of a species that can be described as "'colonial' organisms of individuals" (Damon 332) and so can operate as a figure for social collectives (Damon 332-333). It is a persistent trope for representing the propagation of ideologies to which Blake objects as destructively colonizing in unexamined contrast to the constructive colonization of Blake's own religious and political vision. The Polypus of each chapter is explicitly identified with that quality which Blake's corresponding preface establishes as the error of the group under scrutiny--an error that forestalls the establishment of Blake's own "harmony." The Polypus marks the invading paradigm that corrupts the group from the ideal which Blake's text imagines in the post-apocalyptic moment of his own ideology's successful colonization--or, from another perspective, entangles the group in an otherness, an unassimilable hybridity, that halts the colonizing momentum of that ideal.

In Chapter Three of *Jerusalem*, for instance, Blake addresses "the Deists," contending,

> Those who Martyr others or who cause War are Deists, but never can be Forgivers of Sin. The Glory of Christianity is, To Conquer by Forgiveness. All the Destruction therefore, in Christian Europe has arisen from Deism, which is Natural Religion. (*J* 52).

It is the Deists who "Arose with War," "forgd the Law into a Sword,"

and turned "Grecian Mocks & Roman Sword / Against this image of his Lord" (*J* 52.8, 52.19, 52.23-24). Blake persistently identifies Rome and Greece with military imperialism in contemporary works, from *Milton* to *The Laocoön* and "On Virgil." Blake thus associates the Deists with violent conquest, imperialism, and rationalism--and, in Chapter Three, the Polypus is represented in similar terms. It is insistently identified with images of violent colonization:

> the Great Polypus of Generation covered the Earth
> In Verulam the Polypus's Head, winding around his bulk
> Thro Rochester, and Chichester, & Exeter & Salisbury,
> To Bristol: & his Heart beat strong on Salisbury Plain
> Shooting out Fibres around the Earth, thro Gaul & Italy
> And Greece, & along the Sea of Rephaim into Judea
> To Sodom & Gomorrah: thence to India, China & Japan. (*J* 67.34-40)

> O Double God of Generation
> The Heavens are cut like a mantle around from the Cliffs of Albion
> Across Europe; across Africa; in howlings & deadly War
> A sheet & veil & curtain of blood is let down from Heaven
> Across the hills of Ephraim . . .
> He sees the Twelve Daughters naked upon the Twelve Stones
> Themselves condensing to rocks & into the Ribs of a Man
> Lo they shoot forth in tender Nerves across Europe & Asia.
> (*J* 68.18-22, 68.24-25)

Colonizing root systems spread outward from England to Africa and Asia, through the Polypus' tentacles, the Daughters' nerves, or the woven threads of a mantle. While the nonconsensual pregnancies of the female of *Europe*'s Preludium produces tyrannical books, the "infernal bondage" (*J* 69.9) of the Warriors' culture produces a colonizing cancer that propagates the philosophies of the Deists:

> Then all the Males combind into One Male & every one
> Became a ravening eating Cancer growing in the Female
> A Polypus of Roots of Reasoning Doubt Despair & Death
> Going forth & returning from Albions Rocks to Canaan:
> Devouring Jerusalem from every Nation of the Earth.

Envying stood the enormous Form at variance with Itself
In all its Members.[17] (*J* 69.1-7)

The Polypus is a compelling figure for hybridity. "[A]t variance with Itself" (*J* 69.6), it is devouring, parasitical, and invasive, as well as colonizing. It is that which corrupts the political body but will leave it in its prior state of health once excised.

In Chapter One, "To the Public," or perhaps, "To the [English] Public," the Polypus is identified with nationalism and appears in a series of plates that return over and over again to issues of nationalism and exile. After an extensive geographical and architectural description of the City of Golgonooza (*J* 12.45-14.34), Blake turns from that "museum in which Blake shores eternal forms against the ruins of time" (Ferber, *Social Vision of William Blake* 197) to "Hampstead Highgate Finchley Hendon Muswell hill" (*J* 16.1), moving from the Platonist ideal to a lapsarian particular of that ideal. The intervening passage plots the fibrous strangulation of the Polypus and polypus-like entities that are structurally similar but ethically opposite to the "Fibres of love from man to man thro Albions pleasant land" (*J* 4.8) that will spread after the renovation. The Polypus is the basis for the topography of the fallen, divided world mapped in the lines that follow its appearance, marking the transformation of the abstract landscape from Golgonooza to its fallen British iteration. The first reference to the Polypus envisages another colonization of the globe, again imaged in terms of rooting and the mandrake-like soldier "Skofeld":

And Hand & Hyle rooted into Jerusalem by a fibre
Of strong revenge & Skofeld Vegetated by Reubens Gate
In every Nation of the Earth till the Twelve Sons of Albion
Enrooted into every Nation: a mighty Polypus growing
From Albion over the whole earth. (*J* 15.1-5)

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[17]While Damrosch suggests that "in a horrible image in *Jerusalem* the growing fetus is likened to a spreading malignancy" (204), I would read this passage as a reference to uterine cancer taking the place of a fetus in a gothic parody of procreative propagation that has certain continuities with issues discussed in Chapter Four.

A few lines later, such serpentine entanglements are identified with other texts available "To the Public":

> Bacon & Newton sheathd in dismal steel, their terrors hang
> Like iron scourges over Albion, Reasonings like vast Serpents
> Infold around my limbs, bruising my minute articulations
> I turn my eyes to the Schools & Universities of Europe
> And there behold the Loom of Locke whose Woof rages dire
> Washd by the Water-Wheels of Newton. black the cloth
> In heavy wreathes folds over every Nation; cruel Works
> Of many Wheels I view, wheel without wheel, with cogs tyrannic
> Moving by compulsion each other. (*J* 15.11-19)

Beginning with what could be a description of *The Laocoön*, surrounded as the encircled figures are with Blake's own "minute articulations," the passage ends with the iteration of an image from *Milton*, where "cogs are formd in a wheel to turn the cogs of the adverse wheel" (*M* 27.10) in the Printing-Press of Los. To drive home the point, Blake ends the passage with an anticipation of the time that Los will begin "cutting the Fibres from Albions hills / That Albions sons may roll apart over the Nations" (*J* 15.23-24).

In Chapter One, the Polypus is thus implicated in limitations that are complicit in the production of the national divisions that are enthusiastically erased in Chapter Four as Jerusalem "overspread[s] all Nations" (*J* 97.2), so that "the Reader will be with [the author], wholly One in Jesus" (*J* 3) and "Heaven, Earth & Hell, henceforth shall live in harmony" (*J* 3.10). Interconnections and harmonies are valorized in the first preface, "To the Public": from Blake's praise of "those with whom to be connected, is to be [*blessed*]", the "consolidated" poem, and the religious Ancients who were "absorb'd in their Gods," to his condemnation of "the modern bondage of Rhyming," the poet represents the erasure of constraints as a union with a larger collective rather than simple liberty or engagement with the Imagination as he had so often before. The Polypus intervenes in this uninterrupted collectivity, marking the nations through its fibrous,

invasive roots, guided by "strong revenge" (*J* 15.2) and anticipating the entwining texts of the rationalists and the imposed cartography of the following lines in which the gates, counties, and points of Britain and Ireland are "fixd down" (*J* 16.28), "fixing" (*J* 16.31), and "divided" (*J* 16.43; 16.51; 16.52).

Later in Chapter One, the Polypus reappears, again in connection with violence, devouring imperialism, boundaries, and the nation, as "Building Castles in desolated places, and strong Fortifications. / Soon Hand mightily devour'd & absorb'd Albions Twelve Sons. / Out from his bosom a mighty Polypus, vegetating in darkness" (*J* 18.38-40). In the fractured syntax of the passage, moving "forth from [a] bosom" (*J* 18.42) or absorbing into the bosom through eating ("devour'd and absorb'd") becomes part of a chain of unclosed repetitions, "Like Wheels from a great Wheel reflected in the Deep" (*J* 18.43), that mark the violation of the closed boundary of personal territory (the body)--the first stage of invasion. The Polypus is revealed as a figure for the agents of a war to conquer rather than retain territory: "Hyle & Coban were his two chosen ones, for Emissaries / In War: forth from his bosom they went & return'd" (*J* 18.41-42), "His Children exil'd from his breast pass to and fro" (*J* 19.1). The conquerors are, of necessity, in exile from the place proper to them. In the ensuing lines, the Polypus-invaded landscape takes on the features of the Polypus, especially poison, hate, devouring, disease and any "Form at variance with Itself" (*J* 69.6). All of it is traced to the same source as the Polypus, the bosom of Hand:

> from within his witherd breast grown narrow with his woes,
> The corn is turn'd to thistles & the apples into poison:
> The birds of song to murderous crows . . .
> And self-exiled from the face of light . . . he wanders up and down. (*J* 19.9-11, 19.12-13)
>
> All his Affections now appear withoutside: all his Sons . . . each Double-form'd . . .
> Raging against their Human natures, ravning to gormandize
> The Human majesty and beauty of the Twentyfour.
> Condensing them into solid rocks with cruelty and

abhorrence

Suspition & revenge, & the seven diseases of the Soul. (*J* 19.17, 19.20, 19.23-26)

This image of violence spreading outward is countered by a positive iteration located at the apocalyptic endpoints, as Jerusalem describes how she "redounded from Albions bosom," laments "then was a time of love: O why is it passed away" (*J* 20.38, 20.41) and begs Albion not to "number every little fibre of [her] Soul" (*J* 22.20). When Albion finally "br[eaks] silence" (*J* 20.42) to speak to Jerusalem, he locates himself in the Polypus-like web of poison, divided against himself and diseased:

> The disease of Shame covers me from head to feet: I have no hope
> Every boil upon my body is a separate & deadly Sin.
> Doubt first assaild me, then Shame took possession of me
> Shame divides Families. Shame hath divided Albion in sunder!
> First fled my Sons, & then my Daughters, then my Wild Animations
> My Cattle next, last ev'n the Dog of my Gate . . . drivn forth by my disease. (*J* 21.3-8, 21.10)

In the following lines, Albion blames words for this destruction, lamenting, "What have I said? What have I done? O all-powerful Human Words! / You recoil back upon me in the blood of the Lamb" (*J* 24.1-2), as well as the education that he has offered "I have taught my children sacrifices of cruelty" (*J* 23.17); "I have educated you in the crucifying cruelties of Demonstration" (*J* 24.55). In the closing lines of Chapter One, the features of the Polypus reappear in the lament for the loss of Jerusalem, for a past in which "In the Exchanges of London every Nation walkd / And London walkd in every Nation mutual in love & harmony / Albion coverd the whole Earth, England encompassd the Nations" (*J* 24.42-44). The imposition of national boundaries is again figured as a wounding that is associated with revenge (*J* 15.2; 19.26), planting or rooting, and the serpentine:

> Why did you take Vengeance O ye Sons of the mighty Albion?
> Planting these Oaken Groves: Erecting these Dragon Temples

> Injury the Lord heals but Vengeance cannot be healed . . .
> Vengeance is the destroyer of Grace & Repentance in the
> bosom
> Of the Injurer in which the Divine Lamb is cruelly slain.[18]
> (*J* 25.3-5, 25.10-11)

This figuring of war, regional boundaries, nationalism, and colonization as a kind of invasive Polypus protects the possibility of the survival of an uncorrupted identity. The vision of a past Jerusalem can be resurrected in the present if that Polypus can only be excised, and the wounds it created healed through apocalyptic transformation like that which appears at the end of *Milton*--"Descend O Lamb of God & take away the imputation of Sin" (*J* 25.12). Yet again, renewal is represented as the "casting off" of that which is not proper to the (healthy) body.

In Chapter Three, addressed "To the Jews," the correspondence between Preface, Polypus, and text is more overt in one of Blake's most extended elaborations of the vital/viral paradigm. Texts are emphasized throughout, even to the narrator asserting, "Record the terrible wonder . . . Shudder not, but Write, & the hand of God will assist you! / Therefore I write Albions last words" (*J* 47.14, 47.17-18). In such remarks, Blake emphasizes the textuality of the narrative in a way that he does not in other chapters, as the religion of the book, writing, and disease intersect in his condemnation of Old Testament "Law." In the Polypus's only explicit appearance in Chapter Three, Blake writes, "O Polypus of Death O Spectre over Europe and Asia / Withering the Human Form by Laws of Sacrifice for Sin" (*J* 49.24-25). This apostrophe precisely echoes the prefatory verse:

> [Satan] witherd up sweet Zions Hill,
> From every Nation of the Earth:
> He witherd up Jerusalems Gates,

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[18]I am, of course, associating the dragon with the serpent, not only because both are reptilian and etymologically linked through the archaism, "wyrm" or "worm," but also because of an earlier passage in *Europe* where the druidic "temple" is descriped as serpentine (*Eur* 10.21).

And in a dark Land gave her birth.
He witherd up the Human Form,
By laws of sacrifice for sin. (*J* 27.49-54)

But the Polypus is also implicit in the "deadly Tree" of the chapter's opening lines, repeating the images of enrooting, poison, and limitation found in other chapters' representations of the Polypus:

A deadly Tree, he nam'd it Moral Virture, and the Law
Of God who dwells in Chaos hidden from the human sight.
The Tree spread over him its cold shadows, (Albion groand)
They bent down, they felt the earth and again enrooting
Shot into many a Tree! and endless labyrinth of woe! (*J* 28.15-19)

Such labyrinthine twinings are then identified with writing:

I am your Rational Power O Albion & that Human Form
You call Divine, is but a Worm seventy inches long
That creeps forth in a night & is dried in the morning sun
In fortuitous concourse of memorys accumulated & lost
It plows the Earth in its own conceit, it overwhelms the Hills
Beneath its winding labyrinths . . .
And shall Albions Cities remain when I pass over them
With my deluge of forgotten remembrances over the tablet.
(*J* 29.5-10, 29.15-16)

While the inscription of memories by the "Human Form" is figured as plowing and so recalls the traditional "conceit" of writing as plowing, so closely connected to the vital paradigm in Hugh Latimer's *Sermon on the Ploughers*,[19] it appears here in a pejorative, violent

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[19]In his famous *Sermon on the Plougers* (1549), Latimer writes that

Gods worde is a seede to be sowen in Goddes fielde, that is the faithful congregation, and the preacher is the sower. And it is in the gospel. *Exiuit qui seminat seminare semen suum.* He that soweth, the husbandman, the ploughman went furth to sowe his seede, so that a preacher is resembled to a ploughman. . . . For preachynge of the Gospel is one of Goddes plough workes, and the preacher is one of Goddes plough men. (12-13)

Derrida addresses this metaphor for writing in *Of Grammatology*: "It is

transformation of that metaphor. It recalls as well the ploughing of the globe into divided nations that recurs throughout *Milton* and *Jerusalem* and echoes the inscriptions of the "Spectrous Chaos," carved in cold tablets of stone. The conceit of plowed land as an inscription of mental contents is later extended to explicitly include "error," as the same "Hills" lament Albion's disease: "Albion is sick! said every Valley, every mournfull Hill / And every River: our brother Albion is sick to death," for "They have perswaded him of horrible falshoods! / They have sown errors over all his fruitful fields" (*J* 36.11-12, 36.19-20).[20] The Spectre is then physically identified with the Polypus, or "many footed,"

> Having a white Dot calld a Center from which it branches
> out
> A Circle in continual gyrations. this became a Heart
> From which sprang numerous branches varying their motions

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a matter of *writing by furrows*. The furrow is the line, as the ploughman traces it: the road--*via rupta*--broken by the ploughshare. The furrow of agriculture, we remind ourselves, opens nature to culture (cultivation)" (287).

[20]This is also the plate which, as Stephen Leo Carr has noted, visually develops a contrast that is made more explicit as Blake's revisions progress and is related to the vital/viral imagery I am tracing:

> In the last complete version of *Jerusalem* (copy F), Blake carefully revised the left margin of plate 36 [40], transforming it into a clearly delineated tree. . . . This monochrome plate offers a more definite representation of a tree than does the sole illuminated version (E). Yet both late revisions establish a similar thematic contrast with the scene in the right margin: its exuberant human activity and ripe grapes are now counterbalanced by a stark, almost leafless (lifeless?) tree. The newly formed tree also plays off numerous other marginal designs, especially in *Jerusalem* 34 [38], whose chainlike vegetation is echoed at the top of plate 36, and in *Jerusalem* 49, which depicts a similar desolate tree. (177)

A similar duality appears, as already noted, in *Europe* (see 117*n*).

> Producing many Heads three or seven or ten, & hands & feet
> Innumerable at the will of the unfortunate contemplator
> Who becomes his food[:] such is the way of the Devouring Power. (*J* 29.19-24)

I cite this description of the Spectre at length not only because it echoes the anatomy of the Polypus as well as its medical association with the heart (repeated in Chapter One where it is repeatedly rooted in the bosom, and in Blake's identification of it with "devouring"), but also because of this reference to "the unfortunate contemplator." It is in this chapter that "becoming what he beheld" becomes a chorus, and receives its only elaboration. In Blake's attempted rhetorical conversion of the Jews, the Polypus-like entity propagates the legislative constraints of the Old Testament and, as those who read it "become what they behold," consumes those exposed to it.

In Chapter Two, after condemning the "Laws" against "Sin," Blake writes, "they looked on one-another & became what they beheld," and then,

> all terrified fled: they became what they beheld.
> If Perceptive Organs vary: Objects of Perception seem to vary:
> If the Perceptive Organs close: their Objects seem to close also:
> Consider this O mortal Man! O worm of sixty winters said Los
> Consider Sexual Organization & hide thee in the dust. (*J* 30.50, 30.54-58)

Such "beholding" is repeatedly identified with disease:

> does Mercy endure Atonement?
> No! It is Moral Severity, & destroys Mercy in its Victim.
> So speaking, not yet infected with the Error & Illusion,
> Los shudder'd at beholding Albion, for his disease
> Arose upon him pale and ghastly. (*J* 35.25-36.2)
> Have you also caught the infection of Sin & stern Repentance?
> I see Disease arise upon you! (*J* 38.75-76)

"Strucken with Albions disease they become what they behold" (*J* 39.32):

"these Laws" "are death / To every energy of man" (*J* 31.11-12), and they spread virally from their inscription to the population. While the commandments of the Old Testament propagate virally, Christianity offers the vital half of the model--a vaccine that is structurally similar but medically antithetical to the disease which it destroys. Instead of a "deadly Tree" named "Moral Virtue" (*J* 28.15) and an Albion "perswaded" of "horrible falshoods" (*J* 36.19), a Bard "speak[s] the words of God / In mild perswasion: bringing leaves of the Tree of Life" (*J* 41.8-9). The Saviour addresses Albion,

> Displaying the Eternal Vision! the Divine Similitude!
> In loves and tears of brothers, sisters, sons, fathers, and
> friends
> Which if Man ceases to behold, he ceases to exist:
> Saying. Albion! . . .
> We live as One Man; for contracting our infinite senses
> We behold multitude; or expanding: we behold as one,
> As One Man all the Universal Family; and that One Man
> We call Jesus the Christ: and he in us, and we in him,
> Live in perfect harmony. (*J* 34.11-21)

Again, that word "harmony" erases difference, but in this case it is produced by beholding the "Eternal Vision," as the population again "becomes what it beholds," by regarding the Christian ideal as propounded by Blake--within the text as well as through it.

In the final chapter, hybridity is condemned to be erased by that vision. Just before the final crisis,

> Los terrified cries: trembling & weeping & howling!
> Beholding
> What do I see? The Briton Saxon Roman Norman amalgamating
> In my Furnaces into One Nation the English: & taking
> refuge
> In the Loins of Albion. The Canaanite united with the
> fugitive
> Hebrew, whom she divided into Twelve, & sold into Egypt
> Then scatterd the Egyptian & Hebrew to the four Winds!
> This sinful Nation Created in our Furnaces & Looms is
> Albion. (*J* 91.58-92.6)

Albion's death, "closed apart from all Nations" (*J* 94.14), and then his resurrection into "Friendship & Brotherhood" (*J* 96.16), facilitates the transcendence of these divisions: "Albion stood before Jesus in the Clouds / Of Heaven Fourfold among the Visions of God in Eternity / Awake! Awake Jerusalem! O lovely Emanation of Albion / Awake and overspread all Nations" (*J* 96.42-97.2). The production of this unity is represented in a passage that transmutes the features of the Polypus and its brethren into a divine version:

> in regenerations terrific or complacent varying
> According to the subject of discourse & every Word & Every Character
> Was Human according to the Expansion or Contraction, the Translucence or
> Opakeness of Nervous Fibres such was the variation of Time & Space
> Which vary according as the Organs of Perception vary & they walked
> To & fro in Eternity as One Man reflecting each in each & clearly seen
> And seeing: according to fitness & order. And I heard Jehovah speak
> Terrific from his Holy Place & saw the Words of the Mutual Covenant Divine. (*J* 28.34-41)

At the same time, the Polypus-like trees disappear: "Where is the Covenant of Priam, the Moral Virtues of the Heathen / Where is the Tree of Good & Evil that rooted beneath the cruel heel / Of Albions Spectre" (*J* 98.46-48).

Like Bhabha's colonial agents, Blake divides the population with which he is concerned into different genres which can then be controlled through means specific to their differences, and, like Lloyd's anxious nationalists, he condemns hybridity wherever he finds (and does not obviously produce) it--"Every Thing has its Vermin" (*J* 1). In *Jerusalem*, Blake goes beyond the apocalyptic moment to imagine what the post-apocalyptic future will hold and, because that future knows no religious or national divisions, the fall that precedes apocalyptic renewal is framed in precisely those terms. For Blake's

Christian, British utopia to prevail, the Jews and Deists must convert, and the Public and the Christians must acknowledge that Britishness is a product of national interminglings that can contain the global erasure of national differences as well as submit to Blake's definitions of a true public and a legitimate Christianity. As Barrell has shown, Blake's representations of "the Public" are, to a large extent, defined as Blake's ideal audience--"when the judgment of the audience is correct, it is a public" (*Political Theory of Painting* 254). In colonizing these cultural spaces, subsuming them in his artistic, religious and national rubric, Blake falls back on the mechanisms and rhetoric of the more usual imperialists, from the transformative power of texts and the administrative command of taxonomies to the propagandist force of an identification of the unacceptable with disease. By dividing *Jerusalem* into four prefaces and four chapters, with each section addressed to a different segment of the population--the Public, the Jews, the Deists, and the Christians--and then providing a prosaic and then more oblique poetic critique directed at persuading that group to submit to his general vision, Blake submits his readership to an administrative taxonomy that facilitates his management of differences that he would erase in plotting the return of a meta-national Jerusalem and the homogeneity that Blake's new acceptance of the term "harmony" implies.[21] At the same time, he characterizes the continuance of such differences as disease, infection, pestilence, cancerous growths, roots invading the earth, poison, intoxicating liquids, and pollution while locating his own text as the revitalizing twin of those destructive propagative mechanisms, different in its social effects but not in its mode of operation. In imagining a universal renovation, Blake "buys the smallpox" and becomes what he has so long beheld--the producer of "print" that "murder[s] by analyzing, that [he] / May take the aggregate."

We see here the forerunners of the twentieth-century cliché that the first step in a revolution is to seize the radio station. In each

[21]See Punter (201-202) and note 14, above.

of these works, published discourse bears with it, as a term of its publication, the possibility of sociopolitical change. Regardless of its truth value or prophetic authority, the circulated discourse affects the way in which its readers perceive the world around them. During the eighteenth century and Romantic period, the battlefield of political discourse shifted from Runnymede to any publicly-accessible domain. By "the witchcraft of a proclamation," popular opinion could be formed and transformed outside of the bounds of authority. The hegemony could no longer depend on treaties, deeds, legislation, and wealth to sustain its control, but needed to maintain its claim to authority by controlling public representations of itself and its areas of responsibility. And, with an increasingly literate, wealthy, and politicized populace, popular opinion was becoming very difficult to determine, or even manage, while the ability of conventional authority to sell ideology became compromised through its widely-disseminated association with the taint of Cowper's fountain and "the iron hand of Power" (*M* 25.5). Thus, while the government seized control over the publication of discourse--by censoring print, banning large meetings, expanding the definition treason to include utterances and establishing a network of spies to survey more private speech--its supporters infiltrated counter-hegemonic discourse by producing ballads of its own, distributing narratives in the voice of the disenfranchised, and printing cheap engravings of paintings that characterized those in power as heroic and self-sacrificing.[22] Blake's verse is part of this battle over representational control, and it employs the same weapons, including the vital/viral paradigm and the medical discourse which invests it with such power, as each side tries to purge the political body of matter that it characterizes as foreign or unhealthy in order to justify and sanctify its purgation. I shall close with a passage from one of Blake's more passionate deployments of the vital/viral

[22]By "narratives in the voice of the disenfranchised" I refer to such works as Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* and "Lame Jervas," both of which validate colonialism through what might be termed a "sub-altern narrator." Edgeworth's narrators sanction and praise the hegemony while decrying those who resist it. Regarding the use of cheap engravings as propaganda, see Colley (178-182).

paradigm:

> <First God Almighty comes with a Thump on the Head Then Jesus Christ comes with a balm to heal it>
> The Last Judgment is an Overwhelming of Bad Art & Science. . . . Some People flatter themselves that there will be No Last Judgment & . . . that Bad Art will be adopted & mixed with Good Art That Error or Experiment will make a Part of Truth. . . . I will not Flatter them Error is Created Truth is Eternal Error or Creation will be Burned Up & then & not till then Truth or Eternity will appear It is Burnt up the Moment Men cease to behold it I assert for My self that I do not behold the Outward Creation & that to me it is hindrance & not Action it is as the Dirt upon my feet *No part of Me.* (*VLJ* 565; my emphasis)

Ceci N'est Pas une Conclusion

In his essay, "The Law of Genre," Derrida writes,

> The remark of belonging [to a genre] need not pass through the consciousness of the author or the reader, although it often does so. It can also refute this consciousness or render the explicit 'mention' mendacious, false, inadequate or ironic according to all sorts of overdetermined figures. (230)

Like René Magritte's *The Two Mysteries* (1966), a painting in which a representation of a pipe is set next to a representation of a painting of a pipe with the caption, "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," generic markers can challenge the ease with which we taxonomize the field of literature. Regarding Magritte's visual challenge of the distinction between symbol and object, Douglas R. Hofstadter writes,

> Focusing on the inner painting, you get the message that symbols and pipes are different. Then your glance moves upward to the "real" pipe floating in the air--you perceive that it is real, while the other one is just a symbol. But that is of course totally wrong: both of them are on the same flat surface before your eyes. . . . The only way not to be sucked in is to see both pipes merely as colored smudges on a surface a few inches in front of your nose. Then, and only then, do you appreciate the full meaning of the written message, "Ceci n'est pas une pipe"--but ironically, at the very instant everything turns to smudges, the writing too turns to smudges. (701)

By painting the grain of the wood in its symbol of a floor, adjusting the lines of the floor's planks to create persepective, showing the nails in the easel on which the inner painting is mounted, Magritte cues the spectator that this is a realist painting while the composition of the piece, the conjunction of a pipe and a painting of a pipe, and the caption announces its fictionality. Discourse is traversed by generic cues that facilitate the classification of a work relative to other works and relative to the world in which it moves.

Reading is as entangled with the disciplinary-inspired taxonomy of the Dewey decimal system (non-fiction, fiction, poetry, biography, history, politics, aesthetics, sociology) as with the alphabet. Academic discourse is, in a sense, constituted within this generic imperative: sensitive to disciplinary markers, it focusses on those elements within a discipline that define it. In the study of English literature, narrative, authorial intent, representation, allusions, canonical placement, theme, and so forth govern academic discourse as the elements which define what is proper to the general object of study. But academic discourse also has its own generic imperatives.

The term "conclusion," for instance, conveys a sense of double closure, suggesting both the ending of a line and the essential thesis of an argument. It at once marks the ending of the form of the work and totalizes its content. The bibliography and the notes are relegated to the margins as "apparatus," peripheral to the narrative line of the argument. But such apparatus is anything but marginal. It defines and gives shape to that which it frames. The bibliography and notes mark the work as an academic study, showing compliance, if not obeisance, to the conventions of the genre and the paradigms of academic authority which it supports. Yes, they say, the author has read a lot of primary and secondary sources, can support assertions with reference to various works, even if it is not relevant to the main academic narrative, and has more to say than can be said in a focussed narrative line. Such marginalia are actually at the centre of any academic study, establishing both proof and copious knowledge, the cornerstones of academic authority. Moreover, the bibliography locates the work intertextually, marking off a region of textual space in which these readings of Blake's works take place, a kind of elaborate arrow with the message, "You are here." The notes, and the epigraphs, plot additional lines which anchor the main line of text to that space. The so-called academic apparatus marks the main narrative as not just any narrative, but as a thoroughly academic one that has obeyed the rules of academic discourse as well as engaged its constituent texts and is therefore recognizable within it. The limits of the academic discourse are, however, being nudged outward. Acknowledgements are no longer necessarily the dry enumerations of debts to academics, funding

sources, and family members, but now locate intellectual origins in pyjama parties and battles over domestic cleanliness with slovenly roommates.[1] The definition of academic debt, and authority, is incorporating the private sphere to a greater degree, as areas of academic inquiry do the same, acknowledging that academics, like their area of enquiry, are not necessarily limited to high culture (from canonical literature to the codes of professionalism), nor the normalizing paradigms that it supports. The selective lens by which the empirical ground is reduced to what is serious and important is being re-ground to expand the field of academic vision, as we learn to see ourselves differently through different academic theories.

Thus Roe, in his attempt to justify and modulate the New Historicist approach, claims that he has "grounded [his] critical readings of poetry in empirical historical research, in the belief that this remains an effective base from which to return the criticism of Romantic poetry to 'a human form'" (8). Before proceeding, he marks the "ground" of his study, anchoring his criticism by theoretical threads to the solid earth of "empirical historical research." I single out Roe because his language illustrates so well the authorizing strategy in which all academic studies are implicated. In "The Archetypes of Literature," Frye took science as his model for the ground of literary study, constructing the literary field as an empirical one that is governed by a discernible order. Although the scientific approach continues, for instance, in psychoanalytic readings, contemporary literary criticism is increasingly taking history as its (shifting) ground, locating texts not only within an untotalizable history but defining them *as* historical artifacts, breaking down the disciplinary boundary between the humanities and the social sciences--and between high and low culture. Deconstruction was so threatening to the traditional academy precisely because it questioned the stability, and even the validity, of an empirical ground. It separated the critic from the signified by an unscalable

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[1]I refer to the Preface to ***Nationalisms and Sexualities*** by Andrew Parker et al. and the Acknowledgements by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White in ***The Politics and Poetics of Transgression.***

wall of signifiers and divided the students of the humanities from the certainty, and therefore validity, that our materialist society grants to the hard sciences. In a larger academy, and society, in which the empirical is the foundation of all authority and truth claims, such a proposition is profoundly subversive, reifying the disregard for such studies most colloquially expressed in the derogatory epithet, "artsy," a term which carries with it all of the pedestrian empiricist's contempt for that which cannot be codified, demonstrated, or classified by well-regulated empirical methods. Genre, rather than fact, is exposed as the Occam's Razor by which literary evaluations are made; instead of an empirical ground, there is an ideal sonnet, rules of academic debate, criteria for evidence, conventions of citation, punishments for plagiarism, and various other abstracted, fixed codes with which to evaluate the literary or critical artifact.

My goal here is not to deconstruct the academic conclusion, to fatuously mimic Derrida's famous dictum, "This (therefore) will not have been a book" ("Outwork, prefacing" 3), but to situate the genre of academic literary discourse within the structure in which it is codified, to note the ideological investments of its form. Like a Mobius strip, these pages seek to turn the methodology of the thesis back in upon itself while inverting the focus from the object of the academic gaze to the constitution of the seeing subject. Not to close it, but to glance for a moment at its other, less familiar, though not unknown, face. For, in the preceding pages which I now conclude, I have had to pay tribute to the god of closure, the line: I have used "regular type, lines that read from left to right and from the top of the page to the bottom, pages that are read from the front of the book to the back, partitioned illustrations, if any, [and] page numbers along an upper or lower edge" (35), used parenthetical citations to establish an authorizing genealogy of particular words and ideas, and sought to include the reader in the view that this text propagates. But I have also infected this literary discourse with references to unliterary texts, such as a murderer's lecture to his little brother, the hard sciences and the low science fiction classic, Doctor Who (98), as well as established, at the start, an overlapping partitional structure, a "dissertation [that] falls into two parts, and three"

(31). It is to such disruptions in the polemical line, to such hybridities in the forms of academic discourse, that many of Derrida's essays draw attention, from parallel texts such as "Tympan" to *Limited Inc*, and they are here noted not because they are deployed in this dissertation in new ways, but to point out that the same formal battles that Blake fought are still being played out in the academy whose members seek to describe his work. Moreover, simply exposing the investments of form has a certain utility, even when those forms, like that of the academic essay, are largely inescapable. They are inescapable precisely to the extent that the values that inform them are inescapable, and evaluating the commensurability of value and form is one way in which we can actively engage culture rather than simply be passively, and blindly, marked by it. There is, as Blake's texts suggest, a world of difference between citing sources out of fear of retribution and doing so out of respect for the people whose labour produced that information. And there is also a world of difference between unselfconsciously overquoting and Derrida's overquoting of John R. Searle in *Limited Inc* to subvert Searle's (to Derrida, unacademic) use of copyright. Information does not circulate in a neutral form and, while its formal effects are, because of the complexity of the signifying field, unplottable, it is possible to begin the task of investigating them, and evaluating their relevance.

Steven Goldsmith, after paying close attention to the politics of some of Blake's "discursive practices," outlines the relation between the academic and the political in a way that is worth quoting at length:

> The countless radical discursive strategies ingeniously and compellingly championed since the late 1960s--from différance to "l'écriture feminine" to signifyin', just to name a few--all represent significant political challenges to some aspect of cultural domination, but at their outer limits they may simultaneously affirm and deepen the democratic context that was compatible with those forms of domination in the first place. Both instances of directly political criticism--the critique of dominant discourses and the celebration of marginalized discourses--extend into

> the realm of cultural interpretation the basic activities described by Mill's "talking function" of representative government: one throws the light of publicity on abusive acts of power, the other makes culture a committee of grievances, a congress of opinions, where different voices can advance different interests. . . . Criticism has indeed become more political and has achieved tangible political objectives (such as canon reformation); whether it has become more radical can only be measured by the extent to which the freedom in language promoted by politics gets translated into the somewhat different medium of social relations. (206-207)

The 1960's, like the 1790's, saw challenges to prevailing cultural paradigms that had become very comfortable and familiar, but I would revise Goldsmith's narrative slightly by replacing its informing oppositions--dominant/marginal, homogeneous/heterogeneous, political abuses/political objectives--with a hybrid construction that leaves one element entangled in its opposite. Representation offers a powerful vehicle for counter-hegemonic discourse precisely because it is used to such great effect by the hegemony: the establishment makes a spectacle of its judicial system's successes, and its opponents make a spectacle of its failures; the patriarchy makes a celebratory spectacle of women who conform to its paradigms and represent as tragic the lives of those who do not, while its opponents reverse those associations. Both sides agree on the power of culturally-familiar and well-defined genres as guides to interpretation, both sides seek to increase their power by increasing the volume of circulating representations that support their views, and both fight each other on those terms. The counter-hegemony differs with the hegemony on essential ideological points, but not in its sense of how culture *works* to unite the population behind ideology, to interpellate individuals into a particular communal view. The 1960's in the West constitute as much a recognition of the power of mass media--of corporate rock, television, radio, publishing, and large assemblies--that comes out of the first television decade, the 1950's, as a rebellion against the ideas that 1950's television programming propagated. The medium may not be the message, but it does shape it in

ways that render even the most radical ideas always already hybrid, shuffling around a couple of gene sequences in a cultural element so that it becomes strange, but never entirely alien. By the same imperative to be different, but not very, pyjama parties thus show up in the marginal space of acknowledgments though they are not, yet, showing up in the introductions to chapters. Popular and private culture are gradually becoming acceptable objects of academic disciplines that have historically focussed on high culture, and with their inclusion the terms of academic propriety are also becoming more heterogeneous. One can now not only discuss the carnivalesque, but enact it--at least within a carefully contained space.

Which brings me back to the beginning of the beginning: the strangeness of Blake. Rather than citing his debts to literary practices, artistic theories, political events, religious beliefs, or any other communal experience, or even his participation in the cultural myth of a prophet or bard, of the poet who understands "humanity" better than its more prosaic members, I will simply note that his work is read. Blake would not be comprehensible at all if he were not speaking a familiar language and in recognizable terms. We might not know who Enitharmon is, but Blake's punctuation, use of pronouns, and syntax make it clear that "Enitharmon" is a proper noun that designates a female character. We might not know what "Golgonooza" is, but then "Lilliput" is not self-evident either. Blake makes fewer concessions than most to the reader in constituting his fictional worlds, but he still constructs them along recognizable lines: parents and children, tyrants and subjects, wars and arguments, education and inspiration, as well as the occasional nudge and a wink, are all familiar elements that are immediately accessible. Blake's defamiliarizing strategies are no different: inverting associations so that the devil becomes a hero, the author does not control his text, and change appears non-linear, revising historical and biographical narratives from a different ideological perspective, and mixing disparate discourses in new ways, Blake limits the points at which defamiliarization operates and ensures that his defamiliarizing strategies are recognizable as such. He pushes the boundaries of the

familiar, but not very far and not in a way that was particularly new. But he still pushed them further and harder than many of his canonized contemporaries.

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