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WILLIAM BLAKE'S CRITICISM OF THE ENGLISH POETS.

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA, PH.D., 1979

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

WILLIAM BLAKE'S CRITICISM OF THE ENGLISH POETS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

ORPHIA JANE ALLEN

Norman, Oklahoma

1979

WILLIAM BLAKE'S CRITICISM OF THE ENGLISH POETS

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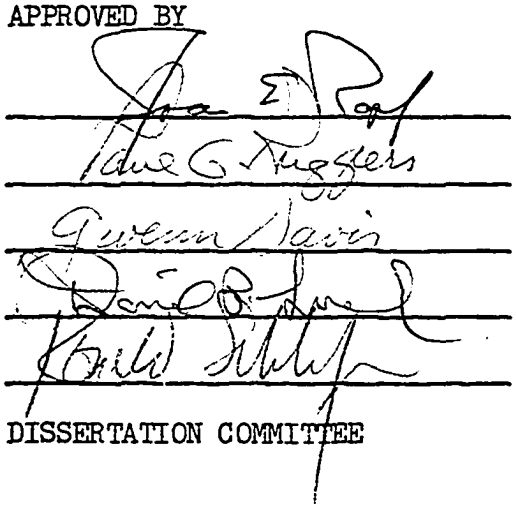

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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WILLIAM BLAKE'S CRITICISM OF THE ENGLISH POETS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> I rest not from my great task!
> To open the Eternal worlds, to open the immortal Eyes
> Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity
> Ever expanding in the Bosom of God. the Human Imagination
> (Jerusalem 5:17-20)[1]

That William Blake's purpose in opening the "Eternal worlds" extends beyond his work as poet, painter, and prophet to his work as literary critic has long been recognized. Charles Lamb was cognizant of Blake's critical acuity in 1824 when he wrote of Blake's "most spirited criticism on Chaucer."[2] Also aware of Blake's inclination as a critic was Alexander Gilchrist who wrote that Blake's designs to Blair's The Grave "form a strangely spiritual commentary" on Blair's

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from Blake's writings are from David V. Erdman's edition, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake (1965; rpt. with rev. New York: Doubleday, 1970).

[2] Letter to Bernard Barton, May 15, 1824, The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb, ed. E. V. Lucas, VII (London: Methuen, 1905), 643.

"somewhat matter-of-fact homily."[3] Among more recent critics who have expressed an awareness of Blake's critical propensity are Northrop Frye and Joseph Wittreich. Northrop Frye has noted that Blake's "chief interest in writing passes from creation to criticism."[4] And Joseph Wittreich remarks on the variety of Blake's "canon of criticism," a canon that includes both "written commentaries" and "illustrations to an array of poets."[5]

Blake's canon of criticism is, in fact, extensive and varied. It extends from his one document of prose criticism on a specific writer, that portion of A Descriptive Catalogue which comments on his own illustration of Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims and on Chaucer's work; to a series of critical comments in his letters, in his Notebook, and in the margins of the work of other writers; to his own poetic and prophetic works, notably Milton, The Book of Thel, and The Ghost of Abel; and to the hundreds of illustrations he did for the works of others, including the Bible, Dante, Virgil, and a large number of English writers of prose and poetry.

It is the purpose of this study to review Blake's criticism of the English poets in order to show that the unifying element of his

[3] Life of William Blake, I (London, 1880; rpt. Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973), 269.

[4] Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake (1947; rpt. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 414.

[5] Angel of Apocalypse: Blake's Idea of Milton (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1975), p. 76.

criticism is his consistent concern with measuring the work of other writers against his own archetypal myth. This myth is largely concerned with the creative function--including the rational and emotional, sensory and intuitive faculties--of the human mind. This is not to say that Blake's archetypal criticism extends only to the work of the English poets, but the study must have boundaries. Hence I am omitting his criticism of English prose writers, an area fertile for investigation; his criticism of the non-English writers, including the Classics; and that important body of his work, his illustrations to the Bible. Furthermore, in the interest of unity and organization, I am dealing with the topic of Blake's criticism of the English poets, for the most part, in terms of the poets' general chronology, in spite of my awareness that this does not represent the order in which Blake approached their work. Nevertheless, I feel justified in this approach because of Blake's general consistency in his own system.[6]

Blake's criticism of Chaucer, which largely consists of an illustration of the Canterbury pilgrims executed between 1806 and 1809 and his short descriptive commentary on the illustration in the descriptive catalogue for his 1809 exhibition, has received little extended critical attention. Northrop Frye has noted Blake's "masterly

[6] Northrop Frye, in Fearful Symmetry (p. 13), writes: "His principles he held with bulldog tenacity all his life. The lyrics of his adolescence, the prophecies of his middle period, the comments which blister the margins of books he read on a sickbed at seventy, are almost identical in outlook."

analysis" of the Canterbury Tales,[7] and S. Foster Damon devotes a full page of his Dictionary to a discussion of Blake's opinion of Chaucer and his delineation of the pilgrims.[8] In addition, two significant monographs exist, one written by Karl Kiralis in 1969 and one by Warren Stevenson in 1977.[9] Karl Kiralis' perceptive and thought-provoking article discusses Blake's criticism of Chaucer with emphasis on the significance of Blake's placement of the pilgrims in the illustration. Kiralis introduces the question of the religious differences of Blake and Chaucer--Blake's belief in an internal God as opposed to Chaucer's more orthodox religious belief--and bequeaths "his contradictory views as a scholar hoping to help the next pilgrim on the topic."[10] The challenge is met by Warren Stevenson who, in his detailed observations on the illustration, discusses the subtly ironic rendering of the pilgrims in such a way as to express Blake's "keen sense of paradox."[11] Following Kiralis and Stevenson, I venture another step on the

[7] Fearful Symmetry, p. 318.

[8] A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake (Providence: Brown Univ. Press, 1965).

[9] Karl Kiralis, "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," Blake Studies, 1 (1969), 139-90; and Warren Stevenson, "Interpreting Blake's Canterbury Pilgrims," Colby Library Quarterly, 13 (1977), 115-26.

[10] "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," p. 156.

[11] "Interpreting Blake's Canterbury Pilgrims, p. 123.

pilgrimage to show that Blake as critic was measuring the characters of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales against his own archetypal myth, and that though their philosophies may at first appear in conflict, a closer study of their work reveals an underlying and reconciling irony.

Blake's criticism of the Renaissance poets deals almost exclusively with Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. Here, because an explanation of Blake's treatment of Shakespeare's fairies seems to clarify some aspects of his criticism of Spenser, I have deviated from the poets' chronology and treated Shakespeare prior to Spenser.

Blake's criticism of Shakespeare consists in a series of verbal echoes, allusions, and comments and in some twenty-eight illustrations which can be linked either with Shakespeare himself or with various of the plays. In addition to the page Damon devotes to Blake's criticism of Shakespeare in A Blake Dictionary, I have found "Blake's Shakespeare" by W. Moelwyn Merchant to be helpful.[12] Merchant identifies the relationship between various illustrations and the plays, but where he notes the lack of unity, of "single direction or technical form in Blake's works which are derived from Shakespeare,"[13] I have tried to show that a unifying note can be found in that a number of the Shakespeare illustrations reveal Blake's recognition of the

[12] The Visionary Hand: Essays for the Study of Blake's Art and Aesthetics, ed. Robert N. Essick (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1973), pp. 232-52; reprinted from Apollo, n.s. 79 (1964), 318-24.

[13] "Blake's Shakespeare," p. 235.

archetypal function of Shakespeare's fairies. The fairies Blake interpreted as representative of psychological states, and his frequent use of fairies and related motifs in the illustrations indicates that, though he may have objected to Shakespeare's concern with war in the history plays--revealed in his verbal linking of Homer and Shakespeare--he appreciated Shakespeare, nevertheless, as a master of character portrayal.

Not unrelated to Blake's appreciation of the archetypal significance of fairies and their relationship to character portrayal in Chaucer and Shakespeare was his appreciation of the allegory of Spenser's Faerie Queene. But Blake's criticism of Spenser, consisting mostly in his portraits of Spenser--Design 12 to Gray's "The Bard" and the Head of Spenser executed for Hayley--and his large tempera The Characters in Spenser's Faerie Queene, is double-edged. On the one hand, Blake sees Spenser's shortcomings, which include the repressive aspects of his close association with the monarchy, but more importantly he recognizes in Spenser glimpses of his own fourfold archetypal vision. Northrop Frye and Harold Bloom have both recognized this affinity between Blake and Spenser.[14] In addition, S. Foster Damon devotes two pages in his Dictionary to Blake's criticism of Spenser and to describing and identifying the characters of the large Faerie Queene

[14] Frye, Fearful Symmetry, pp. 142-43; Bloom, The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 23-24.

illustration. This illustration, which has been dated by Sir Geoffrey Keynes as ca. 1815 and by Martin Butlin and John Grant as ca. 1825,[15] has been the subject of an intensive study by John Grant and Robert Brown, who have attempted to identify its every character and motif, at the same time interjecting their own valuable interpretations in key areas. Their article, "Blake's Vision of Spenser's Faerie Queene: A Report and an Anatomy," and Damon's analysis have provided the foundation for my further speculation about the significance of the painting as an indication of Blake's idea of Spenser.

Little critical commentary is available on Blake's criticism of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Spenser, but the commentary on Blake and Milton is abundant. This criticism seems to follow two general avenues of thought--one, that Blake thought Milton's vision limited and sought to revise or expand it;[16] the other, that though Blake saw some fault

[15] John E. Grant and Robert E. Brown, "Blake's Vision of Spenser's Faerie Queene: A Report and an Anatomy," Blake Newsletter, 8 (Winter 1974-75), 56.

[16] See, for example, Jean H. Hagstrum, William Blake: Poet and Painter: An Introduction to the Illuminated Verse (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 123-[illegible]; S. Foster Damon, "Blake and Milton," The Divine Vision: Studies in the Poetry and Art of William Blake, ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto (New York: Haskell House, 1968), pp. 89-96; Harold Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument (1963; rpt. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1970), p. 80; Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p. 346; Irene Tayler, Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), p. 10; Ben Jones, "Blake on Gray: Outlines of Recognition," Fearful Joy: Papers from the Thomas Gray Bicentenary Conference at Carleton University, ed. James Downey and Ben Jones (London: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1974), p. 129; and W. J. T. Mitchell, Blake's Composite Art: A Study of the Illuminated Poetry (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 114-21.

in Milton's early work, he grew to appreciate the later Milton as a true poet-prophet and that it was his intention to celebrate or apotheosize Milton as such.[17] The ample critical response to Blake's idea of Milton is not surprising in view of Milton's extensive influence on Blake's work. Whether in correction or in celebration, Blake's criticism of Milton extends throughout every period and facet of his own career. Milton's influence is evident in the Poetical Sketches. The epic-prophecy Milton is an overt criticism of the great poet. And Blake's criticism is further evident in his illustrations and portraits of Milton, in his numerous illustrations to many of Milton's works, in his explicit critique of Milton in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, and in the parallels that can be drawn between almost every major work of Blake's and a corresponding work of Milton's. What becomes clearly evident from a review of Blake's criticism of Milton is that it focuses on two fundamental archetypes inherent in the vision of both poets: the archetype of the Fall and the archetype of Atonement. With regard to the Fall, Blake seems either to have seriously disagreed with Milton's concept or at least to have seen it as needing clarification because it was concealed by his narrative technique and religious orthodoxy. But it is evident from Blake's illustrations to Paradise

[17] See Joseph Wittreich's Angel of Apocalypse, passim, but particularly pp. 39-43; and Stephen Behrendt's "Bright Pilgrimage: William Blake's Designs for L'Allegro and Il Penseroso," Milton Studies, VIII, ed. James D. Simmonds (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), 123-47.

Regained that he came to see that Milton's concept of Atonement was in harmony with his own, which rejected the crucifixion concept in favor of a less avenging mode that focused on love and forgiveness and at-one-ment with the God within.

Blake's critical attitude toward the eighteenth century was generally one of reaction. He reacted against the Deism and Neoclassicism of Dryden, Pope, and Johnson. And although he felt an affinity with the primitivism of Macpherson and Chatterton, he objected to the morbid fascination with death displayed by the graveyard poets Young, Gray, and Blair.

Again, I have violated the poets' chronology. I have treated first the neoclassical poets and then the poets of the cult of sensibility. This meant that Goldsmith and Johnson, whom Blake mentions briefly, had to be grouped with Dryden and Pope and before them since the emphasis of Blake's criticism falls more heavily on Dryden and Pope. Similarly, I have tried to treat the poets of the cult of sensibility in the order of Blake's critical emphasis. The graveyard poets, who attracted more critical attention, I have placed last and in the order in which Blake seems to have illustrated their poems.

Blake's criticism of Edward Young included some 537 illustrations of Night Thoughts. Not all of the illustrations were published during Blake's lifetime, but those that were have been edited by Robert Essick and Jenijoy La Belle in Night Thoughts or the Complaint and the

Consolation.[18] The introduction and commentary to this text have been valuable to this study as has been Sir Geoffrey Keynes's introductory essay and reproduction of thirty-five of the illustrations in his Illustrations to Young's Night Thoughts Done in Water-Colour by William Blake.[19] In addition, I have relied on John Grant's identification of the figures in some of the designs in his article "Envisioning the First Night Thoughts,"[20] and Thomas Helmstadter's "Blake and the Age of Reason: Spectres in the Night Thoughts" has provided insight into Blake's reaction to Young's religion of reason.[21] With the help of Essick and La Belle, Keynes, Grant, Helmstadter, and others, I have attempted to show that Blake's intention was to rescue Young's poem from the obscuring clouds of religious orthodoxy and preoccupation with the morbid aspects of death.

Blake's criticism of Gray was similar to his criticism of Young. Again, I have tried to show that Blake intended, in the 116 designs he executed to illustrate thirteen of Gray's poems, to revise

[18] Night Thoughts or the Complaint and the Consolation, Illustrated by William Blake, Text by Edward Young (New York: Dover, 1975).

[19] Illustrations to Young's Night Thoughts Done in Water-Colour by William Blake (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927).

[20] "Envisioning the First Night Thoughts," Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic, ed. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 304-35.

[21] "Blake and the Age of Reason: Spectres in the Night Thoughts," Blake Studies, 5 (1973), 105-39.

Gray's limited vision, a vision which focused too much on the morbidity of death and too little on Atonement. Two sets of the designs are readily available: one by Sir Geoffrey Keynes, with his excellent interpretive introduction, William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for the Poems of Thomas Gray;[22] the second, Irene Tayler's Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray. Tayler's work, which reproduces all of the Gray designs, includes some 160 pages of perceptive commentary and interpretation. The commentary of Tayler and Keynes I have used freely to show that Blake's criticism of Gray was directed toward expanding a vision that had dwelt too long on the theme of "the race of man" coming finally "in dust to rest."[23]

The subject of Blake's third major work of critical illustration of eighteenth-century poets was Robert Blair's The Grave. Again Blake objected to a morbid fascination with death and sought to expand upon Blair's themes by making his reader aware of the lacunae between Blair's text and his own design. The Brown University Press edition of Blake's designs, Blake's Grave: A Prophetic Book (1963), with its commentary by S. Foster Damon, has been valuable in helping to establish the essential contradiction between Blair's orthodox, materialistic

[22] William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for the Poems of Thomas Gray (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972).

[23] Thomas Gray, "Ode on the Spring" (ll. 32, 40), Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray. All quotations from Gray's poems are from this edition.

interpretation of death and resurrection and Blake's optimistic vision of Atonement.

Blake's criticism of nineteenth-century poets deals with two of the poets of the Romantic era--Wordsworth and Byron. And his quarrel with both of them deals with their preoccupation with what Blake considered the generative level of existence.

Blake's criticism of Wordsworth consists in his marginalia to the 1815 edition of Wordsworth's Poems and in some annotations to a transcript he made in 1826 of part of the Preface and 107 lines from The Recluse.[24] Wordsworth's concern with external nature, his projection of his own feelings into natural objects, instead of subjectively perceiving the divine element within himself, and his reliance on memory, Blake saw as a hindrance to the spiritual or creative life.

Blake's criticism of Byron consists in his short two-plate engraved drama, The Ghost of Abel, which serves as a critical final scene for Byron's Cain, A Mystery. Truman Guy Steffan's Lord Byron's Cain[25] and Leslie Tannenbaum's "Lord Byron in the Wilderness: Biblical Tradition in Byron's Cain and Blake's The Ghost of Abel"[26] have been useful in leading me to conclude that Blake was sympathetic with

[24] See Erdman, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, pp. 654-56.

[25] Lord Byron's Cain (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1968).

[26] "Lord Byron in the Wilderness: Biblical Tradition in Byron's Cain and Blake's The Ghost of Abel," Modern Philology, 72 (1975), 350-64.

Byron's unorthodoxy and his refusal to accept the crucifixion as a mode of Atonement. But Blake was dismayed with Byron's preoccupation with death and his failure to provide a positive mode of Atonement in place of the crucifixion he denies. Hence Blake extends Byron's drama to provide his own concept of Atonement, Atonement through love and forgiveness.

From Chaucer to Byron, Blake's concern is with the measurement of each poet's vision against his own archetypal system, a system keyed to the development of the creative faculty of the human mind. In the poetry of these men he looked for archetypes, repeated motifs and images which carry messages reflecting various modes of consciousness or levels of vision. Although the same patterns and concepts can apply in the external world and, as David Erdman has shown, have their political referents,[27] Blake's first concern is with their origins in the human mind. In Jerusalem, for example, he writes:

> For all are Men in Eternity. Rivers Mountains Cities Villages,
> All are Human & when you enter into their Bosoms you walk
> In Heavens & Earths; as in your own Bosom you bear your Heaven
> And Earth, & all you behold, tho it appears Without it is Within
> In your Imagination of which this World of Mortality is but a
> Shadow.
>
> (71:15-19)

The human individual, then, is what he beholds. All that he sees,

[27] Blake: Prophet Against Empire: A Poet's Interpretation of the History of His Own Times, rev. ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1969).

"tho it appears Without . . . is Within." As he observes life, so he himself is. His world, in other words, depends upon the state of his vision.

States or levels of vision form the principal archetypes of Blake's system, each state containing its appropriate images or sub-archetypes. These four principal levels of vision Blake calls Eden, Beulah, Generation, and Ulro.

The lowest level of vision for Blake is that of Ulro. This is the level of "Single vision & Newton's sleep" (p. 693). It is a state of self-centered delusion, the lowest state at which the human soul can exist, a state of mental chaos. Its chief inhabitant is Urizen, who symbolizes for Blake the rational principle of the mind, Urizen or reason uninhibited or unqualified by his contrary Orc, who represents energy or emotion. Blake's descriptions of Ulro in Milton and Jerusalem are helpful in that they provide a landscape from which to draw images and symbols used throughout his critical canon. In Milton Blake writes:

> I also stood in Satans bosom & beheld its desolations!
> A ruind Man: a ruind building of God not made with hands;
> Its plains of burning sand, its mountains of marble terrible:
> Its pits & declivities flowing with molten ore & fountains
> Of pitch & nitre: its ruind palaces & cities & mighty works;
> Its furnaces of affliction in which his Angels & Emanations
> Labour with blackend visages among its stupendous ruins
> Arches & pyramids & porches colonades & domes:
> In which dwells Mystery Babylon, here is her secret place
> From hence she comes forth on the Churches in delight
> Here is her Cup filld with its poisons, in these horrid vales

And here her scarlet Veil woven in pestilence & war:
Here is Jerusalem bound in chains, in the Dens of Babylon.
(38:15-27)

Equally dire is the description in Jerusalem:

The land of darkness flamed but no light, & no repose:
The land of snows of trembling, & of iron hail incessant:
The land of earthquakes: and the land of woven labyrinths:
The land of snares & traps & wheels & pit-falls & dire mills:
The Voids, the Solids, & the land of clouds & regions of waters:
With their inhabitants: in the Twenty-Seven Heavens beneath Beulah:
Self-righteousness conglomerating against the Divine Vision:
(13:46-52)

The iconography of such a self-conscious, rational perspective is that of the cross that symbolizes a Urizenic religion, of desolation and ruin, of burning sand and "regions of waters," of poison cups, of labyrinths, of snares and traps and pyramids and scarlet veils. Those who sleep in Ulro are those who doubt and despair and impute sin and righteousness (Jerusalem 25:15-16).

The next level of vision is that of Generation, the world of Experience and twofold vision, the subject-object world that involves the human relationship with external nature. One of Blake's rare descriptions of nature is to be found in Milton as he describes the experience of the individual in the generative state:

Thou seest the gorgeous clothed Flies that dance & sport in summer
Upon the sunny brooks & meadows: every one the dance
Knows in its intricate mazes of delight artful to weave:
Each one to sound his instruments of music in the dance,
To touch each other & recede; to cross & change & return
These are the Children of Los; thou seest the Trees on mountains

> The wind blows heavy, loud they thunder thro' the darksom sky
> Uttering prophecies & speaking instructive words to the sons
> Of men: These are the Sons of Los! These the Visions of Eternity
> But we see only as it were the hem of their garments
> When with our vegetable eyes we view these wond'rous visions.
> (26:2-12)

The world of Generation is also that of the "Oak / Of Weeping & the Palm of Suffering" (Jerusalem 59:5-6) and the "Place / Of Redemption & of awaking again into Eternity" (Jerusalem 59:8-9). The inhabitants of Generation are Orc, who represents the emotions and energy, the spirit of revolution, and the nature goddess Vala (Jerusalem 18:29-30), whose function it is to delude mankind "into believing nature's beauty to be the only real beauty."[28] The iconography of Generation is that of growing, living nature and of veiled women and serpents.

Blake's level of threefold vision is called Beulah. This is a world of unified innocence, of dream and of inspiration, of maternal and married love. Blake describes it in Milton as

> a place where Contrarieties are equally True
> This place is called Beulah, It is a pleasant lovely Shadow
> Where no dispute can come. Because of those who Sleep.
> Into this place the Sons & Daughters of Ololon descended
> With solemn mourning, into Beulahs moony shades & hills
> Weeping for Milton: mute wonder held the Daughters of Beulah
> Enraptured with affection sweet and mild benevolence
> Beulah is evermore Created around Eternity: appearing
> To the Inhabitants of Eden, around them on all sides.

[28] Karl Kiralis, "Blake's Criticism of Milton's L'Allegro and Il Penseroso and of Its Author," Milton Reconsidered: Essays in Honor of Arthur E. Baker, ed. John Karl Franson (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1976), p. 49.

But Beulah to its Inhabitants appears within each district
As the beloved infant in his mothers bosom round incircled
With arms of love & pity & sweet compassion. But to
The Sons of Eden the moony habitations of Beulah,
Are from Great Eternity a mild & pleasant Rest.
(30:1-14)

Beulah's iconography includes expressions of love and compassion, the child cradled in the mother's arms, and moony shades and hills. Its chief inhabitants are the Daughters of Inspiration, Blake's muses, and Tharmas, Blake's representative of the senses and the physical body. Tharmas is a shepherd and is sometimes accompanied by his flocks (Four Zoas, IX, p. 138, l. 33). As an artist he is a painter, and his profession is that of Physic or Surgery (Milton 27:55-60), indicating his concern with the cure of the outward body.

Eden is Blake's level of fourfold vision, the level of

the Human Imagination
Which is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus . . .
(Milton: 3:3-4)

This is the level of apocalyptic vision, the level at which Atonement, at-one-ment with the God within, is achieved. Los, the inhabiting Zoa, is Blake's representative of the human imagination. He is the Spirit of Prophecy and his art is Poetry (Jerusalem 39:28-31). Blake describes the landscape of Eden in Milton:

Suddenly around Milton on my Path, the Starry Seven
Burnd terrible! my Path became a solid fire, as bright
As the clear Sun & Milton silent came down on my Path. . .
And there went forth from the Starry limbs of the Seven: Forms

> Human: with Trumpets innumerable, sounding articulate
> As the Seven spake; and they stood in a mighty Column of Fire . . .
> (39:3-9)

In Jerusalem Blake describes his redeemed heroine in shades of azure, purple, gold, and crimson:

> I see thy Form O lovely mild Jerusalem, Wingd with Six Wings
> In the opacous Bosom of the Sleeper, lovely Three-fold
> In Head & Heart & Reins three Universes of love & beauty
> Thy forehead bright: Holiness to the Lord, with Gates of pearl
> Reflects Eternity beneath thy azure wings of feathery down
> Ribbd delicate & clothd with featherd gold & azure & purple
> From thy white shoulders shadowing, purity in holiness!
> Thence featherd with soft crimson of the ruby bright as fire
> Spreading into the azure Wings which like a canopy
> Bends over thy immortal Head in which Eternity dwells
> Albion beloved land . . .
> (86:1-10)

Flames and fire, trumpets and cherubim, the numbers seven and three constitute the iconography of Eden. At this level of vision, the individual elements of the mind, "the Four Zoa's who are the Four Eternal Senses of Man" (Jerusalem 32:31), come into focus, and the individual recognizes his own Divine Humanity. At this level the creative faculty works at its fullest to create prophetic art. The individual has achieved the liberty of both body and mind necessary to experience the Eternal world of Imagination:

> I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination Imagination the real & eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow & in which we shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative Bodies, when these Vegetable Mortal Bodies are no more. (Jerusalem 77)

This, Blake's concept of Atonement, differs from the orthodox, theological concept that interpreted Atonement as a process of expiation, as the satisfaction made by Christ for the sins of humanity. Instead, for Blake, Atonement becomes the product or achievement of reconciliation, the setting at one, or the at-one-ment, of the individual with God. For Blake Atonement is apocalyptic; it is a state of fourfold vision which results, as Joseph Wittreich explains, from an "'inward-turning' process" that "culminates in apocalypse, in the achievement of the highest state of mental freedom."[29]

What one finds then in Blake's levels of vision are essentially four ways of looking at human experience. In Ulro where Reason, the Urizenic Zoa, is predominant, life is a solipsistic hell. Generation is the ordinary world of experience, of subject-object awareness. The emotions are the ruling faculty in the generative world of Orc. Beulah, governed by Tharmas, the sensory and the unifying principle, and by the Daughters of Inspiration, is both a state of original Innocence and a state of inspired bliss. In Eden, reason, emotion, perception, and inspiration achieve a balance which permits the creative act. Eden, unlike Beulah which is a state of rest, is a state of tension in which the four principles or Zoas exert their contrary impulses, reason and energy, perception and inspiration, creating in the human being the "Divine Body of the Lord Jesus" (Jerusalem 5:59).

[29] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 227.

According to Blake, the individual achieves prophetic or fourfold vision, Atonement, by progressing from the Innocence of Beulah through Generation to Eden. But this progress cannot be achieved without tension between contraries, for

> Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence. (The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Pl. 3)

Aided by the contraries, the individual passes or Falls from the Innocence and unity of Beulah to the subject-object world of Experience or Generation and awareness of mortality, of natural life and death. The next step in the progression to Eden is again through a Beulah state of rest and inspiration, where the contraries cease to function, but from which the individual must soon progress or risk slipping backward into the hell of Ulro. From this second Beulah level, the individual progresses to the fourfold, prophetic state of Eden wherein, through love and forgiveness, a sense of at-one-ment is achieved.

Against this system of progression towards a creative, fourfold vision Blake measures the art of the English poets. Chaucer and Shakespeare he recognizes as masters of character portrayal. In Chaucer's characters Blake perceives the characters of Urizen and Orc, Tharmas and Los who inhabit his own levels of vision. Shakespeare's fairies and ghosts he sees as representations of mental states typical of his world of Generation. In Spenser Blake glimpses a fourfold pattern analogous to the four levels of his own archetypal vision. His

concern with Milton was with that poet's treatment of the archetype of the Fall, of the movement from Innocence or Beulah to Experience or Generation, and of Atonement, the achievement of the fourfold creative vision of Eden. He saw in the works of the graveyard poets Young, Gray, and Blair, because of their morbid concern with death, a failure to achieve fourfold vision. Likewise Blake criticized Wordsworth and Byron for a failure--due in large part to their preoccupation with the world of Generation--to achieve the visionary perspective of Eden.

Hence Blake's illustrations and commentary on the works of the English poets form a significant body of archetypal literary criticism. His illustrations in particular often serve a hermeneutic function in that they are more than mere depictions of the works of a poet. Instead they often establish a dialectic between the text of the poem and the illustration itself. As W. J. T. Mitchell has noted with regard to Blake's illustration of his own poems, "the contrariety of poem and picture entices the reader to supply the missing connections."[30] In short, Blake's illustrations, which make up a large part of his critical canon, by playing text and design against one another often force the reader into "connections" which constitute a critical interpretation, an interpretation which serves to revise or correct a poet's original vision.

[30] Blake's Composite Art, p. 33.

CHAPTER II

BLAKE'S CRITICISM OF CHAUCER

Chaucer was the only medieval English poet who met with Blake's critical attention. And because Blake saw him as one of England's most significant poet-prophets, Chaucer takes his place with Shakespeare and Milton as one of the "Almighty" who appear in heaven as Jerusalem reaches its apocalyptic close (98:8-11).

Blake's criticism of Chaucer consists of a portrait for William Hayley's Heads of the Poets collection done while Blake was at Felpham; the illustration, The Canterbury Pilgrims; and a description of the latter included in A Descriptive Catalogue for Blake's 1809 exhibition. In addition, Blake mentions the illustration of the Canterbury pilgrims briefly in his Notebook, and he prepared two prospectuses for its subsequent engraving, both of which are largely derived from the description of the painting in A Descriptive Catalogue.

Blake's Head of Chaucer, which was probably modeled on Vertue's Chaucer engraving,[1] depicts a kind-faced, youthful Chaucer,

[1] William Wells, William Blake's "Heads of the Poets" for Turret House, the Residence of William Hayley, Felpham ([England]: n. p., [1969]), p. 18.

wreathed in laurel. On his right is a figure of the Merchant, and on his left a figure of the Wife of Bath, both of whom are important characters to the marriage theme of The Canterbury Tales. Both figures can be interpreted as indicative of Blake's appreciation of Chaucer's genius for representing the ironies of human nature and his recognition of the movement throughout the tales toward reconciliation of the contraries of mankind's worldly nature and his spiritual aspirations. These characters which decorate the portrait anticipate the emphasis of the later painting The Canterbury Pilgrims, a painting which Blake describes in his Notebook as a "Complete Index of Human Characters as they appear Age after Age" (p. 560).

Blake's most important criticism of Chaucer exists in the painting, The Canterbury Pilgrims, executed between 1806 and 1809, and in his commentary on it in A Descriptive Catalogue. It is clear from a study of the painting and of Blake's commentary that as a critic he was measuring the characters of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales against his own archetypal myth. And though on the surface their philosophies--or theologies to be more precise--appear contradictory, a careful look at the underlying irony of their work reveals a close affinity between the two poets.

Blake's tendency to look for human archetypes in the work of others and to represent them in his own work is reflected in a comment he makes about his painting The Ancient Britons in A Descriptive Catalogue. Here he typifies the different classes of men as the Strong,

the Ugly, and the Beautiful:

> The Strong man represents the human sublime. The Beautiful man represents the human pathetic, which was in the wars of Eden divided into male and female. The Ugly man represents the human reason. They were originally one man, who was fourfold; he was self-divided, and his real humanity slain on the stems of generation, and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God. (p. 533)

In another passage on the same painting Blake explains that Beauty refers to "intellectual Beauty," that the Beautiful man acts from duty. The Ugly, he says, represents the "incapability of intellect" and acts "from love of carnage," and the Strong is the "receptacle of Wisdom, a sublime energizer" (p. 535).

It is possible to see here a correlation between the Ugly man and Urizen, between the Beautiful man and Orc, and between the Strong man and Blake's Los. Northrop Frye, to the contrary, has identified the three types, the Ugly, the Beautiful, the Strong, as, respectively, Urizen, Orc, and Tharmas. "The divine fourth," he says, "is Los."[2] But Harold Bloom, in discussing Albion, notes that Albion is "a fourfold balance of the faculties of intellect, imagination, emotion and the instinct that holds the first three faculties together in the unsundered harmony of organized Innocence. That instinct for wholeness Blake names Tharmas . . ."[3] Tharmas, then, is a unifying principle. Blake himself

[2] Fearful Symmetry, p. 272.

[3] Blake's Apocalypse, pp. 190-91.

writes that the Ugly, the Beautiful, and the Strong were "originally one man, who was fourfold; he was self-divided." This indication that the unifying element of the fourfold man is absent, in conjunction with Bloom's identification of the unifying element as Tharmas, convinces me that the Strong man cannot be identified as Tharmas, but is instead Los, who qualifies in his prophetic capacity as the "human sublime," the term Blake uses to describe his Strong man.

Clearly Blake was interested in treating the universal elements of human nature, the human archetypes. In A Descriptive Catalogue he says:

> Every age is a Canterbury Pilgrimage; we all pass on, each sustaining one or other of these characters; nor can a child be born, who is not one of these characters of Chaucer. (pp. 526-27)

That Blake is concerned with the "giant forms" of character is further evident in his statement that the Franklin, "who keeps open table, . . . the genius of eating and drinking," is the Bacchus, that the "Squire is the Apollo," and that the "Miller is the Hercules, &c. Chaucer's characters," he says, "are a description of the eternal Principles that exist in all ages" (p. 527). Blake's commentary, in fact, gives the reader sufficient clues that he can, by studying the painting and clues concurrently, see a fourfold pattern in the delineation of Chaucer's characters. As Blake draws them, both pictorially and verbally, they are usually dominated either by reason, as is Urizen; by their sensory faculties, as is Tharmas; by their emotions, as is Orc; or by their

intuitive or imaginative faculties, as is Blake's Los.

Most readily discernible are the characters who fit the Urizenic category. The Squire Blake explicitly calls the Apollo, and the Knight likewise fits into the Apollonian or Urizenic category. Here is Blake's commentary on the Knight and the Squire:

> The Knight and Squire with the Squire's Yeoman lead the procession, as Chaucer has also placed them first in his prologue. The Knight is a true Hero, a good, great, and wise man . . . . He has spent his life in the field; has ever been a conqueror, and is that species of character which in every age stands as the guardian of man against the oppressor. His son is like him with the germ of perhaps greater perfection still, as he blends literature and the arts with his warlike studies. Their dress and their horses are of the first rate, without ostentation, and with all the true grandeur that unaffected simplicity when in high rank always displays. (p. 524)

Blake's comments on the Knight, a "true Hero, a good, great, and wise man," seem to contradict a Urizenic conception of him. How indeed can this "true Hero" who stands as the "guardian of man against the oppressor" at once be the Ugly Satanic oppressor of human freedom symbolized by the Urizenic principle? Blake himself explains the paradox. In A Descriptive Catalogue, he says:

> Visions of these eternal principles or characters of human life appear to poets, in all ages; the Grecian gods were the ancient Cherubim of Phoenicia; but the Greeks, and since them the Moderns, have neglected to subdue the gods of Priam. These Gods are visions of the eternal attributes, or divine names, which, when erected into gods, become destructive to humanity. They ought to be the servants, and not the masters of man, or of society. They ought to be made to sacrifice to Man, and not man compelled to sacrifice to them; for when separated from man or humanity, who is Jesus the Saviour, the vine of eternity, they are thieves and rebels, they are destroyers. (p. 527)

Blake interprets Chaucer's Knight as "a true Hero, a good, great and wise man," because he sees that Chaucer has in this character represented a man in whom the Urizenic principle or Apollonian characteristics have become his "servants" and not his "masters." Both the Knight and the Squire have conquered and tamed for their use the Urizenic or Apollonian principle which lies uppermost within. The Knight, Chaucer says in the General Prologue, was a

> worthy man,
> That fro the tyme that he first bigan
> To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
> Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.
> . . . . . .
> And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys;
> And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
> And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.
> He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde
> In al his lyf unto no maner wight.
> He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.[4]

The Knight's tale is true to the wisdom and order of his character. Palamon and Arcite, whom Blake would surely have interpreted as two forms of the Orc principle, are wisely subdued by Theseus, another Apollonian/Urizenic character. Theseus, like the Knight who tells the tale, has conquered and put to use the Urizenic forces within him. As reason incarnate he controls and gives form to the energy of Palamon and Arcite.

[4] "The Canterbury Tales," The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), ll. 43-46; 67-72. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from the works of Chaucer are from this edition.

Another Urizenic character who appears to be in control of his rational forces is the Man of Law. Chaucer's "Sergeant of the Lawe" was a man "ful riche of excellence," "discreet" and of "greet reverence -- / He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise" (General Prologue, ll. 309-13). And Blake places this excellent and wise man of reason beside the Parson. "The Sergeant at Lawe," Blake says in A Descriptive Catalogue,

> appears delighted to ride in his [the Parson's] company, and between him and his brother, the Plowman; as I wish men of Law would always ride with them, and take their counsel, especially in all difficult points. Chaucer's Lawyer is a character of great venerableness, a Judge, and a real master of the jurisprudence of his age. (p. 526)

This wish that the men of Law would ride with Parson and Plowman expresses Blake's central concern with achieving balance between the warring factions of the mind. Here the Urizenic faculty of the Man of Law is tempered by the poetic wisdom of the Los character of the Parson and by the pathos of the Orc character of the Plowman. Blake brings together the Ugly, the Beautiful, and the Strong man to achieve a balance which combines justice with mercy.

In the Urizenic category, in addition to the Knight, the Squire, and the Man of Law, are the Yeoman, the Reeve, the Monk, the Friar, the Summoner, and the Pardoner. The Yeoman Blake has linked explicitly with the Squire, and Karl Kiralis refers to both the Yeoman and the Reeve as spectral characters. The Yeoman, he says, "is the Squire's Spectre in that he performs the mundane or menial tasks for

his master."[5] For Blake, the word "Spectre" has special associations. In Jerusalem he refers to the Spectre as

> the Reasoning Power in Man; & when separated
> From Imagination, and closing itself as in steel, in a Ratio
> Of the Things of Memory. It thence frames Laws & Moralities
> To destroy Imagination!
>
> (74:10-13)

The Reeve Blake places at the end of the procession because Chaucer said "'And ever he rode hinderest of the rout'" (A Descriptive Catalogue, p. 523). Kiralis draws parallels between the Yeoman and the Reeve which support the idea that the Reeve, too, is spectral in nature. The Reeve, he notes, as "established manager of his lord's estate" is, in Blake's words, a character of "'the most consummate worldly wisdom'" --or, that is, one who knows how to make money.[6] The triangular arrangement in the painting of the first three figures--Knight, Squire, and Yeoman--and the last three--Chaucer, Clerk, and Reeve--suggests a "Blakean relationship between the two figures at the base of each triangle"--Yeoman and Squire, Reeve and Clerk.[7] The Yeoman performs mundane tasks for a master. The Reeve in his concern with making money

[5] "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," p. 143.

[6] "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," pp. 143-44.

[7] "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," p. 143.

contrasts spectrally with the Clerk, who is concerned with spiritual as opposed to worldly matters.

Blake himself notes that the Monk, the Friar, the Summoner, and the Pardoner are grouped together. The Monk, he says,

> is described by Chaucer, as a man of the first rank in society, noble, rich, and expensively attended: he is a leader of the age, with certain humourous accompaniments in his character, that do not degrade, but render him an object of dignified mirth, but also with other accompaniments not so respectable. (pp. 524-25)

Just what are some of these not so respectable accompaniments? Perhaps if one contrasts him with the Knight, as Paul Ruggiers has done, they become more pronounced. The Monk's "hulking figure, his fine horses, his taste for fine food and clothes, [and] his overbearing assertion of service to God outside the monastic world" contrast with the "meek and maidenly deportment" of the Knight--"his restraint of tongue, his avoidance of the signs of wealth, his fruitful activity in defense of the faith."[8] Not only do the Knight and Monk offer a contrast in figure and appearance, but the tenor of their tales likewise is different. The Knight's tale provides an orderly working out of the paradox that pervades the Boethian philosophy with which Chaucer was concerned. Theseus in The Knight's Tale expounds a philosophy of order and purpose in the universe--though man on earth may not be able to discern it. On the

[8] The Art of the Canterbury Tales (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p. 185.

other hand, as Blake has noted, "Chaucer has made his monk a great tragedian" (p. 525). The Monk's tale is a series of episodes about the personal tragedies of men who have fallen from high places. Unlike the Knight, whose circumspection provides him with an optimistic or comic view of the universe, the Monk sees as through blinded eyes and his vision is as limited as that of the "uneducated" Boethius. Fittingly, it is the Knight who moves to stop the Monk in his storytelling.

The Friar is classified by Blake as a "complete rogue" (p. 525). He is an Ugly man. The Summoner, along with the Pardoner, is a "Devil of the first magnitude," one of the type of Satan, and hence a Urizenic character. Yet, in line with his theory of contraries, Blake notes with respect to the Summoner that

> The uses to Society are perhaps equal of the Devil and of the Angel, their sublimity who can dispute. (p. 526)

The Devil and the Angel are contraries, not opposites, and their roles, instead of negating each other, are complementary. Blake calls the Pardoner

> the Age's Knave, who always commands and domineers over the high and low vulgar. This man is sent in every age for a rod and a scourge, and for a blight, for a trial of men, to divide the classes of men, he is in the most holy sanctuary, and he is suffered by Providence for wise ends, and has also his great use and his grand leading destiny. (p. 526)

This man, in all the irony of his character as Chaucer has presented him, is the epitome of Urizenic perversion. He stands a member of the

tribe of the Ugly, a perverted leader, in contrast to the creative leadership embodied in the Parson and in the poet of the Tales.

A second character type is explicitly noted by Blake in the characters of the Physician and the Franklin. Blake's words about them and his designation of his archetypal character Tharmas seem to place the Franklin and the Physician in the Tharmas category. About the Physician and the Franklin, Blake has this to say:

> The Doctor of Physic is described as the first of his profession; perfect, learned, completely Master and Doctor in his art. . . . The Franklin is one who keeps open table, who is the genius of eating and drinking, the Bacchus; as the Doctor of Physik is the Esculapius . . . (p. 527)

The Franklin and the Physician are in one sense contrasting characters in that the Franklin is voluptuous and generous, whereas the Physician is abstemious and wary of spending. But at the same time both fit into that aspect of human nature--the senses or physical body--represented by Tharmas, whose Art is Painting, but which in the professions becomes "Physic & Surgery" (Milton 27:59-60). The Franklin in his concern with eating and drinking and the Physician in his concern with the physical body come together to represent different and contrasting manifestations of the Tharmas principle.

With respect to the Physician, Blake comments that

> Chaucer makes every one of his characters perfect in his kind, every one is an Antique Statue; the image of a class, and not of an imperfect individual. (p. 527)

This passage has troubled Karl Kiralis, and he has remarked that

> Blake's idea of contrasting the Franklin with the Physician has to be on their differing personal characteristics. But since this contrast is between individuals rather than between classes, Blake, despite himself, denies his own principle against generalizing when he asserts, after describing the physician as perfect professionally, that "Chaucer makes every one of his characters perfect in his kind; . . . the image of a class, and not of an imperfect individual." Perhaps I am reading Blake wrong here but I cannot understand how or believe that he would think all physicians then or now to be just like Chaucer's anymore than he would think Chaucer's Pardoner to be "the image of a class" of all pardoners then, or now of all confidence men. Certainly not all plowmen or parsons were then or now poor and good.[9]

Kiralis is quite right in his assumption that Blake would not consider all physicians or all pardoners, then or now, alike. But what Blake sees, I believe, is what Chaucer saw before him, and that is that there were and are certain basic classes of men: men in whom reason is the paramount principle, men in whom the emotions are paramount, men whose prime concern is with spiritual intuition, and men like the Physician and the Franklin of Chaucer's pilgrimage, in whom the sensory faculties are paramount. And Blake, in contrasting the Franklin and the Physician, is not so much concerned with "differing personal characteristics" as he is with presenting two variations of men in whom the Tharmas principle, or "humour" as Ben Jonson would have called it, is uppermost. To bring up Blake's principle against generalizing here is, I think, inappropriate. This principle against generalizing has its application in the

[9] "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," p. 146.

practice of art in the sense that the artist must be concerned with minute details. Paradoxically Blake's system deals with general principles that govern the human mind, but these general principles are in turn manifest in the idiosyncrasies or minute details of individual personalities. The Physician and the Franklin, distinguished by their particular personal characteristics, are at the same time members of the Tharmas class. The Physician, though abstemious of his own pleasure, is a master in his profession, a profession which deals with the outward man, in the cure of the physical body. And the Franklin, "genius of eating and drinking," while seeming in his outward particularity of voluptuousness very different from the less generous Physician, is yet a member of the Tharmas class.

The two Citizens whom Blake says also ride with and are contrasted with the Franklin are identified by Kiralis as the Haberdasher and the Dyer. Though Blake does not say this, I think it can be safely assumed that they, because of their occupations which are concerned with worldly goods, belong to the class of Tharmas.

Another significant grouping is the "triangular arrangement" of the Miller, the Merchant, and the Wife of Bath toward the end of the line of pilgrims.[10] All three of these characters tell tales about or exhibit themselves as characters preoccupied with sex. Blake designates

[10] "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," p. 141.

the Miller as a spectral counterpart of the Herculean character of the Plowman, and his significance will be treated later. The Merchant's preoccupation with sex, exhibited in his tale of the senile Januarie with his young bride May, would classify him, in Blake's archetypal myth, under the type of Theotorman--"frustrate desire"--and hence in the Orc category.[11]

The Wife of Bath likewise belongs to the Orc category as does the Prioress, if one accepts Kiralis' analysis of her as Tirzah.[12] Of Chaucer's women, Blake has this to say:

> The characters of Women Chaucer has divided into two classes, the Lady Prioress and the Wife of Bath. Are not these leaders of the ages of men? The lady prioress, in some ages, predominates; and in some the wife of Bath, in whose character Chaucer has been equally minute and exact; because she is also a scourge and a blight. (p. 528)

In spite of Blake's earlier reference to the Prioress as "of the first rank; rich and honoured" (p. 524), I think we must accept Kiralis' interpretation of the above passage to read that the Wife of Bath is likewise--that is, as is the Prioress--"a scourge and a blight."[13]

[11] Damon, Dictionary, p. 309.

[12] See "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," pp. 153-59, for an extended discussion of the character of the Prioress.

[13] See "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," pp. 160-61. Kiralis notes the confusion which results from Blake's use of the word also instead of likewise in the phrase "because she is also a scourge and a blight." Also, he notes, could be read as meaning in addition. Such a reading merely attributes

Both women, then, in their associations with frustrated desire are governed by the Orc principle. Of the Wife of Bath, Blake says, after denouncing her as "also a scourge and a blight":

> I shall say no more of her, nor expose what Chaucer has left hidden; let the young reader study what he has said of her: it is useful as a scare-crow. There are of such characters born too many for the peace of the world. (p. 528)

The Wife of Bath is "useful as a scarecrow," I assume, in that she serves as a warning to Chaucer's readers against involvement with women of her ilk, lest she shatter "the peace of the world." But though he says no more of her, Blake's painting clearly presents her in the form of the Whore of Babylon. "She wears a huge hat," Kiralis notes, "resembling the Pope's tiara with an ironic suggestion of a halo. Her ornate dress is practically 'topless'; but she is partly covered by a cross on her huge string of beads (an amatory rosary?) with a large heart-shaped pendant hanging between her amply exposed breasts."[14]

In contrast to the Wife of Bath is the Prioress, who rides, as does the Wife of Bath, at a position midway in her group. The entire group of the pilgrims is split into two by the Host with his outspread

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the characteristics "a scourge and a blight" to the Wife of Bath. But Blake's intention, as Kiralis emphasizes, is to compare the Prioress and the Wife of Bath. The Wife of Bath _like_ the Prioress is "a scourge and a blight."

[14] "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's _Canterbury Pilgrims_," p. 148.

arms. Then these two basic groups are "subdivided by the Prioress and the Wife of Bath"--"essential counterparts of womanhood."[15] The Prioress as described by Chaucer has a forehead "almoost a spanne brood" (General Prologue, l. 155). Ironically, in Blake's painting, unlike the Wife of Bath, whose forehead is covered, her forehead is left uncovered, "openly exposed, contrary to church regulations, to the very roots of her long blond hair, which she wears in long tresses that hang well below her waist line"--long hair that was not permissible to nuns. The Prioress' dress is likewise provocative, a "thin transparent blouse-like covering that reveals her upper arms, shoulders and breasts, provocatively."[16] Her horse in Blake's painting is covered with a very prominent golden net. Kiralis discusses at length the significance of nets for Blake, but, in a word, what the net tells the viewer about the Prioress is that she is, in contrast to the Wife of Bath, Rahab and Whore of Babylon, the scheming temptress, Tirzah.[17] As Damon explains, "Rahab is the Whore; Tirzah is the Prude, the 'pure woman,' the false ideal which leads men astray. Rahab squanders her lust; but Tirzah withholds her lust, to use it as a weapon against man."[18] Tirzah, then,

[15] "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," p. 142.

[16] "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," p. 148.

[17] "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," pp. 153-56.

[18] Dictionary, p. 407.

or the Prioress, is both temptress and torturer.

Blake, in presenting this picture of the Prioress, has indicated his own insight into the ironic character of the Prioress as Chaucer has drawn her. She is, Blake says,

> described also as of the first rank; rich and honoured. She has certain peculiarities and little delicate affectations, not unbecoming to her, being accompanied with what is truly grand and really polite; her person and her face, Chaucer has described with minuteness; it is very elegant, and was the beauty of our ancestors, till after Elizabeth's time, when voluptuousness and folly began to be accounted beautiful. (p. 524)

Yet, this woman, in some ages predominating as the leader, is at once "a scourge and a blight." As Chaucer paints her,

> sikerly she was of greet desport,
> And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,
> And peyned hire to countrefete cheere
> Of court, and to been estatlich of manere,
> And to ben holden digne of reverence.
> (General Prologue, ll. 137-41)

She was so charitable she could not bear to see a mouse hurt. Yet she tells a bloody tale in which vengeance is wreaked upon the Jews who kidnap and cut the throat of the "litel clergeon." She fed her hounds with "rosted flessh, or milk and wastel-breed" while people starved. This woman of "conscience and tendre herte," who spoke the French of "Stratford atte Bowe" because "Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe," wore a

> brooch of gold ful sheene,
> On which ther was first write a crowned A,

And after Amor vincit omnia.
(General Prologue, ll. 122-62)

The irony of Chaucer's description of her plus the grimness of this woman's tale Blake has presented to full advantage as he paints the Prioress as a prim nun who is the teasing counterpart of the Wife of Bath. In short, Blake has given us two types of women--Eve and Mary, Virgin and Whore.

Not to be omitted from the Orc category are the Second Nun and the Nun's Priest. Blake says little about them other than that they are "suitable attendants on rank and fashion" (p. 524). The Second Nun's Tale "of the lyf of Seinte Cecile" and her close association with the Prioress clearly place her in the same Tirzah class. As for the Nun's Priest, Kiralis notes that The Nun's Priest's Tale about Pertelote "could be a description of the Prioress," that "both Pertelote and the Prioress are affected and take themselves and their self-appointed missions in life much too seriously."[19] In addition, the Host's knowing words to the Nun's Priest emphasize the priest's sexuality:

But by my trouthe, if thou were seculer,
Thou woldest ben a trede-foul aright.
For if thou have corage as thou hast myght,
Thee were nede of hennes, as I wene,
Ya, moo than seven tymes seventene.
(Epilogue, The Nun's Priest's Tale, vii, ll. 3450-54)

[19] "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," p. 159.

The last and perhaps most significant of Blake's Orc characters are the Plowman and the Miller. The Plowman, Blake says,

> is simplicity itself, with wisdom and strength for its stamina. Chaucer has divided the ancient character of Hercules between his Miller and his Plowman. Benevolence is the plowman's great characteristic, he is thin with excessive labour, and not with old age as some have supposed. . . .
>
> The Plowman of Chaucer is Hercules in his supreme eternal state, divested of his spectrous shadow; which is the Miller, a terrible fellow, such as exists in all times and places, for the trial of man, to astonish every neighbourhood, with brutal strength and courage, to get rich and powerful to curb the pride of Man. (p. 527)

Clearly Blake's designation of Chaucer's Plowman as his Hercules is related to his description of The Ancient Britons and his discussion of the Beautiful man, who "represents the human pathetic" (p. 533). "The Beautiful Man acts from duty, and anxious solicitude for the fates of those for whom he combats" (p. 535). It was Hercules who "early chose Duty instead of Pleasure."[20] Hercules, then, is at once the Beautiful man, the man of pathos, and Orc, representative of the human emotions. The Miller provides an appropriate Spectre because he, in contrast to the Plowman who would work "for every povre wight, / Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght," works with his "thombe of gold," purely for himself (General Prologue, ll. 537-38; 563).

My designation of the Plowman as an Orc character conflicts with Kiralis' interpretation. Kiralis sees the Plowman as a representation of Blake-Los and notes that he is biographically Blake while the

[20] Damon, Dictionary, p. 181.

Miller is Stothard, who cheated Blake in matters concerning the execution of the painting. Kiralis bases his argument on these points. First, he notes that the Plowman is "developed too fully in proportion to the other characters in A Descriptive Catalogue"; second, "the Plowman in the engraving looks very much like a portrait of Blake"; the Plowman's "proper use of his 'wisdom and strength' in his benevolent but excessive labor suggests the character of Blake himself"; and Blake gives "wisdom to the Plowman of which Chaucer makes no mention."[21] With regard to the first point, Blake does devote several lines to the Plowman, and perhaps this is out of proportion to the space spent on the other characters. Yet Blake's primary concern is apparently not so much with delineating the character of the Plowman as with emphasizing the dual nature of the Herculean character, the Beautiful man. That the Plowman in the engraving looks like Blake is true. But I can also see a close resemblance to Blake in the figure of Chaucer. Joseph Wicksteed has noted Blake's tendency to repeat features and figures in his illustrations as a means of indicating a spiritual relationship between otherwise separate characters.[22] Is it not possible then that Blake may have seen some aspect of himself in the character of the Plowman, that

[21] "William Blake as an Intellectual and Spiritual Guide to Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," p. 147.

[22] Blake's Vision of the Book of Job (1910; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1971), passim. See particularly the commentary on Illustration II, pp. 51-53.

aspect which he had vested in his "benevolent and excessive labour," labor for his meager existence? Perhaps too the Plowman represents that element of Blake's being which took umbrage in the Blake-Cromek-Stothard conflict surrounding the execution of the painting.[23] Blake may have recognized in his quarrel with Stothard the Orc-like characteristics of his own temperament and used the Plowman-Miller coupling to express the dissension between them. Yet this dissension, though obviously important to Blake when he wrote A Descriptive Catalogue, would hardly justify his taking on as his total characterization that of Hercules or the Plowman. For Blake's Strong man, representative of the human sublime, his "receptacle of Wisdom," and "sublime energizer" (p. 535)--Los--is the representative of the poet with all his powers. And this aspect of himself Blake would have portrayed in the Los figure of Chaucer. On Kiralis' final point, Blake does give "wisdom to the Plowman of which Chaucer makes no mention." I repeat an earlier quotation from Blake, that the Plowman "is simplicity itself, with wisdom and strength for its stamina." Yet this is hardly the wisdom of Los, "the expression in this world of the Creative Imagination."[24] The Plowman, true, is brother of the Parson--a Los character--and he has the Herculean wisdom that enables him to place duty before pleasure. But thus acting,

[23] See Mona Wilson's account of this conflict in The Life of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 232-36.

[24] Damon, Dictionary, p. 246.

he is Blake's Beautiful man, the human pathetic, and must be placed in the Orc category.

Finally, the Strong man, the Los character, finds expression in the minute particulars of Blake's rendering of the Host, the Parson, the Clerk, and the Poet Chaucer. The "Host who follows this group, and holds the center of the cavalcade," Blake says,

> is a first rate character, and his jokes are no trifles; they are always, though uttered with audacity, and equally free with the Lord and the Peasant, they are always substantially and weightily expressive of knowledge and experience; Henry Baillie, the keeper of the greatest Inn, of the greatest City; for such was the Tabarde Inn in Southwark, near London: our Host was also a leader of the age. (pp. 525-26)

This man, who Chaucer tells us was chosen to be their "governour" and of their tales "juge and reportour" (General Prologue, ll. 813-14), and whom Blake uses to at once split the group in two and yet gather them together with his outstretched arms, ushers the cavalcade on its way.

Blake's description likewise classes the Parson among the Strong men, representative of the human sublime:

> an Apostle, a real Messenger of Heaven, sent in every age for its light and its warmth. This man is beloved and venerated by all, and neglected by all: He serves all, and is served by none; he is, according to Christ's definition, the greatest of his age. Yet he is a Poor Parson of a town. Read Chaucer's description of the Good Parson, and bow the head and knee to him, who, in every age sends us such a burning and a shining light. Search O ye rich and powerful, for these men and obey their counsel, then shall the golden age return; But alas! You will not easily distinguish him from the Friar or the Pardoner, they also are "full solemn men" and their counsel, you will continue to follow. (p. 526)

Closely related in their Los-like qualities are the Clerk and Chaucer. The character of the Clerk, Blake says,

> varies from that of Chaucer, as the contemplative philosopher varies from the poetical genius. There are always these two classes of learned sages, the poetical and the philosophical. The painter has put them side by side, as if the youthful clerk had put himself under the tuition of the mature poet. Let the Philosopher always be the servant and scholar of inspiration and all will be happy. (p. 528)

These men are at the top of the list in nobility of character. They represent the "creative Imagination of the Individual"--Los.[25] They are Blake's strongest of the Strong men, receptacles of wisdom, sublime energizers.

It is thus that Blake classifies Chaucer's characters in terms of his own myth. In them he sees the "eternal principles or characters of human life" that "appear to poets, in all ages" (p. 527). Yet one cannot read Blake's criticism of Chaucer without being at once aware of what on the surface seems to be a significant conflict between Chaucer's Christian orthodoxy and Blake's conception of an internal deity, expressed in part in the passage already quoted wherein he tells us that the gods of the Greeks and of the Moderns "are visions of the eternal attributes, or divine names, which, when erected into gods, become destructive to humanity" (p. 527). Blake expresses a similar concept in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell as he relates the history of religion:

[25] Damon, Dictionary, p. 426.

> The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive.
>
> And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country. placing it under its mental deity.
>
> Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects; thus began Priesthood.
>
> Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.
>
> And at length they pronounced that the Gods had orderd such things.
>
> Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast. (Plate 11)

That Chaucer paid homage, in sending his pilgrims to Canterbury, to an external deity that was unacceptable to Blake is probably true. Yet at the same time this did not prevent Blake from appreciating Chaucer's acute depiction in his characters of mankind's paradoxical nature.

Both Chaucer and Blake are masters of irony. I have already mentioned the irony of Chaucer's portrait of the Prioress. There are countless other instances of it in the Tales. Chaucer makes himself the ironic narrator of his own poem.[26] For example, in what seems outwardly an act of self-deprecation he begins Sir Thopas. This tale to the uninitiated is a monotony of rime. But to the more knowing, Sir Thopas is a brilliant parody of the metrical romance, which could only have come from a person of supreme poetical skill. Hence Chaucer at once deprecates himself and displays himself a poet and an astute literary critic. His ironic masterpiece is his portrait of the

[26] See Ruggiers, The Art of the Canterbury Tales, pp. 16-23, for a discussion of Chaucer as ironic narrator.

Pardoner, whose ironic tale of three young men who find death in the seeking of it suits his own duplicity of character. At the same time, the Pardoner avariciously seeks to perpetrate the very sin on the other pilgrims that he warns them against. Beyond these examples from the Tales themselves, the overall structure of The Canterbury Tales functions on "two levels of fiction."[27] As Ruggiers has noted, "The comic, dissentient world, and realistic world . . . which [Chaucer's] men and women inhabit provides a tart counterpoint to the otherworldly goal implied by the journey."[28] Chaucer's irony displays his Boethian conception of a Providentially ordered world which at the same time assigns mankind individual responsibility. And the casting of the individual pilgrims against the background of the pilgrimage reinforces the basic conflict or paradox of humankind--the "double allegiance of all men to God and to the world."[29] Chaucer's individual is caught between these contraries--contraries without which, Blake would have said, there is no progression.

Blake's own sense of irony is evident in his rendering of The Canterbury Pilgrims. On the one hand, the movement of the cavalcade is from left to right across the painting, the direction of the natural movement of the eye across the page. This left to right movement implies

[27] The Art of the Canterbury Tales, p. 4.

[28] The Art of the Canterbury Tales, p. 5.

[29] The Art of the Canterbury Tales, p. 11.

progression toward the salvation offered by the arrival at Canterbury. But at the same time the cross and net iconography that dominates the painting is a contrary indication because the cross and net were for Blake symbols of repression. As Damon notes, the cross is "an instrument of execution, of the Vengeance for Sin," and consequently does not symbolize "the true religion of forgiveness."[30] Yet the cross motif appears again and again in the painting. It dominates the entire scene in the form of Harry Baily's outstretched arms as he rides in cruciform position at the center of the painting.[31] It is repeated in the Pardoner's "Swastika-like contortion,"[32] in the Wife of Bath's necklace, in the cross on the Knight's chest and in two crosses worn by the Prioress. The net also holds a dominant position in the painting as a covering for the Prioress' horse. This net-like horse covering is the most obvious of such attire in the painting. In fact, it is impossible to glance at the illustration without one's eyes moving first to the central form of Baily in crucifix position and then ahead to the predominant net on the Prioress' horse. The net motif is repeated in the Prioress' clothing. The Pardoner's clothing also has a filmy, net-like appearance, and likewise does the dress of one of the observers

[30] Dictionary, p. 95.

[31] For these observations on cross iconography, I am indebted to Warren Stevenson's "Interpreting Blake's Canterbury Pilgrims."

[32] Stevenson, "Interpreting Blake's Canterbury Pilgrims," p. 122.

in the left foreground. Other indications of Blake's subtly ironic comment on the pilgrimage are evident. The dress of the Parson falls in straight lines from his thighs, in contrast to the more flowing lines of Chaucer's dress as he rides toward the end of the procession. And there are additional symmetrical motifs in the painting. To begin with, as previously mentioned and as also noted by Kiralis, the group itself is cut into two parts with Baily riding at center. Dividing the two halves are the Prioress at the center of the front grouping, and the Wife of Bath at the center of the rear grouping. The triangle motif is also discernible throughout the painting. The pilgrims are shown leaving the portal of the Tabarde, which forms a triangular arch over the heads of the Reeve, the Clerk, and the Poet. There are at least three sets of triangular arrangement in the positions of the pilgrims. One is at the front of the procession and consists of the Knight, the Squire, and the Yeoman. Two form the rear of the procession and consist of the Merchant, the Miller, and the Wife of Bath, and finally, the Reeve, the Clerk, and Chaucer. This repetition of cross and net iconography and symmetrical motif, all of which represent negative and repressive aspects of organized religion, reinforce Blake's sense of irony and make comments both parallel to and in subtle contradiction to his commentary on the pilgrims in A Descriptive Catalogue. If one can imagine Blake's interpreting Chaucer's pilgrimage on a wholly literal or realistic plane, this ironic comment on religion might justify the argument that Blake saw the cavalcade as a vain pilgrimage to the shrine at Canterbury. But

such would be accusing Blake of "single vision." His fourfold, poetic vision penetrated to the archetypal level of Chaucer's work. His own sense of the irony of human existence was attuned to that of Chaucer. He saw in Chaucer's characters the "eternal principles or characters of human life," and that the concept of repression is inherent in humankind, whether projected in an external deity or experienced in the internal warring factions of the mind. As Chaucer's characters were caught between the contraries of God and the world, Blake's were caught between those of Orc and Urizen, Tharmas and Los. And Blake saw, too, that the salvation afforded by the education of the Canterbury pilgrimage was symbolically identical to his own vision of Jerusalem, the City of Peace.

CHAPTER III

THE RENAISSANCE

Of all the periods of English literature, it was with the Renaissance that Blake felt the greatest affinity. Northrop Frye attributes Blake's lack of a public during his lifetime to this affinity: "Had he been born at any time between, say, 1530 and 1630, he would have found a large public able to speak his language, his premises would have been accepted on their own merits . . ."[1] Frye likewise notes that not only do his "early lyrics recall the Elizabethans," but "he reverts to them in his critical attitude as well," especially in his "doctrine that all major poetry is allegorical."[2] Clearly that aspect of Elizabethan poetry which looked inward toward the faculties of the human mind and believed in the Divine nature of the poet appealed to Blake. Though he might have objected to Sidney's concept of the "heavenly maker of that maker, who . . . made man to his owne likenes," because for Blake the "making" was reversed--it was the poet himself who created his maker--

[1] Fearful Symmetry, p. 161.

[2] Fearful Symmetry, p. 9.

he would doubtless have agreed that the poet "with the force of a divine breath," could bring "things foorth surpassing her [Nature's] doings," that "Nature never set foorth the earth in so rich Tapistry as diverse poets have done."[3]

S. Foster Damon has also remarked about Blake's affinity with the Renaissance poets. Blake's lyrics, Damon notes, reflect "Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and William Shakspere. . . . But Blake did more than read them: he was the first to return to their way of seeing and feeling. He was the first to re-establish in literature the ecstacy, the fresh music of the imagination."[4] Harold Bloom likewise attests to the Elizabethan affinity, noting that a large group of poems from Poetical Sketches are "songs in the Elizabethan manner."[5]

Such reflections of Blake's attraction to the Renaissance are scattered throughout his work, particularly his early lyrics. But his commentary on and criticism of Renaissance poets is limited to three major figures: Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton.

[3] "The Defence of Poesie," The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. Albert Feuillerat (1912; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1962), III, 8-9.

[4] William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols (1924; rpt. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958), pp. 27-28.

[5] The Visionary Company, p. 17.

Blake's Criticism of Shakespeare

A review of Blake's criticism of Shakespeare reveals that Blake saw Shakespeare much as he saw Chaucer--as a master of character portrayal. And while, on the one hand, he may have objected to Shakespeare's concern with warfare, as some of his verbal commentary indicates, he nevertheless recognized him as a poet of inspiration.

The criticism of Shakespeare includes a series of comments that season Blake's prophecies and prose; obvious allusions, verbal echoes, and other reflections of influence in some of the Poetical Sketches and in his other works; a portrait of Shakespeare executed for the Heads of the Poets project for Hayley; and a sprinkling of illustrations related in various ways to Shakespeare and his plays.

The series of verbal references to Shakespeare in Blake's prophecies and prose in some instances indicates his concern that Shakespeare's vision might have been afflicted by a classical preoccupation with warfare. The Preface to Milton, for example, links Shakespeare with the Greek and Roman "slaves of the Sword":

> The Stolen and Perverted Writings of Homer & Ovid: of Plato & Cicero, which all Men ought to contemn: are set up by artifice against the Sublime of the Bible. but 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 silly Greek & Latin slaves of the Sword.

When one considers the emphasis Blake places on Atonement and forgiveness as opposed to vengeance and corporeal warfare, it appears that his reference here is to Shakespeare's preoccupation with warfare in the history plays. For Blake the only justifiable warfare was mental warfare, that which occurred "In the great Wars of Eternity, in fury of Poetic Inspiration . . . Mental forms Creating" (Milton 30:19-20). Warfare on earth was another matter; it was "energy Enslav'd" (Four Zoas IX, p. 120, l. 42), a fountain of "bitter Death & of corroding Hell," that changed brotherhood "into a Curse" (Milton 35:3-4). Blake resisted in Shakespeare that inclination which turned him toward the subject of war, an inclination perhaps grounded in Shakespeare's knowledge of the epics of Homer and Virgil. In his commentary "On Homer's Poetry" Blake exclaims: "The Classics, it is the Classics! & not Goths nor Monks, that Desolate Europe with Wars" (p. 267).

There are at least two other instances where Blake associates Shakespeare with Homer; one in particular, from his Annotations to Boyd's Historical Notes on Dante (pp. 622-23), implies an antipathy toward Shakespeare's concern with war. The passage from Boyd which elicited Blake's comment reads:

> We cannot sympathise with Achilles for the loss of his Mistress, when we feel that he gained her by the massacre of her family.

Blake's response,

> nobody considers these things when they read Homer or Shakespear or Dante[,]

seems to point to the reader's tendency to read the epics of Homer, for example, attending merely to the glory of war and not to the human agony and sacrifice involved. If there is no sympathy with Achilles, Blake seems to be saying, it results not from empathy with the mistress and her family but rather from the reader's preoccupation with the warfare. The effect is the same when the reader approaches Shakespeare's dramatization of war in the history plays.

The other coupling of Shakespeare and Homer, which appears in Chapter 7 of An Island in the Moon, seems somewhat inconsequential. Here Quid speaks:

> . . . I think that Homer is bombast & Shakespeare is too wild & Milton has no feelings they might be easily outdone Chatterton never writ those poems. (p. 446)

The satirical setting with its aimless conversation negates any serious meaning that might be attached to the passage. Obviously some parts of Quid's speech--"Chatterton never writ those poems" or "Milton has no feelings"--are contradicted in Blake's more serious work. Nevertheless, as Damon has suggested, it is probably of some significance that Shakespeare is linked with Homer.[6]

[6] Dictionary, p. 370.

For the most part, however, Blake's other verbal comments reflect his appreciation of Shakespeare as a truly inspired poet. In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell he contrasts the infinite content of the works of Shakespeare and Dante with the limited nature of the works of Swedenborg, Paracelsus, and Jacob Boehme:

> Any man of mechanical talents may from the writings of Paracelsus or Jacob Behmen, produce ten thousand volumes of equal value with Swedenborg's. and from those of Dante or Shakespear, an infinite number. (Plate 22)

Blake seems to be ranking these writers with Swedenborg at the lowest point of the scale and Dante and Shakespeare at its apex. Swedenborg, he writes in the paragraph previous to the one quoted above, "has not written one new truth," his writings "are a recapitulation of all superficial opinions, and an analysis of the more sublime, but no further" (Plate 22). Paracelsus and Boehme would furnish the most uninspired writer with material that he might "produce ten thousand volumes" that equaled the writings of Swedenborg, who is inferior and derivative. But this uninspired writer, a "man of mechanical talents," could derive from Dante and Shakespeare an infinite number of volumes equivalent to the work of Swedenborg. In another instance, while commenting on the lamentable state of art in England, Blake contrasts the art of Milton and Shakespeare with the works of Dryden and Pope, the former copiers of Imagination, the latter of Nature:

> Men think they can Copy Nature as Correctly as I copy Imagination this they will find Impossible. & all the Copies or Pretended

> Copiers of Nature from Rembrat to Reynolds Prove that Nature becomes . . . to its Victim nothing but Blots & Blurs. Why are Copiers of Nature Incorrect while Copiers of Imagination are Correct this is manifest to all . . . .
>
> While the Works . . . of Pope & Dryden are looked upon as the Same Art with those of Milton & Shakespeare . . . there can be no Art in a Nation but such as is Subservient to the interest of the Monopolizing Trader . . . (pp. 563-65)

Art, he says, must be "Drawn with a firm . . . hand . . . like Fuseli & Michael Angelo Shakespeare & Milton" (p. 565).

Though not necessarily "criticism" of Shakespeare, Blake's allusions to and verbal echoes of Shakespeare, and the reflection of Shakespeare's influence on the Poetical Sketches do emphasize the degree to which Blake was familiar with Shakespeare's work. Shakespeare's use of blank verse in the drama may have been partly responsible for Blake's turning to the use of blank verse in his early lyrics. That he probably saw it as a means of achieving freedom for his verse is reflected in the early lines of Jerusalem when he comments on his later need to free himself even further by eluding the bondage of 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. (p. 144)

Of the nineteen miscellaneous poems from Poetical Sketches, seven exhibit no end rime. These seven include the four Season poems, which also reflect the influence of James Thomson--"To Spring," "To Summer," "To Autumn," "To Winter"--and three others, "To the Evening Star," "To

Morning," and "Fair Eleanor." "King Edward the Third" reflects, as Mona Wilson has noted, Blake's familiarity with Shakespeare's historical plays.[7] And Harold Bloom finds echoes of Shakespeare in the "winter pastoral" of "Blind Man's Buff."[8]

Damon cites three lines in Blake's work which clearly echo Shakespeare.[9] In his Annotations to Bacon's Essays Moral, Economical and Political Blake responds to Bacon's remarks about Satan (p. 612). In "Of Unity in Religion" Bacon writes:

> It was great blasphemy when the devil said, "I will ascend and be like the Highest"; but it is greater blasphemy to personate God, and bring him in saying, "I will descend, and be like the prince of darkness."

Blake's response to this is:

> Did not Jesus descend & become a Servant The Prince of darkness is a Gentleman & not a Man he is a Lord Chancellor[.]

Here the words "The Prince of darkness is a Gentleman" are also those of Edgar in King Lear (III.iv.132).[10] But they seem not so much a comment on Shakespeare as a negative comment on Bacon, whom Blake

[7] The Life of William Blake, p. 8.

[8] Blake's Apocalypse, p. 21.

[9] Dictionary, p. 370.

[10] Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from the works of Shakespeare are from The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. Irving Ribner and George Lyman Kittredge (Waltham, Mass.: Ginn and Co., 1971).

clearly considered an atheist (p. 615), and the political state of the English court, on which Blake comments earlier in the marginalia to Bacon--"It was a Common opinion in the Court of Queen Elizabeth that Knavery is Wisdom: Cunning Plotters were considerd as wise Machiavels" (p. 610).

More indicative of Blake's interpretation of Shakespeare are the words from Hamlet (I.ii.185) which Blake assigns to Eve in The Ghost of Abel as she begins to achieve insight into the significance of Abel's death and the presence of Jehovah: "I see him plainly with my Mind's Eye" (1:23). S. Foster Damon has noted that this line is "not only interesting as another explanation of Blake's own visions [perhaps the seeing of what Joseph Burke has referred to as the eidetic image[11]], but as an interpretation of the ghost in Hamlet as well."[12] This passage also reflects an instance of Blake's understanding of the fairies and related entities in Shakespeare's work, a subject I shall return to shortly. These figures Blake depicts as corporeally real, thus emphasizing the "reality" of the psychological phenomena they represent. Hence Eve's vision of Jehovah and of "Abel living," and Hamlet's vision of his father were images literally seen.

[11] See Joseph Burke, "The Eidetic and the Borrowed Image: an Interpretation of Blake's Theory and Practice of Art," The Visionary Hand, pp. 253-302. Rpt. from In Honour of Daryl Lindsay: Essays and Studies, ed. Franz Philipp and June Stewart (Melbourne: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 110-27.

[12] William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols, p. 476.

The third explicit echo is in Milton 28:1-7, where Blake alludes to A Midsummer Night's Dream (V.i.16-17):

> Some Sons of Los surround the Passions with porches of iron & silver
> Creating form & beauty around the dark regions of sorrow,
> Giving to airy nothing a name and a habitation
> Delightful! with bounds to the Infinite putting off the Indefinite
> Into most holy forms of Thought: (such is the power of inspiration)

Alexander Gilchrist writes that Blake objected to Shakespeare's expression "'And gives to airy nothing / A local habitation and a name'" because Blake believed "the things imagination saw were as much realities as were gross and tangible facts."[13] Doubtless Blake's use of these lines in this context in Milton, as Los labors at his divine task, pokes ironic fun at Theseus who mistakenly "lumps together the lunatic, the lover, and the poet as negligible victims of the imagination (thus blaspheming against his own creator)."[14] At the same the lines clarify that it is the "indefinite" nature of the "Infinite," and not "airy nothing," to which the poet must give form.

Blake's most revealing criticism of Shakespeare is pictorial. In this respect his comment about the significance of Shakespeare's fairies in A Descriptive Catalogue is highly relevant:

> By way of illustration, I instance Shakspeare's Witches in Macbeth. Those who dress them for the stage, consider them as wretched old

[13] Life of William Blake, p. 364.

[14] Dictionary, p. 370.

> women, and not as Shakspeare intended, the Goddesses of Destiny; this shews how Chaucer has been misunderstood in his sublime work. Shakspeare's Fairies also are the rulers of the vegetable world, and so are Chaucer's; let them be so considered, and then the poet will be understood, and not else. (p. 526)

Disregarding this passage, I would find myself in the position of W. Moelwyn Merchant who notes that "There is no . . . single direction or technical form in Blake's works which are derived from Shakespeare."[15] Though Merchant goes on to say that the illustrations "in addition to their highly personal comment on Shakespeare's thinking . . . form a quite substantial comment on certain aspects of Blake's mythology,"[16] he is clearly frustrated by what at first appears fragmentation and lack of any clear statement on the work of Shakespeare. Working with the seeming miscellanea of illustrations on Shakespeare is clearly different from working with the illustrations on Milton, where one finds a series of illustrations on, for example, Comus, Paradise Lost, and Paradise Regained; those on Gray, where Blake has executed 116 illustrations for a volume of Gray's poems; or those on Young, some 537 illustrations to Night Thoughts. But what Merchant seems to have overlooked is this revealing statement in which Blake writes of the significance of fairies in Chaucer and Shakespeare.

Blake had recognized the allegorical nature of the fairies in Chaucer--in The Merchant's Tale, for instance. Likewise, he recognized

[15] "Blake's Shakespeare," p. 235.

[16] "Blake's Shakespeare," p. 236.

the allegorical correspondence between the fairies of Shakespeare's work and human psychological states. In the fairy category, as indicated in the passage quoted above, he included Shakespeare's witches, and hence it seems safe to infer that he would also have included ghosts in this category. These entities, he writes, are "rulers of the vegetable world," "Goddesses of Destiny," who hold sway over human existence in the generative state, at the twofold level of vision. The individual in the generative state is caught between the contraries of emotion and reason. Perceiving himself a rational creature he is nevertheless plagued by uncontrollable emotional drives which result in ups and downs of emotion and extremes in behavior, in lust, in strife, and in warfare --all of the forces that derive from the complexity of human psychology. And it is these emotional forces at work that Blake refers to as "Goddesses of Destiny."

Here then Blake exhibits his deepest critical appreciation of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's fairies, witches, and ghosts Blake knew were objectifications of the mental states which resulted from the tension between the contraries of reason and emotion, between Urizen and Orc, which prevailed in the generative state. Blake understood the psychological implications of Shakespeare's work, that like Chaucer he was a master of character portrayal, and it is around this insight, an insight that focuses on portraying these fairy-like entities from Shakespeare's work, that one can unify many of his Shakespeare illustrations.

There are twenty-eight Blake illustrations that can be

associated with Shakespeare. As is to be expected, not all can be related directly to Blake's appreciation of Shakespeare's fairies, but eleven can, and this, considered with the fact that several more of the illustrations treat figures from plays dealing largely with human emotions and aberrant behavior, such as King Lear, Romeo and Juliet, and Macbeth, lends to the argument that it was Shakespeare's insight into human character, or psychology, with which Blake was chiefly concerned.

Two of the illustrations which fit outside this emphasis on Shakespeare's treatment of human character, yet which may be commenting at least briefly on Shakespeare as a poet, are portraits of Shakespeare included in Blake's illustrations to the work of Milton and Gray. One is the illustration to L'Allegro entitled The Young Poet's Dream. The design features a young and immature poet asleep, dreaming of a wedding that is depicted in a sphere that takes up a large part of the upper half of the illustration. To the left of the sphere is the figure of Jonson holding a book and to the right the figure of Shakespeare.[17] Though S. Foster Damon sees this illustration as a mark of Blake's appreciation of Shakespeare in that "the sleeping lad reaches up toward the faintly haloed Shakespeare, who holds the Panpipes of his 'native Wood-notes wilde,'"[18] I am more inclined to agree with Stephen Behrendt who points out that this young lad is not a mature poet, that Blake is

[17] As identified by Stephen C. Behrendt in "Bright Pilgrimage," p. 137.

[18] Dictionary, p. 370.

in fact using his immaturity to point the difference between this poet and the more mature poet depicted in the Il Penseroso designs. In Behrendt's view both Jonson and Shakespeare are used in this design to signify the restrictions of convention by which the young poet is bound, and "their presence on either side of the sphere physically restricts the dream sphere's boundaries, preventing any expansion."[19] Consequently, the main emphasis here is not on the depiction of Shakespeare, or Jonson, but upon the young poet, who probably represents Milton. And the implication is that the young Milton might have been too much under the influence of Jonson and Shakespeare.

More in character with Blake's criticism of Shakespeare is the portrait of Shakespeare drawn by Blake for Design 9 to Gray's "Progress of Poesy." This design, which illustrates Gray's lines "To him the mighty mother did unveil / Her awful face . . . ," portrays a young Shakespeare reaching upward to embrace a veiled female, the "mighty mother," Nature, who holds in her hand two golden keys. This illustration, while it literally depicts the lines of Gray's ode, is somewhat ambiguous where Blake's iconography is concerned. The head and arms of the "mighty mother" emerge from a sphere which in its outer circumference is moon-like and hence a symbol of Beulah or inspiration. But in the interior of the sphere the lines converge to form a veil-like garment--symbol of Generation--which flows down from left to right over

[19] "Bright Pilgrimage," p. 138.

the head and left arm--the arm that encloses Shakespeare--of Nature. My first inclination was to read the veil iconography as Blake's statement of apprehension about a young Shakespeare's affinity with Nature. Irene Tayler, however, does not see the design in this light. She sees the "mighty mother" emerging "from a sort of yellow, open sphere" signifying Beulah and "emphasizing the mutual lovingness of Shakespeare's relationship with Nature."[20] Tayler is probably right. The subtle blending of moon (Beulah) and veil (Generation) and the mutual good will exhibited in the faces of both Nature and Shakespeare may indicate the compatibility of Beulah and Generation for Shakespeare. Possibly Blake's statement here reflects his appreciation of Shakespeare's fairies as objectifications of the workings of the human mind. Shakespeare's concern with Nature--human nature--Blake may be saying, is the hallmark of his work. In his ability to penetrate the secrets of the generative world, a world governed by goddesses of destiny, lies his genius.

The seven character heads, Lear and Cordelia in Prison, the Glendower, the Hotspur, the pencil sketch Hamlet Administering the Oath, Lady Macbeth with Candle and Dagger, Jacques and the Stag, and Romeo and the Apothecary leave little room for interpretive criticism, largely because Blake's usual mythological iconography is absent. This is especially true for the seven character heads, though it is worth noting

[20] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 90.

that two of the seven are of Lear and Cordelia and one is of Lear, perhaps indicating a special interest the play held for Blake. The remaining four character heads are of Falstaff and Prince Hal, Juliet and the Sleeping Draught, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, and Othello and Desdemona.

The Jocund Day or Glad Day design, which exists in several versions, has been identified as having been inspired by lines from Romeo and Juliet (III.v.9-10):[21]

> Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
> Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.

Merchant notes that the "posture of the figure echoes the words of Romeo and, with the dark suggestions of the moth and the caterpillar creeping away, extends the ambiguity of light and darkness in this scene of the lovers' parting at the dawn."[22] I find it difficult to relate the illustration to any specific critical position on Shakespeare's play. The fact, however, that it derives from Shakespeare's lines and the significance of this illustration as Blake's depiction of the Human Form Divine, the individual who has achieved fourfold apocalyptic vision, may be an indirect statement about Blake's conception of Shakespeare as a truly inspired poet-prophet.

[21] Merchant, "Blake's Shakespeare," p. 238.

[22] "Blake's Shakespeare," p. 238.

Three of the designs--Pity, Fiery Pegasus, and Queen Katherine's Dream--are closely related to that group of illustrations in which Blake emphasizes Shakespeare's ghosts and fairies. These designs clearly relate to psychological states and are indications of Blake's intense awareness of Shakespeare's insight into human nature. Pity is based on Macbeth (I.vii.21-25), where Macbeth meditates "on the consequences of his regicide":[23]

> And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
> Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, hors'd
> Upon the sightlesse couriers of the air,
> Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
> That teares shall drown the wind . . .

Blake's illustration is especially striking in that it reveals his sensitivity to every facet of the brilliance of Shakespeare's imagery. The design, in spite of the fact that it does not depict a specific scene or character, is significant in that it exhibits Blake's appreciation of Shakespeare's treatment of Macbeth's awareness of the forceful effect of Pity.

The concept of Pity intrigued Blake; for him it was an ambivalent state of mind. In "The Divine Image" of Songs of Innocence, for example, Pity is a divine attribute, for

> Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell
> There God is dwelling too.

[23] "Blake's Shakespeare," p. 244.

Likewise it is a positive state in Jerusalem (61:43-44):

> O Mercy O Divine Humanity!
> O Forgiveness & Pity & Compassion! . . .

On the one hand, Pity is an aid to reconciliation. But in The Book of Urizen, "pity divides the soul" (p. 76). Pity is responsible in the Bard's Song of Milton for Palambron-Blake's relinquishing of the harrow of epic poetry to Satan-Hayley, the consequences of which were the maddening of the "horses of the Harrow" (7:17). And Los's response to Palambron is to

> let each to his own station
> Keep: nor in pity false, nor in officious brotherhood, where
> None needs, be active. . . .
>
> (7:41-43)

The implication is that there is a true pity and a false pity. And Blake's concern with such a complex psychological state must have inclined him to read again and then illustrate Shakespeare's metaphor which compares the pervasive force of pity, expressed by Macbeth as he assesses his motives and the consequences of the crime he is about to commit, to a "naked new-born babe" or "heaven's cherubin" blown swiftly by the wind.

Fiery Pegasus likewise treats a state of mind, this time the "moment of Prince Hal's regeneration" in King Henry IV, Part I (IV.i. 107-10):[24]

[24] "Blake's Shakespeare," p. 240.

> [Harry] vaulted with such ease into his seat
> As if an angel dropp'd down from the clouds
> To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus,
> And witch the world with noble horsemanship.

Blake has commented on the significance of this illustration in A Descriptive Catalogue:

> A spirit vaulting from a cloud to turn and wind a fiery Pegasus--Shakspeare. The Horse of Intellect is leaping from the cliffs of Memory and Reasoning; it is a barren Rock: it is also called the Barren Waste of Locke and Newton. (p. 536)

Merchant notes that Blake contrasts "the spontaneity and the creative wit of Prince Henry, which develops into the regenerate king of Henry the Fifth," with "the barren reason" he rejected.[25] This is clearly an indication of Blake's interest in the psychological states created by Shakespeare; at the same time it exhibits Blake's critical penchant for universalizing that which he considered true poetry. Fiery Pegasus not only illustrates Shakespeare, it illustrates a general principle of human nature: creative inspiration, Blake believed, foundered in the wastes of rationalism.

Queen Katherine's Dream illustrates the vision that precedes the death of Queen Katherine in King Henry VIII. This painting exhibits a quality found in much of Blake's work that is sometimes absent from the Shakespeare illustrations. This has to do with Blake's tendency to depict in the space external to the human form of a character a scene

[25] "Blake's Shakespeare," p. 241.

which represents a "projection of the consciousness" of that character.[26] In this illustration Queen Katherine reclines upon a couch and is surrounded by the figures of her dream--the "spirits of peace" (IV.ii.83). The iconography which depicts the "blessed troop / . . . whose bright faces / Cast thousand beams upon me like the sun" and "promis'd me eternal happiness" (IV.ii.87-90), is reminiscent of Blake's Beulah in its emphasis on the dream state.

The remaining Shakespeare illustrations are more directly related to Blake's concern with Shakespeare's fairies. Each deals either with fairies or with a ghost. Hecate is directly related to Puck's closing speech in A Midsummer Night's Dream (V.i.366-69):[27]

> And we fairies, that do run
> By the triple Hecate's team
> From the presence of the sun
> Following darkness like a dream . . .

But Hecate can also be linked to "the brooding Hecate of the evil supernatural in Macbeth," to Lear's curse, and to "the murderous potion of the inset play in Hamlet."[28] Blake's illustration of the triple-bodied figure of Hecate, her hand on an open book, left foot forward, and

[26] Mitchell, Blake's Composite Art, p. 59.

[27] Merchant, "Blake's Shakespeare," pp. 243-44.

[28] Merchant, "Blake's Shakespeare," p. 244.

surrounded by a darksome natural scene which includes an ass, an owl, a toad, and an ominous-looking bat, recalls portraits of Vala figures from other designs, particularly the figure of Destiny whose scissors clip the cord that releases Selima to her watery death in the illustrations to Gray's "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat." Hecate, as Nature goddess is a witch and a goddess of destiny, a representative of Generation, the twofold level of vision.

Oberon and Titania and Oberon, Titania, and Puck with Fairies Dancing both address the theme of the significance of Shakespeare's fairies as they illustrate A Midsummer Night's Dream. In the first design the king and queen of fairy tranquilly and daintily repose on a lily. The predominance of the lily stalk and flowers is reminiscent of Blake's iconography of Generation, and may again reflect his belief that fairies control the vegetative world, the world of Experience. Blake's objectification of the fairies in these illustrations emphasizes their existence as psychological or emotional forces, "Goddesses of Destiny" whose meddling dictates the seemingly chaotic behavior and shifting love relationships of Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Another series of paintings which emphasizes Blake's concern with the psychological phenomena of Shakespeare's work illustrates various characters from the plays along with apparitions they see in the context of the plays. This group includes Richard III with the Ghost of His Victim, Brutus with Caesar's Ghost, Hamlet with the Ghost of His

Father, and Macbeth with the Ghost of Banquo. Blake seems to be focusing here on Shakespeare's interest in the psychology of murder, both of those who murder and of those whose "duty" it might be to avenge murder. In these illustrations it is worth noting that the ghosts are portrayed as fully corporeal entities, spirits as "real" as any of the phenomena of our natural world, thus indicating Blake's concern with the reality of mental states.

Another revealing illustration is the Head of Shakespeare which Blake did for Hayley. The Head itself closely resembles the Droeshout engraving of Shakespeare.[29] It is surrounded by a plate-halo which in turn is framed by a wreath of "creeping woodland plants." At Shakespeare's right is a scene from Hamlet--Hamlet with the ghost--and on his left a scene from Macbeth--Macbeth with the witches. This design with its vegetative wreath and depiction of scenes involving a ghost and witches reiterates the fairy motif that exists in other Shakespeare illustrations and in Blake's own words, that "Shakspeare's Fairies . . . are the rulers of the vegetable world" (p. 526), the subject-object world of Generation. The Head of Shakespeare, in short, encapsulates Blake's appreciation of Shakespeare's perception of human character.

It should not be overlooked that of the more than twenty illustrations that can be related to the works of Shakespeare, in addition to the emphasis on fairy and ghost-like entities which objectify

[29] See William Wells, William Blake's "Heads of the Poets," p. 22.

psychological states, Blake's focus has been primarily on Hamlet, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, King Henry IV, and King Lear. At least three designs, and as many as six in the case of Macbeth, can be linked to each of these plays. One illustration can be linked to each of King Richard III, Julius Caesar, King Henry VIII, and Othello. Clearly Blake has slighted the history plays for those which deal more specifically with psychological phenomena. King Lear and King Henry IV have as an important theme education and self-knowledge, while Hamlet and Macbeth deal with murder and revenge. Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night's Dream focus on the emotions, and in the latter the emphasis on fantasy can be allegorically linked to the chaotic behavior of the characters. Blake perhaps slighted the history plays because he wished to play down the "malady & infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the Sword" by which both Shakespeare and Milton were "curbd" (Milton, Plate 1). Yet, as he said in a letter to Flaxman, "Shakespeare in riper years gave me his hand" (p. 680), and understanding the significance of Shakespeare's fairies he turned instead to attempts to show this significance in his designs. Blake realized that Shakespeare's gift was similar to Chaucer's, that he was a master of portraying human character, the "physiognomies or lineaments of universal human life" (pp. 523-24). In the words of Northrop Frye, Blake realized that "In the minds of Chaucer and Shakespeare was the universal Word of God, the archetypal vision of 'All that Exists.'"[30]

[30] Fearful Symmetry, p. 121.

Blake's Criticism of Spenser

Although Blake did not hold Spenser in as high esteem as he did Shakespeare and Milton, Spenser was nevertheless important to him both in terms of influence and as a visionary poet. Blake's criticism of Spenser is, however, double-edged, reflecting both a concern with the restrictions placed upon Spenser by his close association with the monarchy and a deep appreciation of a poet whose vision was in some ways analogous to his own.

The criticism of Spenser consists mainly of two illustrations of Spenser himself and the large tempera illustration of the characters from The Faerie Queene. Unfortunately, Blake's prose and poetry contain few explicit references to Spenser, but some of his early work reflects the influence of and his reverence for the poet.

At least three of the poems from Poetical Sketches--"To the Evening Star," "To Morning," and "Imitation of Spenser"--reflect early indications of Spenserian influence. Margaret Lowery, Harold Bloom, and David Wagenknecht, among others, have noted the influence of Spenser's "Epithalamion" on "To the Evening Star."[31] Bloom comments on the

[31] See Lowery, Windows of the Morning: A Critical Study of

influence of Spenser's "Epithalamion" on "To Morning," noting that the allusion to Spenser here is "curiously ironic" since "Spenser's virgin bride comes out of her eastern chamber, like the sun, clad in white and ready for her marriage." But Blake's morning, who is both "white-clad virgin goddess" and "a buskined huntswoman" who "rouses the sun like a huntsman to the chase," suggests "that the classical Aurora, certainly no virgin, is becoming the first of Blake's elusive and demonic nature goddesses, sadistic in her virginity, and mockingly cyclic in her effect upon mankind."[32] The "Imitation of Spenser," Bloom and Frye note, is a "conscious experiment" and more than a mere "unsuccessful attempt to write Spenserian stanzas."[33] Frye notes that each stanza of the poem is "a different variation of the Spenserian model," and he draws attention to Blake's attempts to "weld a whole quatrain or sixain into a single rhythmic unit" by avoiding end-stopped lines.[34]

Another instance of Blake's reliance on Spenser exists in one of his Notebook entries where he inscribes under a sketch of a youth chasing human butterflies, used in The Gates of Paradise and in two

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William Blake's Poetical Sketches, 1783 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1940), pp. 98-103; Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, p. 17; and Wagenknecht, Blake's Night: William Blake and the Idea of Pastoral (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 33-36.

[32] Blake's Apocalypse, p. 18.

[33] Bloom, Commentary, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, p. 888; Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p. 183. Quotations are from Bloom.

[34] Fearful Symmetry, p. 183.

designs for Young's Night Thoughts, lines from Spenser's Faerie Queene (II.ii.2):[35]

> 'Ah luckless babe born under cruel star
> And in dead parents baleful ashes bred
> That little weenest now what sorrows are
> Left thee for portion of thy livelihed
> Spenser'

Obviously, when the pencil sketch was drawn, Blake's intention was to portray the naive child of Spenser's lines, a child who is still unaware of what life holds for him. But he adds a touch of characteristic irony because the boy who is catching the human butterflies with his hat must at the same time be killing them, since while one eludes him in the air, another lies prostrate on the ground. The implication is that the naive youth knows neither what is in store for him nor the harm he brings to others in his careless naiveté.

More significant in terms of Blake's criticism of Spenser, however, are the illustrations of Spenser himself and of the characters of The Faerie Queene. Blake's Head of Spenser, done for Hayley while he was at Felpham, depicts a middle-aged Spenser "surrounded by a spiky wreath of olive and an outer circle of flying nymphs." On Spenser's left is a "bearded man holding a staff beneath two stars," and on his right, "a female figure wearing crown and ruff seated in a crescent moon

[35] The Notebook of William Blake: A Photographic and Typographic Facsimile, ed. David V. Erdman, rev. ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 16-17, N19.

below a star." Suspended from Spenser's neck is a medal inscribed "'Eliza(beth).'"[36] Wells traces the iconography of the illustration--shepherd, queen, nymphs, stars--to the Eclogue for April in The Shepherd's Calendar, which as he notes was "'purposely intended to the honor and prayse of our most gracious souereigne, Queene Elizabeth.'" This interpretation identifies the "bearded shepherd" as "Hobbinol singing Colin Clout's . . . 'laye of fayre Elisa, Queen of Shepheardes all.'"[37] Commenting on the portrait, Irene Tayler has indicated that it "synopsizes Blake's view of Spenser," that though it suggests "Spenser was in real life too much the queen's man, a courtier quick with polished praise, and of insufficient poetic independence," the nymphs, which she calls fairies, signify his "real strength as a poet, his ability to build and people visionary worlds, to offer 'wisdom' . . . in 'fairy dreams.'"[38] Clearly the emphasis in the illustration is on Spenser's association with Queen Elizabeth, and the high ruff collar worn by the female figure, Spenser's collar with its spiked edge, and the aged shepherd, whose age and beard take on Urizenic overtones, reflect Blake's apprehension about Spenser's association with the court. Though the nymphs and the crescent moon may allude to Beulah, home of

[36] Wells, William Blake's "Heads of the Poets," p. 21.

[37] Wells, William Blake's "Heads of the Poets," p. 21.

[38] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, pp. 104-05.

Blake's Daughters of Inspiration, and reflect Blake's positive feelings toward Spenser, the iconography of repression is predominant in the design.

Blake also portrayed Spenser in Design 12 of his illustrations to Gray's "The Bard." This design was intended to illustrate Gray's lines praising Spenser:

> The verse adorn again
> Fierce War, and faithful Love,
> And Truth severe, by fairy Fiction drest.

It shows Spenser seated, looking down at a fairy held in the palm of his hand. On the ground to his right are three figures representing the scene "'Sir Guyon in the cave of Mammon.'" Another scene just above this group illustrates the "episode of 'Redcrosse in the cave of Despair.'" Two figures stand just above and to the left of Spenser. One, a young woman holding an open book, probably represents Truth; the other, a male figure wearing a spiked collar, represents fairy Fiction.[39] This illustration, like the Head of Spenser, contains iconography which reflects Blake's ambivalence toward Spenser. The figures of Truth and Fiction are themselves ambiguous. Truth, stepping lightly ahead of Fiction, carries an open book, while Fiction, who wears a predominant spiked collar, carries a scroll. The open book in Blake's iconography

[39] These identifications are by Sir Geoffrey Keynes, William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for the Poems of Thomas Gray, p. 59; and by Irene Tayler, Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 106. Quotations are from Keynes.

is often associated with Urizen and the repression of Ulro. Likewise, the spiked collar worn by Fiction is indicative of repression--perhaps that of Queen Elizabeth's court. But Fiction carries a scroll, which is a positive symbol for Blake and reflects the creative element in Spenser's "fairy Fiction," as opposed to the "rigidity of doctrine" represented by the book.[40] Also significant are the cherubs playing horns over the heads of Truth and Fiction and whose attention is directed toward Fiction. Blake seems to be saying that Spenser's allegory, though laden with a rigid and repressive doctrine, does reach toward the sublime insofar as he dresses it with the creative elements of Fiction, a "fairy Fiction" that is nevertheless in danger of losing its force because of Spenser's predilection to the court of Queen Elizabeth.

More clearly positive in their comment on Spenser are the scenes from The Faerie Queene and the fairy who stands in the palm of Spenser's hand. Irene Tayler explains the bringing together of these two scenes which portray "temptations to wealth and to despair" as Blake's indication of "the stuff," the variety of Spenser's "visionary knowledge."[41] The fairy in Spenser's hand, which is the object of his concentrated gaze, may reflect an appreciation of Spenser's fairies, his fictional characters, in the same sense that Blake could appreciate the fairies of Chaucer and Shakespeare. He realized their archetypal

[40] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 104.

[41] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 107.

significance, that Spenser's characters were allegorical representations of various facets of human nature.

Blake's masterpiece of Spenserian criticism, however, is the large tempera, The Characters in Spenser's Faerie Queene, conjectured by Sir Geoffrey Keynes to have been executed ca. 1815 and by Martin Butlin and John Grant ca. 1825.[42] This illustration has been compared with Blake's illustration of the Canterbury pilgrims. The two paintings are almost the same size, and Grant and Brown note that the "similarity of arrangements of the figures in both paintings imply that Blake intended them to be companion pictures," though it is unlikely they were ever, in the original state, displayed together.[43]

A striking feature of the arrangement of the two illustrations is that where Chaucer's cavalcade moves from left to right across the print, Spenser's moves from right to left. As I have already indicated, Blake's general intention with Chaucer's characters was to indicate that their pilgrimage was worthwhile, that in going to Canterbury the pilgrims were symbolically voyaging toward Jerusalem or fourfold vision. And it is possible that by turning Spenser's characters in the other direction he was implying that they, perhaps because of Spenser's attachment to the court of Queen Elizabeth, failed to progress toward apocalyptic vision. Since the natural movement of

[42] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 56.

[43] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 57.

the eye across the page is from left to right, the right to left direction in which Spenser's cavalcade is headed is disturbing to the viewer and certainly does not convey a sense of progress. Grant and Brown also question the progress of the cavalcade, noting that except for the lion, Una's ass, and Guyon's horse, who seem to be moving forward, many of the mounts appear to make little progress--three, in fact, "are rearing and two are shying."[44]

Several parallels have been drawn between sets of characters in the two illustrations. Damon, Grant, and Brown all see a correspondence between Una and the Prioress.[45] Damon notes that "Redcrosse, like Chaucer's Knight, leads the cavalcade," and that "Sir Guyon looks backward, just as does the Pardoner."[46] Damon, Grant, and Brown note the similarity of the cruciform posture of the central female character of the Spenser design with the cruciform posture of Harry Baily in the Chaucer illustration, a similarity which is indeed striking in view of its reflection of cross iconography, which for Blake was a symbol of repression.[47] But where Damon identifies this central female figure as Amoret, Grant and Brown identify her as Britomart and then point to her

[44] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 59.

[45] Dictionary, p. 383; "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 58.

[46] Dictionary, p. 383.

[47] Dictionary, pp. 383-84; "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 58.

resemblance to the Wife of Bath. There is a resemblance between this figure in the Spenser illustration and the Wife of Bath in the Chaucer illustration. Both, though their horses are pointed in opposite directions, are seated with bodies facing and positioned, with the exception of the arms, almost identically. Both ride their horses side-saddle with their knees pointed toward the viewer's left and torsos turned so that their glances are directed in the opposite direction from their knees. Perhaps it is significant that the glance of the Wife of Bath faces the front of the procession--ahead and perhaps indicative of progression--while the woman in the Spenser illustration glances backward toward the rear of the cavalcade. The positions of the toes of the two women are identical; the Spenser character, however, appears to have her right foot in a stirrup.

In supporting the Britomart identification of the central female figure, Grant and Brown note that she is intended by Blake, because of "eye-framings . . . and arm-framings," to be connected with the central male figure, whose posture is similar to that of the female figure and whom they identify as Arthegall. Second, they note that Amoret as a character is not sufficiently courageous to assume the confident posture of the figure in the illustration. Another major factor in the Grant/Brown argument is the figure's position "as the third frontline mounted figure in the procession, where we would expect to find the central character of Book III." And they observe that it is

possible to interpret what seem to be garters and other lines on the figure's legs, upper arms, and midriff as indications that she is wearing an armor undergarment.[48] It seems likely that Grant and Brown are right in their identification and that Blake did intend this figure to be Britomart, who is a composite of the female representations of Chastity in Book III of The Faerie Queene.

That she is intended by Blake to be connected with the figure of Arthegall is clear, but I think Blake may have had his own reasons for the connection, reasons separate from Spenser's story. If one looks at the overall illustration, the central, dominating figure is the Urizenic portrait of the God of This World whose outstretched hands rest on the right (viewer's left) over the head of the female figure, and on the left over the head of Arthegall, the central figure of Book V and who Grant and Brown note has been "advanced to the fourth position of prominence."[49] Arthegall, who represents Justice in Spenser's allegory, is wearing a crown and pointing with his left hand toward the figure of Justice above him, his fingers almost touching the sword point of the God of This World. His right hand points toward the globe over which the God of This World presides. The important feature here is that there is not one central figure among the characters. Instead

[48] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 66-67.

[49] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 69.

there are two--Britomart and Arthegall--both seated face forward with their arms in cruciform position, the God of This World centered over them. I think Blake intended to pair the two, just as he grouped the Man of Law, the Parson, and the Plowman in the Chaucer illustration, in order to emphasize his belief that justice must be tempered with mercy or love. Britomart, representative of true love, holds a central position along with Arthegall, and in so doing expresses Blake's antipathy toward cold, unmerciful justice. And the ambiguous state of her dress--what appears to be an undergarment of armor covered by a sheer outergarment--may reflect Blake's intention to emphasize her composite nature, a nature that includes both courage and love.

One of the most significant differences between the Chaucer and Spenser illustrations lies in the emphasis placed on characters as opposed to background design. In the Chaucer illustration, though one cannot overlook the significance of the background, it is certainly Chaucer's characters who deserve the most attention. Blake's continued emphasis on character types in A Descriptive Catalogue clearly attests to this. Conversely, in the Spenser illustration, Grant and Brown have noted the increased significance of the "heavenly regions," attributing this emphasis to Spenser's "more explicit account of his divine machinery." Because Chaucer "gives his illustrator little explicit guidance as to how his supernal regions should be conceived." Blake "was free

to provide only birds and a few other pictorial details as auguries of supernal design in Chaucer." But with Spenser he "could follow his author in rendering the heavenly regions visually."[50]

The Spenser illustration can be readily divided into three parts: the foreground, which depicts the specific characters that people The Faerie Queene: the middle distance, which depicts scenes from the poem; and the supernal regions, whose iconography depicts the four levels of vision of Blake's archetypal myth. Not to be overlooked is the cloud barrier separating the supernal regions from the rest of the illustration, a cloud which originates in the mouth of the dragon whose head leads the procession. That the supernal regions so clearly depict each of Blake's four states of vision may indicate that Blake could see in Spenser's allegory the same corresponding levels. Harold Bloom, for instance, in Book I of The Faerie Queene, sees these four levels of vision:

> the redeemed City of the Faerie Queene [Eden], the paradisal Garden of Una's parents, restored by St. George's triumphal dragon fights and his marriage to Una [Beulah], the post-lapsarian generative universe in which the knight undergoes trials, deceptions, and unsanctified sexual experience, and the self-absorbed Ulro, or hell-within-nature, of Archimago's hermitage, Duessa's bowers, and Fradubio's vegetative prison.[51]

[50] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 58.

[51] The Visionary Company, pp. 23-24.

These same states can be traced from left to right across the top of the Spenser illustration, and they are also reflected in the selections of scenes from The Faerie Queene that Blake depicts in the middle distance, though the latter have not been depicted in so orderly a fashion as the iconography of the supernal regions.

To the far left of the illustration, over the heads of Una, her dwarf and lion, and the Redcrosse Knight, and significantly over the Cave of Despair and what has been identified as either the Gulf of Greediness or the Idle Lake in the middle distance,[52] is Blake's iconography of his fourfold state, Eden: a Gothic arched bridge and a "radiant Gothic cathedral."[53] That the Cave of Despair and this ambiguous body of water lie between Una and the Redcrosse Knight and Jerusalem or fourfold vision may reflect Blake's contention that the developing soul must move from Innocence or Beulah through Experience or Generation in order to reach the higher organized innocence of Eden.

Second in line in the supernal regions is Blake's iconography of Beulah, a figure which Damon calls Mercy, and Grant and Brown refer to as Cynthia, a "moon spirit."[54] Either nomenclature qualifies her as a daughter of Blake's Beulah, where female goddesses lovingly minister to the spirit in distress. Directly below this Beulah symbol, in the

[52] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 78.

[53] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 81.

[54] Dictionary, p. 384; "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 81.

middle distance, are the castle of Celia, where "Redcrosse is restored after his experience in Despaire's Cave"--a sign of the "healing resolution" of Beulah, and a "haloed building," perhaps the castle of Una's parents,[55] a logical next step in Redcrosse's progression, though ironically extending in a direction opposite to that in which the cavalcade is facing. Behind Cynthia in the sky is an entourage of small figures. The next major figure is the God of This World, who presides over the illustration from a central point in the supernal regions, and to whom I shall return shortly.

Moving to the right of the God of This World, the next figure is a dimly distinguishable spread-winged form identified by Grant and Brown as Nature,[56] and clearly symbolizing Blake's state of Generation. Next to Nature is another Generation symbol, Astroea or Justice, who holds up a set of yellow scales.[57] The significance of her relationship to Arthegall below her in the mundane region has already been mentioned. Clearly these two figures represent Blake's state of Generation, the world of vegetative experience, a subject-object world in which ethical matters of right and wrong prevail. Though the figures in the middle distance are blurred and difficult to discern at this point in the illustration, Grant and Brown have identified a significant

[55] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 78.

[56] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 83.

[57] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 84.

amount of vegetation--a "tree on the horizon," a "range of trees."[58]

Blake's level of "single vision and Newton's sleep," Ulro, is depicted in the supernal regions to the far right of the illustration by two figures standing at burning altars,[59] perhaps alluding to the concept of vengeance represented for Blake in the Genesis story of Cain and Abel; and by a figure which is identified by Grant and Brown as the Archer God--Apollo--and by Damon as "the red-rayed Molech, who commands the sacrifice of the baby of the two parents standing at the flaming altar."[60] Regardless of the specific identification, the sacrificial symbolism is that of Ulro. Also representative of Ulro is the figure of the tower of Babel and a series of structures in the style of pagan architecture. Significantly, this Ulro iconography dominates the rear of the cavalcade whose final characters are Archimago, Duessa, and the Blatant Beast.

From the midst of the supernal regions, the God of This World, wearing a spiked crown and bearing a sword in his left hand, presides behind a globe representing the world. His line of sight is directed towards the rear of the procession and towards the iconography of Generation and Ulro. This figure with his long white beard is Blake's Urizen, his negative conception of a Nobodaddy God of dogma and

[58] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 61.

[59] Grant and Brown, "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 84.

[60] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 61.

vengeance. Here Blake is surely commenting on the repressive religion of Spenser's God and the religious dogma which is part of the allegory of his poem. In this respect, the parallel between Una and the Prioress of the Chaucer illustration is significant in that it exhibits Blake's dismay with Spenser's God, a god who finds truth in what Blake would have considered prudery. Not to be overlooked is the fact that Una holds on her lap a large book, the iconography of Ulro.

But a most important entity inhabiting the supernal regions has not yet been discussed, and this is the figure of a man between the God of This World and Astroea or Justice, and over whom the right wing of Nature and the halo of Jove form a rainbow-enclave.[61] The figure, who appears to draw or write "without looking at his work" has been identified by Damon and by Grant and Brown as an artist, and Grant and Brown indicate they are uncertain "whether this is Blake's assessment of Spenser's limitation or whether it is Blake's confession of his own shortcomings."[62] It could, of course, be both, but in view of the critical nature of Blake's illustrations and the serious implication such a placement of Spenser might indicate, I am inclined to believe that this figure does represent Spenser and that it is a major key to Blake's assessment of him. That the artist sits between a Urizenic god and Justice with her scales indicates that his vision is hindered, that

[61] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 83.

[62] "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 83.

in some respects it falls short of Blake's fourfold apocalyptic vision. In addition to this, as Grant and Brown note, the artist rests under the wing of Nature, "a sinister figure" whose influence is "certainly malevolent"[63] since it could reflect Spenser's failure, in some instances, to move beyond a generative level of vision.

Hence it appears that Blake's conception of Spenser was largely ambivalent. On the one hand he saw aspects of genius in Spenser's work, aspects significant enough to induce him to a criticism of the poet's work. But at the same time Blake was intensely aware of the limitations of Spenser's vision, limitations which he connected with Spenser's ties with contemporary religious dogma and the court of Queen Elizabeth. Nevertheless, his own genius sensitized him to the sublime elements of Spenser's allegory. And though he places Spenser in a precarious position, between a Urizenic God and the iconography of Generation, he does place him in the supernal regions, thus indicating that he found Spenser's work, particularly The Faerie Queene, full of vision. Spenser, he knew, could envision existence in levels approximating his own four levels of vision.

63 "Spenser's Faerie Queene," 83-84.

Blake's Criticism of Milton

Just as Spenser had been Milton's master, Milton became Blake's. With no other English poet does Blake have a closer affinity. Blake writes in a letter to Flaxman, 12 September 1800, that "Milton lov'd me in childhood & shew'd me his face" (p. 680). Henry Crabb Robinson's "Reminiscences" (1852) contains an account of Robinson's conversations with Blake about Milton:

> As he spoke of frequently Seeing Milton, I ventured to ask, half ashamed at the time, which of the three or four portraits in Hollis's Memoirs (Vols in 4to) is the most like[.]--He answd ['] They are all like, At different Ages[.]--I have seen him as a youth And as an old man with a long flowing beard[.] He came lately as an old man[.]--He said he came to ask a favor of me[.] --He said he had committed an error in his Paradise Lost, which he wanted me to correct, in a poem or picture; but I declined[.] I said I had my own duties to perform[.]--It is a presumptuous question[.'] I replied--[']Might I venture to ask--What that could be[?']--[']He wished me to expose the falsehood of his doctrine, taught in the Paradise Lost--That Sexual intercourse arouse out of the Fall[.]--Now that cannot be, for no good can spring out of Evil[.' ']But['], I replied, [']if the consequences were Evil, mixed with Good, then the good might fairly be ascribed to the common cause[.']--To this he answerd--by a reference to the Androgynous state, in which I could not possibly follow him[.][64]

[64] Quoted by G. E. Bentley, Jr., Blake Records (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 543-44.

This episode about which Robinson writes occurred in December of 1825,[65] after Blake had already completed Milton.[66] And regardless of Blake's seeming assertion to the contrary, a number of critics would agree that Blake had indeed pursued the task of correcting just such an error in Paradise Lost.

Blake's criticism of Milton, whether in correction or in celebration, extends throughout every period and aspect of his work. In addition to the epic-prophecy Milton, there are early indications of Miltonic influence in the Poetical Sketches. Blake's criticism is evident in his illustrations and portraits of Milton himself, in his illustrations of many of Milton's works, in the parallels that can be drawn between almost every major work of Blake's and a corresponding work of Milton's, and in his explicit critique of Milton in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

Milton's influence on the Poetical Sketches has been repeatedly noted by scholars. Harold Bloom and Michael Phillips have both remarked on the influence of Milton in "Samson."[67] Margaret Lowery notes the influence of both the Bible and Samson Agonistes in "Samson," and she also sees the echo of Milton's conclusion to Lycidas in the

[65] Bentley, Blake Records, p. 315.

[66] See David V. Erdman's discussion of the dating of Milton, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, pp. 727-28.

[67] Blake's Apocalypse, p. 22; "Blake's Early Poetry," William Blake: Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes, ed. Morton D. Paley and Michael Phillips (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 13.

closing lines of "To Autumn."[68] And Bloom notes that "To the Muses" "seems to echo Milton's 'Comus,' lines 98f."[69]

Blake's illustrations of both Milton the man and of Milton's text are numerous. In addition to the Head of Milton done for Hayley's set of the Heads of the Poets, Blake portrays Milton twice in his illustrations to the poems of Gray, and eleven times in his illustrations to his own Milton. The illustrations to Milton's poems include, in addition to more than twenty separate designs which do not comprise a part of any set and range in dates of execution from 1788 to 1808, two sets of eight designs to Comus, one dated 1801 and the other 1805-1810; three sets of illustrations to Paradise Lost, one of twelve designs done in 1807, one of nine designs dated 1808, and an unfinished set of three illustrations, dated 1822; two sets of six illustrations to the Nativity Ode, done 1809; a set of twelve illustrations to L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, 1816; and a set of twelve illustrations to Paradise Regained, also dated 1816.[70] In short, with the exception of Samson Agonistes, Blake illustrated all of Milton's major poems.[71]

[68] Windows of the Morning, pp. 77, 85.

[69] Commentary, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, p. 888.

[70] See "A Catalogue of Blake's Illustrations to Milton," Appendix B, Calm of Mind: Tercentenary Essays on Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes in Honor of John S. Diekhoff, ed. Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 331-42.

[71] Damon, "Blake and Milton," p. 95.

Parallels and other close relationships have been drawn between almost all the major works of Blake and Milton. Damon, for example, has drawn parallels which exhaust most of the titles. Blake expanded the idea of the "alternating moods" of L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, he notes, to his "'two contrary states of the human soul,' the extremes, ecstacy and despair, and bound the Songs of Innocence to the Songs of Experience by pairing his contrasting lyrics, so that each complements the other." The Book of Thel Damon sees as a "reconsideration of the idea on which Comus is based."[72] Jerusalem corresponds to Milton's History of Britain, "which Blake expands into the fall and resurrection of Albion, the history of all mankind."[73] "America corresponds to Milton's political works," and "The Visions of the Daughters of Albion corresponds to the divorce books." Both, Damon notes, attack unhappy marriage, "but where Milton is content to advocate divorce for incompatibility," Blake demands "the complete freedom of love, regardless of ceremony." The Marriage of Heaven and Hell Damon compares to The Christian Doctrine,[74] and he sees "some striking resemblances" between The Four Zoas and Paradise Lost, "especially in the degeneration of Urizen, whom Blake identifies with Satan." Milton is "a frank attempt to revaluate and correct Milton's chief ideas," and

[72] "Blake and Milton," p. 92.

[73] "Blake and Milton," p. 95.

[74] "Blake and Milton," p. 94.

"Milton's descent from Eternity is a study of the development of his thought, illustrated with quotations from Paradise Lost." Finally, Damon sees a relationship between Milton's Nativity Ode and Europe.[75] Harold Bloom also sees a relationship between Europe and the Nativity Ode, noting various passages which parody Milton's poem.[76] Michael Tolley sees the Nativity Ode as a "framework and a stimulus" for Europe,[77] and Joseph Wittreich interprets Europe as a "focusing and an extension of the vision beneath Milton's poem."[78] Bloom notes that The Book of Urizen "parodies Genesis and Paradise Lost, and attempts to correct what Blake considers the imaginative errors of those myths of creation."[79] Wittreich also sees connections between The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, and Areopagitica and Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,[80] between The Four Zoas and Paradise Lost, and between Milton and Jerusalem, and Paradise Regained. "The epic structure of The Four Zoas," he says, "derives from Paradise Lost; and the epic structures of

[75] "Blake and Milton," p. 95.

[76] Blake's Apocalypse, pp. 148-49.

[77] "Europe: 'to those ychain'd in sleep,'" Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic, p. 145.

[78] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 90.

[79] The Visionary Company, p. 71.

[80] "Blake's Philosophy of Contraries: A New Source," English Language Notes, 4 (1966), 105-10.

Milton and Jerusalem derive from Paradise Regained."[81]

Blake's explicit critique of Milton, however, is contained on Plates 5 and 6 of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:

> Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling.
>
> And being restrained it by degrees becomes passive till it is only the shadow of desire.
>
> The history of this is written in Paradise Lost, & the Governor or Reason is call'd Messiah.
>
> And the original Archangel or possessor of the command of the heavenly host, is calld the Devil or Satan and his children are call'd Sin and Death
>
> But in the Book of Job Miltons Messiah is call'd Satan.
>
> For this history has been adopted by both parties
>
> It indeed appear'd to Reason as if Desire was cast out, but the Devils account is, that the Messiah fell. & formed a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss
>
> This is shewn in the Gospel, where he prays to the Father to send the comforter or Desire that Reason may have Ideas to build on, the Jehovah of the Bible being no other than he, who dwells in flaming fire. Know that after Christs death, he became Jehovah.
>
> But in Milton; the Father is Destiny, the Son, a Ratio of the five senses. & the Holy-ghost, Vacuum!
>
> Note: The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devils party without knowing it.

This critique on Milton has been variously interpreted and is at least partly responsible for the nineteenth-century critical approach which held that Satan was the hero of Paradise Lost. Harold Bloom refers to the passage as "one of the most frequently misread passages in Blake,"

[81] "Opening the Seals: Blake's Epics and the Milton Tradition," Blake's Sublime Allegory: Essays on The Four Zoas, Milton, Jerusalem, ed. Stuart Curran and Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1973), p. 49.

noting that Blake "offers an aesthetic criticism of Paradise Lost, not a reading of Milton's intentions." Blake is tracing "the declining movement of creative energy in Paradise Lost from the active of the early books to the passive of the poem's conclusion." And Blake, Bloom asserts, is not "inverting conventional categories of moral good and evil"; instead, he is "insisting that poetic imagination and the energy of human desire are near allied, and that for a poet as poet the ordinary moral categories are contained within a more limited context than the larger world of poetry makes available to him."[82]

Clearly, the evidence for Blake's criticism of Milton has provided an ample source for critics striving to interpret precisely what it was that Blake had to say about him. In a broad and general sense, this criticism seems to assume two perspectives: one, that Blake thought Milton's vision limited and that it was his intention to revise it; the other, that though he saw some fault in Milton's early work, Blake grew to appreciate Milton as a true poet-prophet and that it was his intention to celebrate or apotheosize Milton as such. Among the contenders that Blake chiefly took it upon himself to revise or extend Milton's vision have been Jean Hagstrum, S. Foster Damon, Harold Bloom, Northrop Frye, Irene Tayler, Ben Jones, and W. J. T. Mitchell.[83] Joseph

[82] Commentary, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, p. 810.

[83] See Hagstrum, William Blake: Poet and Painter, p. 124; Damon, "Blake and Milton," pp. 89-96; Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, p. 80; Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p. 346; Tayler, Blake's Illustrations to the

Wittreich has been the main proponent of the latter perspective. According to Wittreich, Blake's task with Milton was to illuminate him to a public that did not understand him. Some of the misunderstanding Wittreich sees as resulting from the misinterpretation of Blake by previous critics. And noting Blake's tendency to revise his own criticism of Milton through various sets of illustrations, Wittreich emphasizes that the changes seem to "progress from criticism to celebration."[84]

A thorough treatment of Blake's criticism of Milton could obviously extend into several volumes. But it seems to me that the criticism essentially revolves around Milton's treatment of two primary archetypes central to the mythology of both poets: the Fall and the Atonement. With regard to the Fall, Blake seems to have either seriously disagreed with Milton's concept or at least to have seen it as needing clarification, concealed in his narrative technique and religious orthodoxy. But Blake's 1816 illustrations to Paradise Regained reflect that by this time Blake had come to see that Milton's concept of Atonement was in harmony with his own, which rejected the crucifixion concept of Atonement in favor of a less avenging mode, a mode which exhibits a full faith in love and forgiveness and in

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Poems of Gray, p. 10; Jones, "Blake on Gray," p. 129; and Mitchell, Blake's Composite Art, pp. 114-21.

[84] Angel of Apocalypse, pp. 13-48.

mankind's at-one-ment with the God within.

Blake must have been attracted by the prevalence of the theme of temptation and choice that runs throughout all of Milton's major poetry and even some of the prose. James Holly Hanford has, in fact, traced the theme in several of Milton's major works, and summarizes its importance for Milton when he writes:

> Milton, like all Puritans, was prone to detect in almost every phase of human experience the presence of a moral conflict, to interpret even those aspects which to other men raise no moral questions, in terms of the eternal struggle of good and evil. Victory or defeat in this struggle is the crucial issue in the lives of men as Milton read them, and accordingly temptation, yielded to or overcome, is a dominant motive of his creative art.[85]

The temptation motif is implied in the Nativity Ode, for example, in the juxtaposition of pagan and Christian mythology, signaling, as Stephen Behrendt has noted, Milton's own "choice of a Christocentric mythology over a pagan one."[86] It appears, obviously, in L'Allegro and Il Penseroso in what Hanford calls "two refined ideals of sense enjoyment," but what seems to me most clearly a choice between Innocence and Experience. Hanford notes the temptation motive in Lycidas and The Sixth Elegy, in the choice offered between "the principle of sense indulgence and that of a tempered ascetism." Milton's choice is between

[85] "The Temptation Motive in Milton," Studies in Philology, 15 (1918), 176.

[86] "Blake's Illustrations to Milton's Nativity Ode," Philological Quarterly, 55 (1976), 65.

"light elegy" and "the enjoyments of the Christmas revels," or the spare life of "the great serious poet." In Comus, the choice is between "sensuality and virtue," and in Paradise Lost, the motive is expressed in the primarily sensual character of Adam's temptation and sin."[87] Again, the archetypal essence of the Fall in Paradise Lost involves a choice between Innocence and Experience. In Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes Hanford notes that the "immediate sense of the reality of the temptation has disappeared" and that one finds only "distant echoes" of Adam's temptation.[88] Clearly, however, Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes both revolve around three temptations. In Samson Agonistes Samson is tempted by Manoa's offer to "procure his liberty by Ransom,"[89] by Dalila's offer of "conjugal affection" (l. 739), and finally by Harapha's incitement to show his strength at "the Feast before the Lords and People."[90] In Paradise Regained the temptations are those of faith, as Christ is tempted to make bread out of stones; to accept the worldly gifts of Satan, a magnificent banquet, treasures, fame, the throne of David, and the "full might of Rome"; and finally to "cast himself from the pinnacle

[87] "The Temptation Motive in Milton," 177.

[88] "The Temptation Motive in Milton," 178.

[89] Argument, "Samson Agonistes," John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey, 1957), p. 551. All quotations from Milton are from this edition.

[90] Argument, p. 551.

of the temple."[91]

Milton's concern with temptation and choice is also an important issue in Areopagitica. Drawing a dichotomy between good and evil that was abhorrent to Blake, Milton affirms the existence and the necessity of evil in the world since it is by choosing good when confronted by both good and evil that the individual proves his virtue:

> As therefore the state of man now is, what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. (p. 728)

Pronouncing the temptation theme he later iterates in Paradise Lost, Milton writes:

> Many there be that complain of divine providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! when God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions. We ourselves esteem not of that obedience, or love, or gift, which is of force. God therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object, ever almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence. Wherefore did he create passions within us,

[91] See Allan H. Gilbert's "The Temptation in Paradise Regained," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 15 (1916), 599-611, for this interpretation of the three temptations.

> pleasures round about us, but that these rightly tempered are the very ingredients of virtue? (p. 733)

Herein lies the key to Blake's disagreement with Milton on the concept of the Fall, and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell expresses Blake's contention in its insistence on the need for gratification of desire, and in its amplification of Blake's theory of contraries. The distortion of the contraries into orthodox concepts of good and evil Blake criticizes in Plate 3:

> Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human Existence.
>
> From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason[.] Evil is the active springing from Energy.
>
> Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell.

Milton, Blake is saying, has assigned the terms "Good" and "Evil" to two contrary and inherent principles of the human mind, to Energy and Reason, neither of which when present in due proportion is evil. Milton saw mankind as caught between the necessary contraries of good and evil and expected him to choose--if he chose rightly--good (Reason) over evil (Energy). But in the act of choosing good, evil would be negated or eliminated, and with its elimination, the contraries, which Blake saw as necessary for progression, would no longer exist. Blake saw mankind as caught between the contraries of Energy and Reason and expected him to resolve the conflict not by choosing either Energy or Reason but by achieving a marriage that included both. In Blake's view, Energy, which is by the religious, including Milton, considered Evil,

is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
Energy is Eternal Delight. (Plate 4)

Thus, in Blake's words:

Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling. (Plate 5)

Hence in the individual in whom Energy is so weak as to permit Reason to dominate over Energy, desire is stifled. Energy (Milton's Evil) was essential to the individual who would progress from Innocence through Experience to a new and higher innocence in Eden.

This conception of Good and Evil as the contraries of Energy and Reason throws a new light on the concept of temptation and choice, especially as it concerns the movement from Innocence to Experience, the archetypal Fall. As Blake would interpret the concept of temptation, the movement from Innocence to Experience, the exercise of will or a weakness of desire which would have permitted Eve to refuse the apple and Adam likewise to refuse her would have entailed a movement out of a state of Beulah, not toward Experience or Generation and finally toward Blake's Eden and the state of higher innocence, but slipping backward into the state of Ulro or a hell of self-absorption.

One of Blake's most coherent statements on his own conception of the Fall, though it came years before he began his most intensive criticism of Milton, is dramatically presented in The Book of Thel (1789). On a literal level, the young Thel, whose name, as Bloom notes,

comes from the Greek word for "will" or "wish,"[92] leaves the pastoral vale of Mne Seraphim to seek "the secret air," where she laments the transient state of her life. In the course of her lamentation she encounters a lily, a cloud, a worm, a clod of clay, all of whom accept the ephemeral, transient nature of earthly existence. The clod of clay then invites Thel to "enter my house . . . with thy virgin feet" (5:16-17). Once she has entered, Thel sees the "couches of the dead, ... A land of sorrows & of tears." She wanders in this land of "dolours & lamentations," until she comes to "her own grave plot" from which she hears the "voice of sorrow":

> Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction?
> Or the glistning Eye to the poison of a smile!
> Why are Eyelids stord with arrows ready drawn,
> Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie?
> Or an Eye of gifts & graces, show'ring fruits & coined gold!
> Why a Tongue impress'd with honey from every wind?
> Why an Ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in?
> Why a Nostril wide inhaling terror trembling & affright
> Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy!
> Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?

Whereupon Thel starts from her seat, "& with a shriek" flees "back unhinderd till she came into the vales of Har" (Plate 6).

Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom, and David Erdman all see Thel's return to Har as her rejection of the world of Experience for a state of naive innocence, a rejection which entails for her not a return to

[92] Commentary, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, p. 808.

the Innocence of Beulah, but instead a return to an innocence which is ignorance, the state of spiritual death or Ulro. Blake's implication is that the individual cannot remain in Beulah but must progress through the state of Generation or Experience.[93] Assuming an alternate critical perspective is Anne Mellor, who writes that Thel is a young girl "passing through puberty," that she "has become aware of the changes in her own body and in the world around her, of mutability," and that Thel's shrieking return to the Vales of Har is an indication of a return to a higher and more personally fulfilling innocence.[94] Thel, Mellor says, refuses to participate in the perversions of an "unnatural world of malice, terror, and sensual repression, so horribly opposed to the sensual delights and overflowing love of Innocence."[95] And

> Inspired by this holy vision or adult Innocence, Thel neither can nor should tolerate the evil and unnatural repressions of rational Experience. Her return to Har, then, is a positive personal action, an action which completes the progression of the plot (from ignorance to divine knowledge and action) . . .[96]

[93] See Frye, Fearful Symmetry, pp. 232-33; Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, pp. 61-62; and Erdman, Blake: Prophet Against Empire, pp. 132-33.

[94] "Blake's Designs for The Book of Thel: An Affirmation of Innocence," Philological Quarterly, 50 (1971), 198-200.

[95] "Blake's Designs for The Book of Thel," 204.

[96] "Blake's Designs for The Book of Thel," 205.

In support of her position Mellor notes that the final design to The Book of Thel depicts "three children . . . gaily riding a large, harnessed snake." This she says is an "emblem of the ability of Innocence to harness or control the evils of the land of death, to overcome the restrictions of Experience and to reaffirm the wisdom of Innocence."[97]

But such an interpretation overlooks the fundamental principles of Blake's mythology, and at the same time it overlooks Blake's frequent tendency to complement his text with design, to present through his illustration an alternate point of view. Mellor, interestingly, does not believe that Blake believed in a fortunate Fall, that a fall into "contraction and error" is even necessary. "The fall," she says, "occurs whenever, but only when, an individual permits his reason to usurp control over his imagination, whenever he allows himself to question, doubt, or deny his potential divinity."[98]

That Blake named his character Thel, meaning "wish" or "will," is surely of some significance, ironic or otherwise. Bloom notes that the name is ironic, since "Thel's pathetic fate is the consequence of her weakness in will, and her failure to carry her pastoral innocence into the world of experience is a failure of desire."[99] But I suspect

[97] "Blake's Designs for The Book of Thel," 205.

[98] Blake's Human Form Divine (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1974), p. 336.

[99] Commentary, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, p. 808.

the name is also ironic in that Blake saw Thel as a new version of Eve, this time an Eve who because she lacked desire had sufficient will to avert the Fall.[100] She could "restrain desire" because hers was "weak enough to be restrained." Ironically, unlike Eve's world, there is little in Thel's world of Experience for her to desire; hence no real effort of will is required in order to avert it. And what Blake seems to be saying in The Book of Thel is that this is what would have happened had Eve averted the Fall.

Blake's illustrations and his text of The Book of Thel clearly indicate that he is dealing with the imagery of the Fall, of the move from Innocence to Experience. The imagery throughout is almost exclusively that of Beulah and Generation. The frontispiece depicts a pastoral shepherdess in a heavily foliaged world of Generation. Such virgin imagery encased by foliage dominates all the designs up until the final design which depicts the child-harnessed dragon mentioned above. Again the imagery is that of Innocence married to Experience, and I think that what Blake is saying in the designs, especially this final one, is not that Innocence has harnessed or controlled Generation, but that Innocence must move into the world of Generation. Unlike Thel, who failed to move into the world of Generation and whose regression is reflected in the dragon who appears to move from right to left across

[100] Robert F. Gleckner, in "Blake's Miltonizing of Chatterton," Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly, 11 (1977), sees Eve's temptations as "the models for Thel's failure in The Book of Thel" (p. 28).

the plate, the negative movement of the Spenser cavalcade, the children of the final design have made an appropriate transition. And this harnessing of the dragon, instead of indicating that Thel's return to Innocence has meant personal fulfillment, indicates that ultimate fulfillment, fourfold vision or Atonement, is to be achieved only by first assuming the responsibilities of Generation.

The text likewise concentrates on the imagery of Innocence and Experience. The first three parts of the text are written from the perspective of Innocence.[101] Thel is the only character in these plates who expresses dissatisfaction with her state, indicating her awakening toward Experience. The lily's words express a sense of unity in existence. She is assured she will be

> clothed in light, and fed with morning manna:
> Till summers heat melts thee beside the fountains and the springs
> To flourish in eternal vales . . .
> (1:23-25)

The cloud likewise knows that when he passes away,

> It is to tenfold life, to love, to peace, and raptures holy:
> Unseen descending, weigh my light wings upon balmy flowers;
> And court the fair eyed dew. to take me to her shining tent;
> The weeping virgin, trembling kneels before the risen sun,
> Till we arise link'd in a golden band, and never part;
> But walk united, bearing food to all our tender flowers . . .
> (3:11-16)

[101] See Susan Fox's comment on the perspectives of Innocence and Experience in The Book of Thel in Poetic Form in Blake's Milton (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 7-8.

In Part III, the clod of clay assures Thel of this unity, of the unifying sense that "we live not for ourselves" (4:10). Then, convinced of this unified, innocent perspective of life, Thel enters the house of the clod of clay. But in Part IV, the perspective shifts; here it is that of Generation. Thel experiences a sorrowful picture of death and lamentation and dissatisfaction with the inequities of human existence. Thus Blake presents, as he does in the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience, two perspectives of human life. Thel presumably can choose, and her choice is a shrieking retreat.

An important feature of Blake's archetypal system is that the state of Generation or Experience is not a negative state, as one is likely to assume if he reads Blake's poems as statements about the world. Experience is a necessary state through which the soul must pass before fourfold vision, the perspective of Eden, is achieved. It is true that the state of Generation is depicted as one of "finite life: a mutable, materialistic world."[102] But Blake depicts it as such because that is the perspective, the level of vision, of the person who exists in that state. In the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience, Blake is not making the statement that this is the way the world is. Instead he is saying that this is the way the world--life, existence--feels and appears to the person who exists at a certain level of vision, in Innocence or in Experience. Hence Blake's chimney sweeper

[102] "Bright Pilgrimage," p. 132.

from Songs of Innocence perceives his existence as one in which "if all do their duty, they need not fear harm" (l. 24). In "Holy Thursday" of the Songs of Innocence, the perspective is that of "Thousands of little boys & girls raising their innocent hands." They "raise to heaven the voice of song," while "Beneath them sit the aged men wise guardians of the poor" (ll. 8-9, 11). On the other hand, the same aspects of life seen from the imaginative perspective of Experience or Generation are of the chimney sweeper clothed "in the clothes of death," while his parents "are gone to praise God & his Priest & King / Who make up a heaven of our misery" (ll. 7, 11-12); or the charity children, "Babes reducd to misery, / Fed with cold or usurous hand" (ll. 3-4).

An important feature of lyric poetry is that its purpose is not to make a discursive statement about the world, but rather to provide for its reader or audience an experience.[103] And I think at least part of Blake's intention for the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience was to bring his reader to experience these contrary states of Innocence and Experience, and through the tension created by the contrary experiences help the reader to achieve a progression to a higher imaginative state. Thel similarly is exposed to the experiences of the world of Innocence, that of the lily and cloud, and then to the world of Experience. She views mortality from the perspective of

[103] See Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art (New York: Scribner's, 1953), pp. 208-15.

Innocence, where it seems "merely a matter of fading gently away," and from the perspective of Experience, where "it seems a matter of torment and betrayal."[104] But experiencing both, she retreats with a shriek, "back . . . into the vales of Har" (6:22), signifying a return not to organized Innocence but to the spiritual death of Ulro.

That Blake interpreted the theme of temptation and choice in L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, Comus, and Paradise Lost as one that involved the movement from Innocence to Experience, a theme analogous to that of Thel, is evident.

Blake's designs to L'Allegro and Il Penseroso signify a shift in visionary states. Though I cannot agree with Behrendt who sees the "mature poet" of the Il Penseroso designs as existing in an "imaginatively superior world of higher innocence [Blake's Eden]," [105] it is clear that the designs indicate some degree of imaginative progress, and this progress is one which moves from Innocence or Beulah to Experience or Generation. In this respect the key designs in the series are Mirth and Melancholy, and the two reflecting Milton in contrary states of poetic development, The Youthful Poet's Dream and Milton, Old Age. A striking facet of many of Blake's interpretive illustrations is the remarkable way in which, while rendering almost a literal interpretation of the poem he is illustrating, he can at the same time by

[104] Poetic Form in Blake's Milton, p. 8.

[105] "Bright Pilgrimage," p. 123.

the use of his own iconography assert his own symbolic and often contradictory comment. These designs provide a prime example of this facile irony. In Mirth Blake brings together in the small figures surrounding the nymph, "Heart easing Mirth," the key personifications of Milton's poem. There "Jest & Youthful Jollity," "Quips & Cranks & Wanton Wiles," "Nods & Becks & wreathed smiles," a wrinkled, derisive-looking Care, and "Laughter holding both his Sides" (p. 663) dance around the central figure of Mirth whose youth and pleasantry of figure are reminiscent of other Blake designs representing a Beulah landscape. Mirth recalls the figure of the youthful Thel, the unfallen Eve in the Paradise Lost designs, and the youthful Selima-maiden who perches on the goldfish tank in Blake's illustrations to Gray's "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat." The imagery of the second of these designs to L'Allegro, The Youthful Poet's Dream, likewise is that of Beulah. The poet's backdrop is the pastoral river bank overarched by growing trees. The sleeping, dreaming posture of the poet writing in his open book is an indication of the Beulah state of pastoral innocence. The poet's dream of a marriage, another symbol of Beulah, is enclosed in a sphere that is bounded on one side by Shakespeare and on the other by Jonson. These two figures, representative of poetic convention,[106] lean toward the dream sphere and seem to restrict it from further expansion.

[106] Behrendt, "Bright Pilgrimage," pp. 137-38.

One needs but contrast the imagery of these two illustrations to L'Allegro with the corresponding illustrations from Il Penseroso to note the progress to another level of vision, that of Generation. In Melancholy Blake personifies again the figures from Milton's poem as they surround the central figure of the "pensive Nun." The dark figure of Melancholy is surrounded by "calm Peace & Quiet," "Spare Fast," who "hears the Muses in a ring" singing "round about Joves Altar," Philomel "Smoothing the rugged Brow of Night," Cynthia checking her dragon yoke, and overhead the "Cherub Contemplation" "Guiding the Fiery wheeled Throne" (p. 665). Here Blake has literally represented Milton's personifications, yet his own iconography lends a wealth of meaning to the design. The "pensive Nun" of Milton's poem, "in a robe of darkest grain" and "sable stole of Cypress Lawn," walks

> With ev'n step, and musing gait,
> And looks commercing with the skies . . .
> (ll. 31-39)

But her dark robes are suggestive of the Vala-figures in other of Blake's illustrations, of Adversity in Design 4 to the illustrations to Gray's "Ode to Adversity," of Malignant Fate who seems to be responsible for Selima's fall in the illustrations to Gray's "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat" (Designs 4 and 5). Vala as fallen Nature clearly belongs to the world of Generation, and her dark robes with their flowing veil-like texture are indicative of the delusive female will. The heavy vegetation in the background of the illustration, what looks

like oak trees, is also representative of Blake's state of Generation. The flames, however, which are part of the personification of the secondary characters, represent Blake's imagery of Eden--the fourfold imaginative state. Hence the "Fiery wheeled Throne" of Contemplation, directly overhead, the flames from the altar where the muses sing over the head of "Spare Fast," and the flowing fiery configuration of Cynthia's dragon bespeak of yet a higher state. What Blake seems to be doing here is presenting a picture of Generation that contains presentiment of Eden as a means of saying that the movement from Beulah to Generation has been a positive move, progression essential to the final achievement of fourfold Edenic vision.

There is indication, however, that Blake did not feel that the Milton who wrote L'Allegro and Il Penseroso had yet achieved fourfold vision. This is contrary to Behrendt's interpretation of the progression indicated by the illustrations. Behrendt interprets the Il Penseroso designs to indicate that in the final design, Milton, Old Age, Blake believes Milton to be in his "prophetic state."[107] However, the iconography of this final design seems to me to be largely that of Generation. In this design Milton sits face forward, but glance directed upward, his arms outstretched in an underground aperture overarched by tree roots--Milton's "Mossy Cell." Though not wholly a Urizenic figure, he does exhibit some Urizenic features. His long,

[107] "Bright Pilgrimage," p. 134.

flowing white hair and huge, protruding knees are reminiscent of the figure of Urizen on the frontispiece of The Book of Urizen, as is the large open book situated on a stone to his left. And the fact that he sits, as opposed to standing in a Glad Day pose representing the achievement of fourfold vision, is also significant. The Milton of this illustration bears a close resemblance to the portrait of Milton with which Blake illustrates the line "'Twas Milton struck the deep-ton'd shell," in Design 4 to Gray's "Ode for Music." A striking feature of the Gray design is the heavy floral foliage, the configuration of which blends with the tendril-like lines of the chair in which Milton sits, and is clearly suggestive of the vegetative or generative state. The natural imagery of green and flowing vegetation that dominates the lower two thirds of Milton, Old Age is that of Generation. A series of small human figures engaged in varied occupations surround the central figure of the poet. A couple embraces, a mother attends a young child, two groups of figures appear to be in mourning. In the sky, among other figures, a tyrant wields a sword. These sky figures may represent what Blake considered Milton's undue concern with the classics, as expressed in the Preface to Milton: "Shakspeare & Milton were both curbd by the general malady & infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the Sword" (p. 94). On the one hand, Blake has literally rendered Milton's lines from Il Penseroso:

> And may at last my weary age
> Find out the peaceful hermitage,
> The Hairy Gown and Mossy Cell,

Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every Star that Heav'n doth shew,
And every Herb that sips the dew;
Till old experience do attain
To something like Prophetic strain.
These pleasures Melancholy give,
And I with thee will choose to live.
(ll. 167-76)

But Blake has at the same time commented on the poet's limited vision. The poet of Il Penseroso has progressed from a state of Innocence in L'Allegro to a state of Experience in Il Penseroso. He aspires to "something like Prophetic strain," but he has not yet achieved it, perhaps because his preoccupation is to "rightly spell" the stars and the herbs, a preoccupation with generative nature. Further progression Blake knew depended on just this move from Innocence to Experience, but the Milton of L'Allegro and Il Penseroso had to progress even further to achieve the fourfold prophetic state.

This is not to say that Blake did not believe that Milton achieved prophetic vision. But unlike Behrendt who sees this set of illustrations, because it is one of the last sets of designs Blake executed on Milton, as constituting the culmination of Blake's opinion of Milton, I see instead that the iconography of the illustrations is not only true to the literal meaning of Milton's poem, but that it is at the same time confined to illustrating the younger Milton who wrote L'Allegro and Il Penseroso. Blake in his illustrations was commenting on the prophetic message of the two poems, on the movement from Innocence to Experience, and not on his final conception of Milton.

Comus, like L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, was for Blake another play on the theme of temptation and choice in the movement from Innocence to Experience. The designs to Comus are on the one hand a literal depiction of Milton's poem and on the other, to the viewer familiar with Blake's iconography, a correction of Milton's conception of the Fall, as expressed in the narrative of Comus. Milton's masque is, like Blake's Thel, the story of a young girl's confrontation with her sexual and mortal self. The Lady of Comus, confronted with the world of Generation, prefers her chastity to the "evils" of Comus and, like Thel, refuses to move into the world of Experience. Blake's designs to Comus depict, as Joseph Wittreich has noted, the "mental landscape,"[108] the drama that takes place in the mind of the Lady. But Blake, instead of depicting a Lady who in her retreat to virginity is another Thel, shows us an alternative reading in which the Lady in her acceptance of the world of Generation frees herself of the restrictions of her sexual fears and moves like Eve into the world of Experience.

The Comus designs clearly bring together the iconography of Innocence and Experience. In the first design the Lady, Blake's depiction of female innocence, is visited by Comus and his rout, a company of weird animal shapes that both literally depict Milton's poem and symbolize the Lady's introduction to the world of Generation. In the second design Comus, dressed as a villager, approaches the Lady in a

[108] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 86.

dense forest scene, again representative of Generation. The Generation motif of heavy foliage is also present in the third design. In the next design the Attendant Spirit, bearing a golden flower, symbolic of sexual love,[109] addresses the brothers under a rounded arch. Above the arch are two coiled serpents and a tiny female figure who probably represents Destiny or Fate, all of which are representative of the generative state. Design 5 depicts the Lady held spellbound and sitting in a chair decorated with "women serpent-bound, images of fallen sexuality and moral law."[110] In Design 6 of the 1801 set of illustrations, the Lady sits by while Comus, representing her sexuality and its incumbent fears, is driven out by her brothers, who represent her virginal state.[111] In both Design 5 and Design 6, as the Lady sits enthralled it is significant that the conformation of the chair in which she sits is sharply rectangular, indicative of Ulro, and hence reflecting the peril of her apparent refusal to accept her sexual nature. In both of these designs she sits in a closed posture with her arms crossed over her breasts. In the latter design she sits facing the viewer, her huge Urizenic knees dominant against the rectangular background of the chair. In Design 7, which depicts Milton's scene of Sabrina disenchanting the

[109] Irene Tayler, "Say First! What Mov'd Blake? Blake's Comus Designs and Milton," Blake's Sublime Allegory, p. 246.

[110] "Say First! What Mov'd Blake?" p. 235.

[111] "Say First! What Mov'd Blake?" pp. 244-45.

Lady, the Lady no longer sits in the chair but has returned to a forest scene, where she sits arms outspread and surrounded by the Beulah figures of Sabrina and her attendants, by her brothers in postures of obeisance, and by the Attendant Spirit who points upward. By Design 8, when the Lady is returned to her parents, the iconography reflects a new freedom for the Lady, both in the psychic union represented by her reunion with her family and in the ascending figure of the Attending Spirit whose outstretched arms are reminiscent of Christ and of Blake's Albion in the Glad Day design. Blake's designs then clearly reflect that the Lady, burdened by the conflict between her awakening sexuality and her fear of that sexuality--represented by Comus--and her virginal state--represented by her brothers--has opted not as Milton's Lady did, for her chastity, but has freed herself for movement to a higher imaginative state by accepting, as did Eve, the world of Generation.

Paradise Lost doubtless represents the epitome of Milton's treatment of the temptation theme as it concerns the archetypal Fall, the "original" movement from Innocence to Experience. Oddly enough, however, in his illustrations to Paradise Lost it is not the narrative of the Fall itself with which Blake seems most concerned. The designs, particularly the second set, focus instead, as Joseph Wittreich has noted, "in the world of Eden and in the figure of Christ who came to restore what by Adam and Eve was lost."[112] That Blake focuses more on

[112] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 93.

the Atonement than on the Fall is in one sense an indirect criticism of Milton's orthodox representation of the Fall; at the same time the emphasis on the Atonement implies that Blake thought that the Fall, if not essential, was at least fortunate. Such a reading may have prompted Blake to shift his focus and concentrate in his illustrations on illuminating the "visionary experience [the theme of Atonement] that Milton's poem afforded--an experience that Milton's own narrative and the eighteenth-century commentaries obscured."[113]

The idea of the felix culpa, which Blake seems to have perceived in Paradise Lost, has been pursued, for example, in this century by Millicent Bell, who cites as indication of a fortunate Fall Eve's dream in Book IV and Adam's conversation with Raphael in Book VIII.[114] Eve's "preliminary temptation," her "anticipatory dream," Bell writes, "occurs nowhere in the traditional and literary versions of the story."[115] And Adam indicates his already imperfect state when in conversation with Raphael he reveals that Eve's influence over his judgment has become a problem.[116] "It is not," she concludes, "the onset of sin we witness, so much as it is the beginning of self-discovery by

[113] Wittreich, Angel of Apocalypse, p. 94.

[114] "The Fallacy of the Fall in Paradise Lost," PMLA, 68 (1953), 867.

[115] "The Fallacy of the Fall in Paradise Lost," 870.

[116] "The Fallacy of the Fall in Paradise Lost," 867.

creatures essentially human."[117] Adam and Eve

> had nothing new to learn . . . except the nature of their own hearts. And this they learned from themselves, from the act of fulfilling their own desires to the final degree. . . . In developing self-consciousness . . . their first impulse upon realizing what has happened to them is to be ashamed, to cover their nakedness. Their self-consciousness has been purchased by the fulfillment in action of what has hitherto lain hidden in the mind.[118]

Finally, Bell notes that

> if . . . the Fall is only the climax of self-realization reached by humankind already fallen, then it was not only inevitable, but necessary. . . . [I]t is only along this road followed to its bitter terminus that they may pass to redemption.[119]

In interpreting the Fall as a felix culpa Blake seems to be saying that if it is possible for one to reject the move from Innocence to Experience, then such a rejection entails spiritual death. Had Eve rejected the apple, if she could have rejected it as Thel rejected Experience, there could have been no Atonement, no higher state of Innocence or fourfold vision. One of Blake's designs illustrating the poems of Thomas Gray seems to me likewise to make a significant statement about the Fall. This is the fifth design to "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat." Blake's theme throughout his designs to this poem

[117] "The Fallacy of the Fall in Paradise Lost," 875.

[118] "The Fallacy of the Fall in Paradise Lost," 876.

[119] "The Fallacy of the Fall in Paradise Lost," 878.

is that of the Fall and of redemption. Curiously, though Gray's poem does not indicate this--the line marked for illustration is "Malignant Fate sat by, and smil'd"--Blake's design depicts Selima, both cat and young maiden, perhaps another Eve, taking a plunge into the fish tank, the waters of Generation, after having been pushed by Fate. Hence it would seem that, according to Blake, there truly may be no choice, that each individual is destined to move into the world of Experience. Not everyone, Blake might grant, moves beyond this state of twofold vision, but it is possible that he would deny that anyone has sufficient will--hence another sense of the irony of Thel's name--to withdraw himself from such a Fall.

That the Fall is essential to Atonement in Blake's archetypal system is clearly indicated in his writings. In his Annotations to Swedenborg's Divine Love and Divine Wisdom, Blake writes:

> Understanding or Thought is not natural to Man it is acquired by means of Suffering & Distress i.e Experience. Will, Desire, Love, Rage, Envy, & all other Affections are Natural, but Understanding is Acquired[.] (p. 591)

Joseph Wicksteed has noted that "the idea that evil must be embodied and made concrete or 'experienced' before it can be escaped or rejected," is "one which recurs in some form at every stage of Blake's thought."[120] In Jerusalem Blake indicates the necessity of "Giving a body to Falshood

[120] Blake's Vision of the Book of Job, p. 21.

that it may be cast off forever" (12:13). Even stronger is his statement in Milton on the need for the individual to pass the Polypus, "human society,"[121] before Golgonooza, the city of art, might be reached:

> but they
> Could not behold Golgonooza without passing the Polypus
> A wondrous journey not passable by Immortal feet, & none
> But the Divine Saviour can pass it without annihilation.
> For Golgonooza cannot be seen till having passd the Polypus
> It is viewed on all sides round by a Four-fold Vision
> Or till you become Mortal & Vegetable in Sexuality
> Then you behold its mighty Spires & Domes of ivory & gold.
> (35:18-25)

For Blake, "the only road from innocence to creativity and apocalypse," Bloom notes, "lies through the realm of summer, through Generation, the hard world of experience. Thel . . . refuses to learn this lesson and will not move forward beyond spring and Innocence." The person who "will not move voluntarily in the cycle . . . will move back involuntarily into the Winter of Ulro."[122]

Thel, the Lady in Comus, and Eve all perform the same archetypal function: they serve to dramatize the Fall. Clearly Blake could not accept the resolution of Milton's narrative which kept the Lady virginal in Comus. In Paradise Lost, however, it is possible that Blake read in Milton's work, though it is not explicit--was hindered by

[121] Damon, Dictionary, p. 333.

[122] The Visionary Company, p. 25.

his narrative--the visionary notion of felix culpa. Nevertheless, Blake's treatment of the archetype of the Fall in The Book of Thel, plus his commentary in other of his writings, makes it evident that he considered the Fall necessary to the mature mind, to attainment of fourfold creative vision. Such vision indicated for Blake the culmination of "the Human Imagination / Which is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus" (Milton 3:3-4), in other words Atonement.

It is in his treatment of the archetype of Atonement that Blake's fullest appreciation of Milton is to be found. Blake, Wittreich says, came to appreciate Milton's vision of Atonement, particularly as he expressed it in Paradise Regained, and it is this appreciation that Blake expresses in his designs to Paradise Regained and in his own epic-prophecy Milton.[123]

Wittreich explains, in terms of Milton's growth and theory of Atonement, two fundamental questions about Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes which have long been of critical concern. One has to do with the dating of Samson Agonistes and the mystery of its publication along with Paradise Regained; the other has to do with Milton's subject matter in Paradise Regained--why he concentrated on the temptation theme instead of the crucifixion in the movement toward Atonement. The publication of Samson Agonistes along with Paradise Regained Wittreich explains in terms of Milton's own sense of growth, Both clearly deal

[123] Angel of Apocalypse, passim. See especially p. 43, pp. 127f.

with the theme of temptation. In Samson Agonistes, Samson denies the temptations of his father to ransom him and the marital bliss, or lust, represented by Dalila. But, though he at first denies Harapha's taunting temptation to show his physical power, it is in the end this physical power which brings about the destruction of the Philistines. The temptations, then, in Samson Agonistes are concerned primarily with Samson's physical nature. On the other hand, the temptations of Paradise Regained are tests of mental fortitude and faith. "Contemplative in character," they "center attention in the arena of the mind, where the drama of the poem unfolds."[124] Noting these parallels, Wittreich writes that

> Milton . . . through conspicuous allusion, both autobiographical and historical, draws the parallels between himself and Samson that have preoccupied his commentators; but from Milton's perspective, and from Blake's own, parallels may suggest either true or false similitude. One suspects that Milton might have come to see the "heroism" of his early years, his defense of regicide, as a parody of the heroism he achieved in his later years--a heroism modeled on that wrought on the pinnacle not at the pillars. . . . [W]henever the play was written, it was not published until late, and then in the setting of Paradise Regained, which projects a vision that Samson Agonistes parodies and a scheme of values to which the play is an affront. Samson may, then, reflect Milton's experiences, his once-held attitudes; but the play is also a critique of them.[125]

In essence, then, one finds in Samson Agonistes a Milton engaged in "carnal warfare," and in Paradise Regained, a Milton engaged, more to

[124] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 122.

[125] Angel of Apocalypse, pp. 61-62.

Blake's liking, in "mental fight."[126] Hence Milton's purpose in publishing the two together, regardless of the date Samson Agonistes was written, may indeed have been to illustrate his own personal growth, a growth Blake would have fully appreciated.

With regard to Milton's failure to treat the crucifixion in Paradise Regained, Wittreich notes that it had been the tendency of critics previous to Blake to "tie Milton's poem firmly to traditional theology," to relate "Paradise Regained not only to the fall but to the drama of the Crucifixion and Resurrection."[127] But Blake indicates his awareness of "doctrinal subtlety" by showing "through his illustrations the extent to which Milton subdued a Christian theme to unorthodox purposes."[128] And Blake's point in the illustrations to Paradise Regained, "like Milton's, is that Christ's resurrection occurs now, paradise is regained now"[129] in the soul of the individual who recognizes the God within himself. Blake, because of his sympathy with Milton's unorthodox view of Atonement, realized that emphasis on the crucifixion would have been "wrong for Milton's purposes," because it would have illustrated "Christ's triumph at the divine rather than the

[126] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 66.

[127] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 110.

[128] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 111.

[129] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 113.

human level."[130] He realized Milton's intention in the elimination of the crucifixion from Paradise Regained, and hence when he illustrated the poem Blake omitted the subject of the crucifixion from his designs. As Wittreich notes,

> Blake himself strove to return to a purified version of Christianity based upon the values of love and forgiveness, and he detected in Paradise Regained the same impulse. Milton omitted reference to the Passion and Crucifixion . . . because he found those subjects uncongenial . . . and alien to the spirit of Christianity that his poem enshrined. Not caring for the doctrine of the atonement, Milton deflected interest from it, thereby eradicating the "torture" and "horror" of Christianity.[131]

C. A. Patrides has commented on the "forensic" nature of the theory of Atonement expressed by Milton in Paradise Lost. The forensic theory, he explains, treats the Atonement as

> a legal transaction, as a debt paid to the Supreme Judge which is at once His satisfaction and the just punishment for our sins. Jesus "substituted" for us . . . and in a just payment of our sins drew upon Himself the just wrath of God.[132]

Patrides notes, however, that this is not necessarily Milton's own theory of Atonement, that "there is absolutely no 'personal emphasis' . . . behind Milton's statement that God demanded 'rigid satisfaction';

[130] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 121.

[131] Angel of Apocalypse, pp. 127-28.

[132] "Milton and the Protestant Theory of the Atonement," PMLA, 74 (1959), 9.

this rather reflects the orthodox Protestant conception."[133] One might suspect, then, that if Milton could not accept this orthodox view of Atonement as he expressed it in Paradise Lost, that Paradise Regained became his instrument for subtly stating his own views. Hence instead of treating the crucifixion in Paradise Regained, he presents a human-like Christ who comes to know in the course of the temptations the true nature of his divinity.

Blake's sensitivity to such a treatment of the Atonement is understandable. The concept of punishment for sin was reprehensible to him. In Jerusalem he writes:

> The Spirit of Jesus is continual forgiveness of Sin: he who waits to be righteous before he enters into the Saviours kingdom, the Divine Body; will never enter there. (p. 144)

Even more reprehensible was the idea that an innocent person should make amends for the wrongdoing of others. On the orthodox conception of Atonement he is reported by Henry Crabb Robinson to have said, "'It is a horrible doctrine--If another man pay your debt I do not forgive it."[134]

Consequently, it is in his sympathy with Milton's presentation of the Atonement in Paradise Regained that Blake comes to his fullest critical appreciation of Milton. One of Blake's methods for reinforcing

[133] "Milton and the Protestant Theory of the Atonement," p. 13.

[134] Bentley, Blake Records, p. 337.

Milton's view, and his own, of the Atonement in the Paradise Regained illustrations is to reject "the typology of the Crucifixion so often associated with it."[135] He likewise accentuates "the introspective, psychological character of Milton's poem," collapsing, as Wittreich notes,

> one half of the poem, the kingdoms temptation, into a single design, concentrating on those temptations that are contemplative in character, on those that lend themselves to the mental landscape that dominates most of his illustrations. Finally, in recognition of the fact that Milton's drama of the mind gathers intensity as it drives toward the epiphany on the pinnacle, Blake concentrates his designs within the fourth book of Paradise Regained, thereby defining the poem's thematic and dramatic center.[136]

It is not, in fact, until the tenth illustration that one finds any explicit crucifixion imagery. Here Christ stands on the pinnacle, and confirming his divinity, stretches his arms, palms upward, in cruciform position. At the same time Satan, his Urizenic beard flowing, falls downward and the angels stand by, supposedly to catch Christ should he fall but apparently not concerned that such might occur. Two of them seem rapt in adoration; the other seems more to be showing the way down to Satan than concerned that Christ might fall. Blake, in reserving the crucifixion iconography for this moment, is surely saying that it is such a moment, not that of Christ's dying on the cross for the sins of

[135] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 112.

[136] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 120.

humankind, but the moment of the realization of his full divinity, that represents the true conception of Atonement. It is forgiveness and love, not vengeance and sacrifice, that represent mankind's true at-one-ment, the realization in the self of a fourfold creative Imagination, Jesus Christ in the human soul. In short, as Wittreich writes,

> Christ's journey into the desert draws an end to the Old Testament ethic: it ensures that a philosophy of love will reign over the law of sacrifice, which finds its fullest, most offensive expression in the very story that Milton and Blake chose to ignore--the story of Christ's crucifixion.[137]

Blake's criticism of Milton's conception of the Fall and of the Atonement finds its most complete assertion, however, in the epic-prophecy Milton. Here Blake expresses his dismay with a Milton whose poetry failed to envision an accurate conception of the Fall, a failure perhaps due in part to Milton's failure to accept his own sexual nature. Milton's narratives in Paradise Lost and in Comus, Blake thought, had distorted the archetype of the Fall, had failed to portray the Fall as necessary to human existence, and Milton's own life had been distorted by his sexual prudery and his disinclination to accept the generative state. On the other hand Blake realized that in Paradise Regained Milton had redeemed himself with his unorthodox conception of Atonement.

Consequently, Blake celebrates the poet in Milton. But this

[137] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 132.

celebration is dependent first upon Milton's acceptance of his emanations, signifying a putting off of his sexual prudery and a recognition of the inevitability of a Fall into Generation. This need for Milton to return to "self annihilation and eternal death" (14:22) may indicate not only Milton's failure in his relationships with his family but more importantly Blake's realization that Milton's critics had misread him, that they had failed to realize the vision he achieves in Paradise Regained. Hence Milton, "Unhappy tho in heav'n" (2:18), returns to earth and is fused with Blake and Los. Thus he sets out to redeem himself, to modify the image that the world was inferring from his work and to prove that he had indeed achieved fourfold vision in his new and unorthodox treatment of the Atonement in Paradise Regained.

Joseph Wittreich notes an interesting point about Milton and the way in which Blake uses his prophecy to exalt the poet, a point significant in defining Blake's criticism of Milton. Blake deviates, Wittreich writes, from the "apotheosis tradition," a deviation

> integral to the poem's meaning. The hero's journey is neither a flight nor an ascent; it is a descent into the self and into the world of generation. The apotheosis motif, rather than being relegated to a brief episode, is expanded into the central episode of a brief epic poem. . . . Blake's purpose . . . is to rid a literary and artistic tradition of its usual philosophical underpinnings. Ordinarily the hero's apotheosis is the result of his adopting an attitude of contempt for this world; only by divorcing his soul from his body, only by freeing himself of worldly concerns by taking on the cloak of chastity, is he able to achieve his apotheosis. Precisely because Milton exhibited contempt for this world, precisely because he donned the robes of

> chastity, holding his soul distinct from his body, he remained isolated, for most of his life, from the divine vision, from the fiery city of Jerusalem. . . . [S]o, fittingly, Milton takes a descent into this world, not a flight from it, which begins with his re-entering his body and which culminates in his union with Ololon.[138]

Emphasizing the necessity of the Fall, Blake has Milton reassume the generative state in order that he may give a body to the falsehood of his previous refusal to accept Generation and thereby cast it off altogether and assert his prophetic state.

In Milton the Bard's Song, which reflects Blake's own generative state in its mythological interpretation of his quarrel with Hayley, elicits Milton's redemptive response. Charging himself with having approached the Judgment without his emanation, of having dwelt "With the daughters of memory, & not with the daughters of inspiration" (14:29), Milton enters Blake's left foot. Joined by Los they journey into the world of Generation, the world of time and space, for a confrontation with Urizen, the Zoa of repression. And as Milton comes to a close the poet Milton is joined, at Blake's cottage in Felpham, with his six-fold emanation. Blake surrounds the scene with apocalyptic imagery as Milton arrives at Felpham on a path that "became a solid fire, as bright / As the clear Sun" (39:4-5), standing "in a mighty Column of Fire" (39:8). Milton's union with Ololon awakens Albion, Blake's fourfold man, and the prophetic character of Milton is

[138] Angel of Apocalypse, p. 138.

realized as:

> with one accord the Starry Eight became
> One man Jesus the Saviour. wonderful! round his limbs
> The Clouds of Ololon folded as a Garment dipped in blood . . .
> (42:10-12)

And

> Jesus wept & walked forth
> From Felphams Vale clothed in Clouds of blood . . .
> (42:19-20)

surrounded "In a column of Fire" (42:22). Having descended into the generative state to throw off the error of falsehood, Milton achieves true at-one-ment with Christ, Blake's symbol of the Imagination, thus reflecting Blake's awareness of his fourfold visionary state, that Milton was indeed a true poet-prophet.

CHAPTER IV

RESTORATION AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

If one word can describe Blake's attitude toward the poets of the Restoration and eighteenth century and the aesthetic and critical principles that lie behind their work, that word is "reaction." With the exception perhaps of some aspects of the cult of sentimentalism, Blake reacted against the literary and philosophic trends that critics generally associate with literature of the period from 1660-1800. He reacted against Deism and its attendant epistemological implications. He reacted against Neoclassicism with its concern with imitation of the "ancients" and with "rules" for art. And he reacted against the morbid aspect of sentimentalism or sensibility that is reflected in the work of the "graveyard poets"--of such men as Young, Gray, and Blair. What he did not react against was that aspect of the cult of sentimentalism, exhibited in the primitivism of poets such as Macpherson, Percy, and Chatterton, that supported a belief in the innate goodness of humankind and in a theory of art based on inspiration as opposed to mimesis.

Blake's position against Deism and Lockean epistemology is set out in three of his early illuminated works: <u>There Is No Natural</u>

Religion, Series A; There Is No Natural Religion, Series B; and All Religions Are One. These three texts consist of a series of some twenty axioms that contradict the principles of Lockean epistemology and the Deism or Natural Religion that derived in part from Lockean principles. In short, Blake was unable to accept a religion based on reason and the study of external nature in lieu of a "revealed" religion which left room for innate knowledge and human inspiration.

There Is No Natural Religion, Series A, presents in its Argument and axioms an ironic statement of the Lockean principle that man is born a tabula rasa, that all his knowledge derives from his sensory perception--that "Man's desires are limited by his perceptions." The Argument of this short work is that

> Man has no notion of moral fitness but from Education. Naturally he is only a natural organ subject to Sense.

But its Conclusion holds that

> If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character the Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things, & stand still unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again.

Blake's "ratio" refers to rational abstraction, a removal from the actual sensory experience. And to depend wholly on sensory experience and its "ratio" would limit mankind to the dull round of the natural cycle of the life and death of the body. Without the "Poetic or Prophetic character," the source of inspired knowledge and of the

spirit, the fate of humankind is the death of the "natural" man.[1]

There Is No Natural Religion, Series B, shifts from an ironic treatment of Locke to the Blakean point of view to set forth the axiom that

> Man's perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception. he perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover.

"The desire of Man being Infinite," Blake says, "the possession is Infinite & himself Infinite." And, finally,

> He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio only sees himself only.
> Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is[.]

Man is far more than a product of his sensory perception. He indeed has infinite possibilities. Here Blake reflects his belief that God is man and man is God, that God resides within or is the human soul.

The final tractate, All Religions Are One, expresses the belief that all religions derive from one source, and that source is the Poetic Genius that is found in the "true Man":

> As all men are alike (tho' infinitely various) So all Religions & as all similars have one source.
> The true Man is the source he being the Poetic Genius[.]

The implication is that religion or God is not derived from looking

[1] See Harold Bloom, Commentary, The Prose and Poetry of William Blake, p. 807.

outward through the senses to find God through external nature, but that God is found within via the poetic genius of humankind.

But Blake's attack on Deism and Lockean epistemology is not limited to these three tractates. He refers to Locke in Chapter 8 of his early and chaotic satire An Island in the Moon:

> Then S[c]opprell & Miss Gittipin, coming in Scopprell took up a book & read the following passage.
> An Easy of [Human] (Huming) Understanding by John Lookye Gent[.] (p. 447)

The "Lookye" (look eye) instead of "Locke" refers to Locke's epistemology of the senses. The "Easy" spelling of "Essay" could imply that Blake saw in Locke's Essay on Human Understanding a simplistic interpretation of human nature. As for the indecision about "Human" or "Huming," Erdman, in his textual note on this passage, suggests that Blake deletes the word "Human" and inserts "Huming," by which he probably meant "Humming" (p. 766). But it seems more likely that Blake used the opportunity to allude to another philosopher who represented a skepticism which he detested, and that "Huming" is instead an attempt to bring together a derogative reference to two philosophers whose tenets he could not accept: Hume and Locke.

Deism, in that it moved God outside of man's personal life and eliminated revelation and innate ideas as a source of knowledge, was for Blake too much a system of ethics, too little a religion. In his Annotations to Bacon's Essays, Moral, Economical and Political Blake emphasizes his antipathy to rational truth, the "ratio":

> Self Evident Truth is one Thing and Truth the result of Reasoning is another Thing Rational Truth is not the Truth of Christ but of Pilate It is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil[.] (p. 610)

Blake's belief in innate human knowledge is expressed repeatedly in his writings. He expresses it in his marginalia to The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose neoclassical art theory Blake could not abide:

> Knowledge of Ideal Beauty. is Not to be Acquired It is born with us. Innate Ideas. are in Every Man Born with him. they are (truly) Himself. (p. 637)

And:

> Reynolds thinks that Man Learns all that he Knows I say on the Contrary That Man Brings All that he has or Can have Into the World with him. Man is Born like a Garden ready Planted & Sown. This World is too poor to produce one Seed. (pp. 645-46)

The state religion that fostered Deism Blake saw as oppressive in its emphasis on moral evil and moral good. In his Annotations to Watson's An Apology for the Bible, Blake writes that

> All Penal Laws court Transgression & therefore are cruelty & Murder
>
> The laws of the Jews were (both ceremonial & real) the basest & most oppressive of human codes. & being like all other codes given under pretence of divine command were what Christ pronounced them The Abomination that maketh desolate. i.e. State Religion which is the source of all Cruelty. . . .
>
> The Gospel is Forgiveness of Sins & has No Moral Precepts these belong to Plato & Seneca & Nero. (pp. 607-08)

Blake's objections to Deism were various and complex. As Harold Bloom has noted, "Deism tries to prove 'Christianity not

Mysterious,' replacing supernatural revelation by natural reason."[2] The Deists, Bloom explains, believed in a subject-object world that included, respectively, man's reason and the phenomena of the natural order, a world that left no room for a concept of the imagination that assigned mankind the power to create his own "order in space" and his own "consciousness in time." Consequently, Blake held that there was no Natural Religion because the source of poetic ideas is not objective nature but the human mind itself. Blake also objected to Deism's "covert influence" on the English church. He saw parallels between Deism and Neoclassicism. In short, he considered Deism "the negation of Imagination."[3] Of Newton and Burke and Locke and Reynolds he said:

> They mock Inspiration & Vision Inspiration & Vision was then & now is & I hope will always Remain my Element my Eternal Dwelling place. (p. 650)

Neoclassicism lost favor with Blake for a number of reasons. Its conception of nature, which was in accord with Deistic views of nature; its emphasis on classical models of Greek and Roman literature, which included a penchant for imitation as opposed to innovation and invention; its concern with didactic and satiric literature and preference for rimed couplets all were anathema to Blake, a threat to his theory of inspired art. The neoclassical concept of nature, whether

[2] Blake's Apocalypse, p. 265.

[3] Blake's Apocalypse, pp. 25-27.

the reference was to external nature or to human nature, implied order. With external nature, the emphasis was on order in nature--evidence of the Deistic God. With regard to human nature the emphasis was on the order associated with Reason. Hence Nature in the neoclassic sense was analogous to those forces that inhibit inspiration and vision.

The same propensity toward order was expressed in literature that relied heavily on imitation of "Nature" and of the classics--imitation as opposed to invention--and on strict verse forms. Sir Joshua Reynolds, a leading proponent of eighteenth-century Neoclassicism, evoked Blake's ire, and his annotations to Reynolds' works are vehement against both the man and his advocacy of Neoclassicism. Of Reynolds, he says, "This Man was Hired to Depress Art" (p. 625). In addition to despising Reynolds for preferring the art of the Venetian and Flemish masters instead of his own favorites Michaelangelo and Raphael, Blake found it difficult to accept Reynolds' emphasis in art on the portrayal of general as opposed to particular nature. In his Reynolds marginalia Blake writes:

> What is General Nature is there Such a Thing
> What is General Knowledge is there such a thing . . . All Knowledge is Particular[.] (p. 637)

And:

> To Generalize is to be an Idiot To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit--General Knowledges are those Knowledges that Idiots possess . . . (p. 630)

In Jerusalem Blake comments similarly on the general as opposed to the particular:

> He who would do good to another, must do it in Minute Particulars
> General good is the plea of the scoundrel hypocrite & flatterer:
> For Art & Science cannot exist but in minutely organized Particulars
> And not in generalizing Demonstrations of the Rational Power.
> The Infinite alone resides in Definite & Determinate Identity . . .
> (55:60-64)

It is sometimes confusing, in view of his system which so obviously "generalizes" about the nature of the human being, to see Blake speak out so strongly against the general. But what Blake is acutely concerned with in these passages is the execution of art. And though the poets of all ages, as he says in his commentary on Chaucer, strive to delineate the "physiognomies or lineaments of universal human life" (pp. 523-24), when it comes to the execution of his art, the artist has to depict universal human nature by focusing on the particular. "Distinct General Form," says Blake, "Cannot Exist Distinctness is Particular Not General" (p. 638); and, "A History Painter Paints the Hero, & not Man in General. but most minutely in Particular" (p. 641). In his Annotations to Swedenborg's Divine Love and Divine Wisdom, Blake says that

> Essence is not identity but from Essence proceeds Identity & from one Essence may proceed many Identities as from one Affection may proceed. many thoughts. (p. 593)

Thus it seems that, in truth, Blake and the Neoclassicists were trying

to achieve the same artistic goal, and that the language they used may have become a divisive factor.[4] Both Blake and Reynolds were concerned with portraying the essence of human nature. Blake, however, insisted that it was in particularities that it was best portrayed.

It would be inaccurate to say that Blake categorically objected to the neoclassical emphasis on the ancients, because more than once he expresses an appreciation for ancient writers. In the Reynolds marginalia, for instance, he writes,

> The Ancients were chiefly attentive to Complicated & Minute Discrimination of Character it is the Whole of Art. (p. 642)

In response to Reynolds' comment against "Spiritual Perception" in Discourse VII, Blake writes,

> The Ancients did not mean to Impose when they affirmd their belief in Vision & Revelation Plato was in Earnest. Milton was in Earnest. They believd that God did Visit Man Really & Truly & not as Reynolds pretends. (p. 647)

[4] Robert W. Uphaus, in "The Ideology of Reynolds' Discourses on Art," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 12 (1978), 59-73, has noted the shift in Reynolds' aesthetic theory from a concept of genius as "process," implying that genius is inherent in human nature, to a concept of genius as "product," that seems to oppose a concept of native genius, between 1769 and 1790 (p. 61). Uphaus relates this shift to Reynolds' association of his aesthetic theory with political events of the period and his desire to dissociate himself from the radical camp whose "unregulated use of the imagination" (p. 66) he distrusted. In so doing, Reynolds distinguishes between "acquired genius" and "original genius" and links the "concept of original genius with a vocabulary of destructiveness that could easily be linked with the French Revolution" (p. 72). Hence the implication is that Blake's aversion to Reynolds may have stemmed as much from political differences as from differences associated with the execution of art.

On the other hand, Blake did not always speak kindly of the classical writers whom the Neoclassicists were so prone to translate and to imitate. Attacking the Deists, he writes, in Jerusalem:

> You O Deists profess yourselves the Enemies of Christianity: and you are so: you are also the Enemies of the Human Race & of Universal Nature . . . But your Greek Philosophy (which is a remnant of Druidism) teaches that Man is Righteous in his Vegetated Spectre: an Opinion of fatal & accursed consequence to Man, as the Ancients saw plainly by Revelation to the intire abrogation of Experimental Theory. and many believed what they saw, and Prophecied of Jesus. (p. 198)

Here Blake charges the Greek philosophy with relegating man to his "natural" state, devoid of spiritual faculty. He is even more abusive in his short piece "On Virgil":

> 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. . . .
>
> Rome & Greece swept Art into their maw & destroyd it a Warlike State never can produce Art. It will Rob & Plunder & accumulate into one place, & Translate & Copy & Buy & Sell & Criticise, but not Make. Grecian is Mathematic Form Gothic is Living Form Mathematic Form is Eternal in the Reasoning Memory. Living Form is Eternal Existence. (p. 267)

Repeatedly Blake attacks the classics, and these attacks seem to be concerned mostly with his conviction that the classics with their emphasis on Reason hinder revelation, revelation as can be found in the Hebrew Bible. In A Vision of the Last Judgment, he writes:

> Let it. here be Noted that the Greek Fables originated in Spiritual Mystery & Real Vision and Real Visions Which are lost & clouded in

> Fable & Alegory . . . (while) the Hebrew Bible and the Greek Gospel are Genuine Preservd by the Saviours Mercy The Nature of my Work is Visionary or Imaginative it is an Endeavour to Restore (what the Ancients calld) the Golden Age . . . (p. 545)

Acknowledging that inspiration had formed the ancient background for classical literature, Blake sees that as it stands to be "copied" by neoclassic writers, Greek literature is mechanical, mathematical, and a hindrance to inspired art.

Blake expresses his concern for inspired art in one instance by striking out at the English poets' penchant for imitation:

> No Man of Sense can think that an Imitation of the Objects of Nature is The Art of Painting or that such Imitation which any one may easily perform is worthy of Notice much less that such an Art should be the Glory & Pride of a Nation The Italians laugh at English Connoisseurs who are (most of them) such silly Fellows as to believe this . . . .
>
> The English Artist may be assured that he is doing an injury & injustice to his Country while he studies & imitates the Effects of Nature. England will never rival Italy while we servilely copy . . . (pp. 566-67)

Art requires more than mere imitation. It involves inspiration and emotion. "Character & Expression," Blake says,

> can only be Expressed by those who Feel Them Even Hogarth's Execution cannot be Copied or Improved. (p. 568)

And in defense of his own inspired art, Blake writes:

> To recover Art has been the business of my life to the Florentine Original & if possible to go beyond that Original (this) I thought the only pursuit worthy of [an Englishman] (a Man). To imitate I abhor I obstinately adhere to the true Style of Art such as Michael Angelo Rafael Jul Rom Alb Durer left it [the Art of Invention not

> of Imitation. Imagination is My World this world of Dross is beneath my Notice & Beneath the Notice of the Public.] (p. 569)

In addition to abhorring imitation because it stifled imagination, Blake detested the strictness of English verse form. This he expresses not only verbally but in the freedom of his own poetic lines. Alicia Ostriker has noted, for example, Blake's use of free verse in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.[5] Blake's introductory material for Jerusalem, part of which has already been quoted, expresses his concern with the restriction of verse forms, both of rime and of 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. I therefore have produced a variety in every line, both of cadences & number of syllables. Every word and every letter is studied and put into its fit place: the terrific numbers are reserved for the terrific parts--the mild & gentle, for the mild & gentle parts, and the prosaic, for the inferior parts: all are necessary to each other. Poetry Fetter'd, Fetters the Human Race!

Perhaps it was the fear of a fettered poetry and a fettered human race that caused Blake to react so generally to eighteenth-century neoclassical principles. In his Notebook, for example, he again relates the state of poetry to the political state:

[5] Vision and Verse in William Blake (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1965), pp. 162-63.

> The wretched State of the Arts in this Country & in Europe originating in the wretched State of Political Science which is the Science of Sciences Demands a firm & determinate conduct on the part of Artists to Resist the Contemptible Counter Arts established by such contemptible Politicians as Louis XIV & originally set on foot by Venetian Picture traders Music traders & Rhime traders to the destruction of all true art as it is this Day. (p. 569)

In summary, Blake sought an art that left behind the neoclassical principles that pursued the Greek and Roman classics and focused on imitation and on confining verse forms. But Blake did not stop with a general criticism of the period. His criticism extends, both in his verbal commentary and in his water color and engraved illustrations of the literature of the period, to comment on specific poets. Among the Neoclassicists, Goldsmith and Johnson, Dryden and Pope are objects of his verbal commentary.

Of Goldsmith and Johnson Blake had only a little to say. His reference to Goldsmith consists of two brief annotations to Reynolds' work, one a comment on Reynolds' listing of the original members of the Literary Club:

> Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Johnson, Mr. Burke, Dr. Nugent, Mr. Langton, Mr. Antony Chamier, Sir John Hawkins, the Hon. Topham Beauclerk, and Dr. Goldsmith. (p. 629)

Blake's marginalia reads:

> [Oliver Goldsmith ?never should have known such knaves] (p. 629)

A few pages later in the Reynolds book, responding to a note that

quotes Goldsmith's epitaph on Reynolds, Blake writes:

> Such Men as Goldsmith ought not to have been Acquainted with such Men as Reynolds[.] (p. 630)

Obviously Blake held Goldsmith in higher regard than the others of his neoclassical company, and one can only speculate why. Perhaps it was because Goldsmith exhibits a strain of sensibility that appealed to Blake. In spite of the fact that The Deserted Village is written in heroic couplets, Goldsmith's display of emotion and nostalgia for "Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain," where

> While scourged by famine from the smiling land,
> The mournful peasant leads his humble band . . . ,
> (ll. 299-300)[6]

must have appealed to Blake. And The Vicar of Wakefield, which Blake may also have read, likewise reflects Goldsmith's inclination toward the cult of sensibility.

Blake expresses little admiration, however, in his commentary on Dr. Johnson. His one explicit mention of Johnson is contained in the ninth chapter of An Island in the Moon where Johnson becomes the butt of a rather raw song:

> I say this evening [we'd] (we'll) all get drunk. I say dash, an Anthem an Anthem, said Suction
> Lo the Bat with Leathern wing

[6] Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith, ed. Arthur Friedman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), Vol. IV.

Winking & blinking
Winking & blinking
Winking & blinking
Like Doctor Johnson
Quid--O ho Said Doctor Johnson
To Scipio Africanus
If you don't own me a Philosopher
I'll kick your Roman Anus
Suction--A ha to Doctor Johnson
Said Scipio Africanus
Lift up my Roman Petticoatt
And kiss my Roman Anus

The bat, of course, is a negative symbol for Blake, one related to spiritual death; hence the first section of the song could be read as a statement against Johnson's pessimism that found little happiness in life, that implored mankind to

> Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,
> Obedient passions, and a will resign'd;
> For love, which scarce collective man can fill;
> For patience sov'reign o'er transmuted ill;
> For faith, that panting for a happier seat,
> Counts death kind nature's signal of retreat:
> These goods for man the laws of heav'n ordain,
> These goods he grants, who grants the pow'r to gain;
> With these celestial wisdom calms the mind,
> And makes the happiness she does not find.
> (The Vanity of Human Wishes, ll. 359-68)[7]

Johnson's philosophy was one that sought fortitude for the endurance of life's unhappiness. His writings reflect little hope of Atonement through the creative life. Hence Blake, in addition to deploring his

[7] The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, Vol. VI, ed. E. L. McAdam, Jr. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1964).

adherence to neoclassical principles of imitation and the closed couplet form, could likewise have deplored Johnson's philosophy. This passage certainly reflects such an aversion. Mona Wilson provides a plausible explanation for the appearance of these lines in An Island in the Moon, which is at least in part a satire on the bluestocking get-togethers at the home of Mrs. Matthews, when she comments that "Dr. Johnson did not, so far as we know, honour Mrs. Mathew's gatherings with his presence, but his opinions were doubtless quoted ad nauseam."[8] Apparently Blake not only did not approve of Johnson's ideas, he likewise was tired of hearing about them.

Blake's reference to Johnson as a philosopher brings to mind Johnson's Rasselas and Imlac's neoclassical tenet that

> The business of a poet . . . is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances: he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. (Chapter X)[9]

And Imlac's pessimistic conclusion is that "Human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed" (Chapter XI).

Sir Geoffrey Keynes has detected an allusion to Rasselas in the following introductory lines to Europe:

[8] The Life of William Blake, p. 23.

[9] The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson and Brian Jenkins (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971). All quotations from Rasselas are from this edition.

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

So sang a Fairy mocking as he sat on a streak'd Tulip,
Thinking none saw him . . .

(11. 1-8)

The fairy here is the fairy, the muse, that dictates Europe to Blake. Keynes sees the reference to the "cavern'd Man," who is Blake's fallen man, as perhaps an allusion to Rasselas, in which the prince of the same name was "confined to a Happy Valley surrounded by mountains and to be entered only through 'a cavern that passed under a rock.'" Keynes also sees in the words "a streak'd Tulip" an allusion to the already quoted passage on the nature of the poet's task.[10] Doubtless it is an allusion and a critically ironic one at that. The fairy, who is the source of Blake's inspiration for Europe, sits on "a streak'd Tulip, / Thinking none saw him"--thinking none saw him because it is not the business of the poet to be concerned with "the streaks of the tulip" but with "general properties and large appearances." Blake's implication is that inspiration does derive from attention to the particular, the individual, and not from general properties.

Blake's references to Dryden and Pope are more numerous and more explicit than those to Goldsmith and Johnson. On occasion he

[10] Wilson, The Life of William Blake, pp. 67-68 n.

mentions both men together as he strikes out at their neoclassical preference for the heroic couplet and their penchant for translation or imitation. His Notebook contains several references to their offenses:

> I do not condemn Pope or Dryden because they did not understand Imagination, but because they did not understand Verse.[11]

And:

> While the Works [of Translators] of Pope & Dryden are looked upon as the Same Art with those of Milton & Shakespeare . . . there can be no Art in a Nation but such as is Subservient to the interest of the Monopolizing Trader . . . 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 Be-lying the English Character in that well known Saying Englishmen Improve what others Invent[.] This even Hogarths Works Prove a detestable Falshood. No Man Can Improve An Original Invention. (pp. 564-65)

Here Pope and Dryden are collectively condemned for their rimes and for their translation. Short poems in other sections of the Notebook express even stronger sentiment against riming which, as Northrop Frye explains, Blake regarded "as a step in the direction of the freezing of art into 'outward Ceremony.'"[12] In one short poem Blake writes:

> Having given great offence by writing in Prose
> Ill write in Verse as soft as Bartolloze.

[11] Blake: Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p. 602.

[12] Fearful Symmetry, p. 95.

Some blush at what others can see no crime in
But nobody sees any harm in Rhyming
Dryden in Rhyme cries Milton only plannd
Every Fool shook his bells throughout the land
Tom Cooke cut Hogarth down with his clean graving
Thousands of Connoisseurs with joy ran raving
Thus Hayley on his Toilette seeing the sope
Cries Homer is very much improvd by Pope
. . . . . .
While I looking up to my umbrella
Resolvd to be a very contrary fellow
Cry looking quite from Skumference to Center
No one can finish so high as the original Inventor . . .
(p. 496)

Blake clearly exhibits in these couplets one of the fallacies of rime--that the poet can be led by his rimes. This is especially obvious in the couplet about Hayley, whom Blake considered an enemy by the time of this writing (1808-11). Here merely for the sake of a rime for "sope," the poet is led into the falsehood, in Blake's eyes, that Homer is improved by Pope. The implication is that the rimers--Dryden and Pope--are led by rimes and not by inspiration. Finally, and most obvious, is Blake's own position on the primacy of original invention, that "No one can finish so high as the original Inventor."

In connection with some of his own ideas on design and execution in art, Blake comments at least one other time, in his Notebook, on Pope's riming:

> I have heard many People say Give me the Ideas. It is no matter what Words you put them into & others say Give me the Design it is no matter for the Execution. These people know (Enough of Artifice but) Nothing of Art. Ideas cannot be Given but in their minutely Appropriate Words nor Can a Design be made without its minutely Appropriate Execution[.] The unorganized Blots & Blurs of Rubens

> & Titian are not Art nor can their Method ever express Ideas or Imaginations any more than Pope's Metaphysical Jargon of Rhyming[.] . . . He who copies does not Execute he only Imitates what is already Executed Execution is only the result of Invention. (p. 565)

Two final examples of Blake's verbal criticism of Pope are two short Notebook poems. The first is entitled "Imitation of Pope A Compliment. to the Ladies."

> Wondrous the Gods more wondrous are the Men
> More Wondrous Wondrous still the Cock & Hen
> More Wondrous still the Table Stool & Chair
> But Ah! More wondrous still the Charming Fair
> (p. 498)

The second, though this is not indicated in the title, appears likewise to be imitating Pope. This poem is entitled "A Pretty Epigram for the Entertainment of those who have Paid Great Sums in the Venetian & Flemish Ooze."

> Nature & Art in this together Suit
> What is Most Grand is always most Minute
> Rubens thinks Tables Chairs & Stools are Grand
> But Raphael thinks A Head, a foot, a hand
> (p. 505)

M. E. Bacon's perceptive comment on these two poems helps to clarify Blake's attitude toward Pope. The first of the poems, Bacon notes, is a poor imitation and was probably so intended--"it contains neither pointed comment nor appropriate diction nor effective use of the heroic couplet." It does in its silly content ironically imply a reverse order of the "wondrous," so that the order of wonder is, working from the top

--no doubt an allusion to the chain of being--from Charming Fair, Tables, Stools, Chairs, Cocks, Hens, Men, and finally God. "A Pretty Epigram," Bacon notes, "is much more pointed than the 'Imitation," and is in fact more worthy of being called an imitation of Pope." The implication, of course, with both poems is that Pope is too much concerned with material things--tables, stools, chairs. As Bacon notes, he sacrifices "the lineaments of the human form to the fashionable bric à brac of the day."[13]

Both Dryden and Pope were subjects for Blake's Heads of the Poets project. Pope is depicted with his glance directed toward the viewer's right, his head resting on his right hand, following the image created by Jean Baptiste van Loo. The head itself is encircled by a wreath of bay, ivy, and fern. To the viewer's left is a "female figure with sword and dagger," depicting the opening lines of "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady." On the right a kneeling figure, Eloisa from "Eloisa and Abelard," prays in her cell. The Dryden portrait depicts the poet facing the viewer's right and wreathed in laurel. To the left is a scene illustrating the opening lines of "Alexander's Feast or the Power of Music."[14] The subsidiary figures in the Pope design are

[13] "Blake's Imitation of Pope: A Compliment to the Ladies and A Pretty Epigram for the Entertainment of Those Who Paid Great Sums in the Venetian and Flemish Ooze," The Explicator, 28 (May 1970), No. 79.

[14] Wells, William Blake's "Heads of the Poets," pp. 24-25.

difficult to interpret in view of what we have already seen as Blake's attitude towards Pope. The allusion to "Eloisa and Abelard" could be pointing toward Pope's imitations and translations. But this is surely not the case with the "Elegy" scene. Perhaps I am reading too much into this, but it may be that Blake is here focusing on those works of Pope which deal with emotion or feelings because he could appreciate this aspect of Pope's work. The "Elegy" in its reflection of strong personal feeling indicates another facet of Pope, a Pope who hints that he may have felt the twinges of a "romantic imagination." At the same time the poem anticipates the work of the graveyard poets. The scene from "Alexander's Feast" in the Dryden illustration is likewise difficult to assess. Blake's interest in this poem, which reflects the effect of music upon Alexander the Great, may indicate Blake's appreciation of Dryden's skill in imitating musical effects in verse. He may, on the other hand, be objecting to the martial theme--"so should desert in arms be crown'd"--of the poem's early lines.[15]

Blake criticizes Dryden separately from Pope in a Notebook comment and in one of his illustrations to the poems of Thomas Gray. The former reference compares Dryden with Milton:

> An example of these Contrary Arts is given us in the Characters of Milton & Dryden as they are written in a Poem signed with the name of Nat Lee which perhaps he never wrote & perhaps he wrote

[15] As quoted by Wells in William Blake's "Heads of the Poets," p. 24.

> in a paroxysm of insanity In which it is said that Miltons poem is a rough Unfinishd Piece & Dryden has finishd it Now let Drydens Fall & Miltons Paradise be read & I will assert that every Body of Understanding must cry out Shame on such Niggling & Poco Pen as Dryden has degraded Milton with But at the same time I will allow that Stupidity will Prefer Dryden because it is in Rhyme (& Monotonous Sing Song Sing Song) from beginning to end . . . (pp. 569-70)

The reference to "Dryden's Fall" probably refers to Dryden's The State of Innocence (1674), an operatic version of Paradise Lost. Again Blake is attacking Dryden for his use of rime--"(Monotonous Sing Song Sing Song) from beginning to end." And he is doubtless appalled at the idea that Dryden's "imitation," could improve upon Milton.

Blake's Design 10 to Gray's "The Progress of Poesy" is another source of critical comment on Dryden. Gray's lines on Dryden rank him with Shakespeare and Milton:

> Behold, where Dryden's less presumptuous car,
> Wide o'er the fields of glory bear
> Two coursers of ethereal race,
> With necks in thunder cloth'd, and long-resounding pace.
>
> Hark his hand the lyre explore!
> Bright-eyed Fancy, hov'ring o'er,
> Scatters from his pictur'd urn
> Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.

Though Gray sees Dryden in a slightly lesser light than he sees Milton--in his "less presumptuous car"--he nevertheless sees him as one of England's most powerful poets. But Blake's illustration is not so favorable. In the picture Dryden sits strumming his lyre and gazing into a potpourri of figures streaming in flames from a vase emptied by "Bright-eyed Fancy" who hovers overhead. Among the figures visible in

the flames--Dryden's fancy--are four young women bearing various objects. One releases a bird which appears to be trying to return to the urn from which the stream of fancy has been released. Another woman bears a grasshopper, interpreted by Sir Geoffrey Keynes to represent "vermin, one of the plagues of Egypt." Another carries a snake in either hand, and a fourth "bears a sprig of laurel." Keynes notes that the laurel refers to Dryden's laureateship and that further such references are made by a "wreath round the neck of the urn and a little picture on its body of a tiny figure being crowned with laurel."[16] Irene Tayler sees the illustration in a more negative light, noting that this vision of fancy is Blake's comment on Dryden. It is, she notes, "a fancy that presents images of the mundane world and its attendant evils," a fancy that is subservient to the interests of the world. "Fancy makes her presentation, and Dryden seems impressed; but Blake leaves us to judge for ourselves the merit of a poet who accepts so undiscriminatingly the gifts of his fancy. Like the bird, we may well wish to return the way we came."[17] Blake's intention here indeed seems to be the calling into question of Dryden's laureateship, a laureateship that played to the interests of a public whose "stupidity" accepted his rimes and translations.

[16] William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for the Poems of Thomas Gray, p. 55.

[17] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 92.

The cult of sentimentalism or sensibility, which became increasingly popular toward the middle of the eighteenth century, held more appeal for Blake than had Neoclassicism and Deism. This school of thought was expressed, for example, in Collins' "Ode on the Poetical Character," which reflects both a reverence for Milton and a view of the poet as heaven-inspired Maker, and in the Miltonic blank verse of the works of James Thomson. Instead of focusing on the "ancients" and "rules" and general human nature, its followers looked more to the significance of the individual human being. And most importantly to Blake, the movement glorified the emotions as opposed to reason. The cult of sensibility or sentimentalism saw an inherent goodness in human nature,[18] and in turn it fostered a movement toward an interest in the primitive. Advocates of primitivism saw poetry "as the natural language of primitive man and suggested that only among primitive men was genius to be found."[19] Humankind in essence was good, and it was society that was the corrupting influence. The minds of early men were, as Arthur Lovejoy explains,

> not corrupted by "prejudices" at all; there were no traditions and no crystallized social forms to hinder the workings of common sense in them. What is universal and uniform in man, then, but has been

[18] See R. S. Crane, "Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the Man of Feeling," Journal of English Literary History, 1 (1934), 205-30.

[19] Robert Folkenflik, "Macpherson, Chatterton, Blake and the Great Age of Literary Forgery," The Centennial Review, 18 (1974), 382.

> overlaid and obscured by historic accretions in the unhappy diversities of belief and practice of modern and civilized peoples, must . . . have been exemplified in the earliest age . . . and must have persisted with least contamination among savages.[20]

Another aspect of this reactionary tendency, one related to the new reverence for the emotional and "feeling" aspect of human nature, found its expression in the gloom and Gothic horrors of the works of the poets of the graveyard school.

Blake must have felt a special affinity for the work of Collins and Thomson, especially in view of their reverence for Milton. Though there is no explicit mention of either man in his writings, there is evidence that he was at least influenced by them. Northrop Frye lists Collins as one of Blake's "masters" in poetry,[21] and Harold Bloom notes that the four unrimed landscape poems of Poetical Sketches are "clearly indebted to James Thomson's blank verse descriptive poem, The Seasons."[22]

Because they emphasized the emotions and "feeling" over Reason, Cowper and the Wesleys likewise would have appealed to Blake. Cowper was one of Blake's subjects for Hayley's Heads of the Poets project. Blake depicts him surrounded by a wreath which Rossetti identifies as composed of lilies of the valley. The subsidiary figures in the

[20] "The Parallel of Deism and Classicism," Essays in the History of Ideas (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1948), p. 86. First published in Modern Philology, 29 (1932).

[21] Fearful Symmetry, p. 167.

[22] Blake's Apocalypse, p. 13.

illustration are a dog and a boy running, arms raised, holding "an open book or letter," perhaps alluding to facts of Cowper's personal life. Wells indicates that the dog could be either Cowper's spaniel, Beau, or Tom Hayley's Fido, and that the boy may be Thomas Hayley, "waving with delight a letter to him from Cowper of 14th March, 1793, beginning 'My dear little critic.'"[23] Blake, who engraved a series of illustrations for Hayley's Life of Cowper, mentions Cowper on more than one occasion. In one note he writes:

> Cowper came to me & said. O that I were insane always I will never rest. Can you not make me truly insane. I will never rest till I am so. O that in the bosom of God I was hid. You retain health & yet are as mad as any of us all--over us all--mad as a refuge from unbelief--from Bacon Newton and Locke[.] (p. 652)

A short poem in Blake's Notebook entitled "William Cowper Esqre" likewise alludes to Cowper's madness:

> For this is being a Friend just in the nick
> Not when hes well but waiting till hes sick
> He calls you to his help be you not movd
> Untill by being Sick his wants are provd
>
> You see him spend his Soul in Prophecy
> Do you believe it a confounded lie
> Till some Bookseller & the Public Fame
> Proves there is truth in his extravagant claim
>
> For tis atrocious in a Friend you love
> To tell you anything that he cant prove

[23] William Blake's "Heads of the Poets," pp. 27-28.

> And tis most wicked in a Christian Nation
> For any Man to pretend to Inspiration
> (p. 498)

More appreciative of Cowper's genius is Blake's comment in a letter to Hayley on 28 May 1804:

> I have the happiness of seeing the Divine countenance in such men as Cowper and Milton more distinctly than in any prince or hero.[24]

And in a letter to Thomas Butts, 11 September 1801, Blake expresses his appreciation of Cowper's letters, writing that they were "Certainly the very best letters that ever were published" (p. 686). The religious enthusiasm and the intimacy and emotional sensitivity that Cowper revealed in such works as his letters and hymns, his long blank verse poem The Task, and "On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture" must have provided for Blake a welcome contrast to the neoclassical emphasis that had prevailed in the work of the poets of the early part of the century.

John and Charles Wesley and their thousands of hymns represented an appeal to the emotional life which Blake could appreciate. And although he does not comment explicitly about the Wesleys, critics have found evidence of a literary relationship between them. Martha Winburn England, for example, has noted parallels between the Wesley hymns and Blake's poetry.[25] Jacob Bronowski sees Wesleyian influence in

[24] Blake: Complete Writings, p. 845.

[25] See "Blake and the Hymns of Charles Wesley," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 70 (1966), 7-26, 93-112, 153-68, 251-64.

"The Divine Image" of Songs of Innocence.[26] And Robert Gleckner notes that Blake's "Holy Thursday" from Songs of Experience is an "extended parody" of a stanza from the Wesley song "A Yearly Hymn for Charity Children."[27]

More consonant with Blake's vision was the eighteenth-century primitivistic interest with its belief in the inherent goodness of human nature. And because he embraced primitivism, Blake could appreciate the work of Percy, Macpherson, and Chatterton.

Although Blake's writings do not mention Percy, Margaret Lowery and Harold Bloom, among others, attest to his familiarity with Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, noting that several of the poems in Poetical Sketches have their origin in the Reliques. Margaret Lowery, for instance, sees Blake's "Mad Song," in its imagery, phrasing, and rhythm, as directly reflecting the influence of the mad songs in the Reliques.[28] Bloom notes that "Gwin, King of Norway" is "imitated from several ballads in Percy's Reliques and from Chatterton" and that "Fair Eleanor" is an "exercise in Gothic horror again quarried from Percy's Reliques."[29]

[26] William Blake: A Man Without a Mask (London: Secker and Warburg, 1944), pp. 111-12.

[27] "Blake and Wesley," Notes and Queries, n.s. 3 (1956), 522-24.

[28] Windows of the Morning, pp. 161-65.

[29] Blake's Apocalypse, pp. 20-21.

About both Macpherson and Chatterton Blake comments explicitly. In his marginalia to Wordsworth's poems, contrary to Wordsworth's skepticism about the nature of Macpherson's work, Blake writes:

> I Believe both Macpherson & Chatterton, that what they say is Ancient, Is so . . . .
> I own myself an admirer of Ossian equally with any other Poet whatever Rowley & Chatterton also[.] (p. 655)

Curiously, Blake seems not to have recognized the fraudulent nature of the work of both Chatterton and Macpherson. And it is clear that both men influenced some aspects of his work. Anne Mellor, for example, notes that the plot of Visions of the Daughters of Albion may have been borrowed from Macpherson's Oithona "where . . . Oithona's lover Gaul . . . fights for her honor and defeats the rapist Dunrommath."[30] S. Foster Damon sees the Ossian poems as influencing Blake's poetic line. Blake, he writes, experimented with "Macpherson's method of printing unrhymed metres as prose" in The Passions, a work Blake never published, and in some other bits of poetry published in the Poetical Sketches. Thereafter, although Blake "retained the Ossianic septenary," he "dropped the custom of printing it as prose. But aside from technique, the cloudy, raw supernaturalism was extremely appealing to Blake: it completely dominates a few of the early poems, and sometimes reappears for a brief instant in the first of the Prophetic Books."[31] Blake adopts the

[30] Blake's Human Form Divine, p. 58.

[31] William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols, p. 28.

septenary from Macpherson, but he modifies it to suit his own purposes so that in his use of it it varies "from the gentle meander of Thel" to the "choral tempest of Jerusalem."[32] Ironically, Blake disparaged the verse forms of the greatest poets of his age only to adopt that of its most famous literary forger. Yet it was this latter form that provided the liberty he needed to purvey his own myth.

Blake's regard for Chatterton is reflected in An Island in the Moon and in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. As with most of the chaotic "conversation" of An Island in the Moon, an attempt to get at its meaning requires an "imaginative" effort, and results are seldom categorical. The first mention of Chatterton comes at the beginning of Chapter 3, after a song by the Cynic about Phebus. Aradobo then asks who Phebus is and is answered by Obtuse Angle, and the story continues:

> He was the God of Physic, Painting Perspective Geometry Geography Astronomy, Cookery, Chymistry [Conjunctives] Mechanics, Tactics Pathology, Phraseology, Theology Mythology Astrology Osteology, Somatology in short every art & science adorn'd him as beads round his neck, here Aradobo lookd Astonishd & askd if he understood Engraving--Obtuse Angle Answerd indeed he did.--Well said the other he was as great as Chatterton. Tilly Lally turnd round to Obtuse Angle & askd who it was that was as great as Chatterton. Hay, how should I know Answerd Obtuse Angle who was it Aradobo. why sir said he the Gentleman that the song was about. (p. 442)

A similar reference to Chatterton, alluding this time to his death, appears in Chapter 5. Aradobo praises Chatterton:

[32] William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols, p. 53.

> I think in the first place that Chatterton was clever at Fissic Follogy, Pistinology, Aridology, Arography, Transmography Phizography Hogamy HAtomy, & hall that but in the first place he eat every littly wickly that is he slept very little which he brought into a consumption, & what was that that he took Fissic or somethink & so died[.] (p. 444)

Chatterton is also alluded to just before the above passage when Aradobo asks if he is a mathematician. Obtuse Angle replies, "No . . . how can you be so foolish as to think he was" (p. 444). In Chapter 7, Quid speaks:

> I think that Homer is bombast & Shakespeare is too wild & Milton has no feelings they might be easily outdone Chatterton never writ those poems. a parcel of fools going to Bristol . . . (p. 446)

Finally, there is Blake's couplet in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:

> How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way,
> Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?
> (Plate 7)

which is "adapted" from one of Chatterton's poems.[33]

In view of the chaos of the conversation and the slight to Shakespeare and Milton in An Island in the Moon, Blake's comment that "Chatterton never writ those poems" can hardly be taken seriously. Blake seems rather to have thought highly of Chatterton. His twice-used phrase "as great as Chatterton" from Chapter 3 reflects that to

[33] Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, p. 83.

him Chatterton may have indeed represented a standard against which other artists might be measured. That he did not consider Chatterton a mathematician likewise indicates an appreciation of his imaginative genius since to Blake mathematics was associated with the classics. Mathematic form he opposed to Gothic or "Living Form." The couplet echoing Chatterton in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and Blake's expression of belief in Chatterton in the Wordsworth marginalia reflect a positive conception of Chatterton. Chatterton's precocious medieval forgeries exhibited an interest in sentimentalism and in primitivism, and a literary quality influenced by Elizabethan poetry that found favor with Blake. Chatterton, he must have realized, was aware of mankind's infinite possibilities.

Perhaps less to Blake's liking, yet gaining more of his attention, was the gloom and Gothic horror of the work of the graveyard poets Edward Young, Thomas Gray, and Robert Blair. Although he was unable to accept the morbidity of their views of death, Blake saw in them an opportunity to put his own fourfold myth to work, an opportunity to use his myth as a corrective to their limited visions. Consequently, his sets of illustrations to the works of these three poets constitute three of his most important works of literary criticism.

Blake's Criticism of Young

Except for a brief mention in An Island in the Moon, Blake's explicit criticism of Edward Young is contained in the 537 water colors which he executed between 1795 and 1797 to illustrate Young's Night Thoughts.

The reference to Young in An Island in the Moon (Chapter 8) is cast in the chaos of the bluestocking tea party conversation scene:

> Steelyard the Lawgiver, sitting at his table taking extracts from Hervey's Meditations among the tombs & Young's Night thoughts. . . . He is not able to hurt me (said he) more than making me Constable or taking away the parish business. Hah! . . . .
>
> My crop of corn is but a field of tares
>
> Says Jerome happiness is not for us poor crawling reptiles of the earth Talk of happiness & happiness its no such thing--every person has a something
>
> Hear then the pride & knowledge of a Sailor
> His sprit sail fore sail main sail & his mizen
> A poor frail man god wot I know none frailer
> I know no greater sinner than John Taylor
>
> If I had only myself to care for I'd soon make Double Elephant look foolish, & Filligree work I hope I shall live to see--
>
> The wreck of matter & the crush of worlds
>
> as Younge says . . . (pp. 446-47)

It is difficult to find in this passage much more than a mere reference to the morbidity of Young's graveyard school of poetry. Perhaps Blake's intention is to show in the Steelyard-Jerome drama that Young's

philosophy of morbidity concentrates on "The wreck of matter & the crush of worlds,"[34] and hence lacks efficacy as a means of Atonement and of happiness in this life. Steelyard and Jerome seem only superficially concerned with the austerity of Young's preachings. Their thoughts immediately revert to their own selfish interests, Steelyard's becoming Constable and losing "parish business" and Jerome's desire to have only himself to care for.

More on the order of criticism are the water-color illustrations to the Night Thoughts. Blake was employed for this task by Richard Edwards in 1795. Two years later he had completed 537 water-color illustrations which were designed to enclose on the page--large folio sheets--the text of Young's poem. Edwards then selected forty-three of the designs for his first volume (Nights I-IV) of the Night Thoughts, and because the venture proved financially unsuccessful, these forty-three prints were the only ones he published.[35]

Critics have speculated about Blake's reasons, other than a hope for financial success that never materialized, for taking up such an extensive project on the work of Edward Young. Northrop Frye suggests that it was not so much Young who appealed to Blake but that the

[34] A line from Addison's Cato. See Morton D. Paley, "Blake's Night Thoughts: An Exploration of the Fallen World," William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Providence: Brown Univ. Press, 1969), p. 134.

[35] Robert Essick and Jenijoy La Belle, eds. Night Thoughts or the Complaint and the Consolation, p. iii.

poem's symbolism was based on the Bible and that it was the Biblical archetypes to which Blake gravitated.[36] Noting that it is difficult for a contemporary audience to understand Blake's interest in Young, Morton Paley writes that Blake had, however, read Young's Night Thoughts prior to Edwards' engagement of him to do the illustrations and that the Night Thoughts are echoed in several of Blake's own works. Among the examples given by Paley are the reference mentioned above and these lines from The Book of Thel:

> where the fibrous roots
> Of every heart on earth infixes deep its restless twists . . . ,

which are "either directly or indirectly derived" from Young's

> O the soft Commerce! O the tender Tyes
> Close-twisted with the Fibres of the Heart![37]

Paley sees additional derivations from Young in lines from For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise, and similarities between "The Sick Rose"

[36] "Poetry and Design in William Blake," The Visionary Hand, p. 152. Reprinted from the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 10 (September 1951), 35-42.

[37] "Blake's Night Thoughts: An Exploration of the Fallen World," pp. 131-34. Michael Tolley, in "The Book of Thel and Night Thoughts," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 69 (1965), 382, also notes that the Night Thoughts are a source for some aspects of Thel. Some of the lines of Night I, he says, are a source for some of the ideas of the poem. Tolley also sees parallels between lines 284-301 in Night I and Blake's description of Urizen exploring his dens; and the source of Blake's symbol the Mundane Shell, he says, may have been Young's reference to "the future Embryo" in lines 128-33 of Night I.

from Songs of Experience:

> O Rose thou art sick
> The invisible worm,
> That flies in the night
> In the howling storm:
>
> Has found out thy bed
> Of crimson joy:
> And his dark secret love
> Does thy life destroy.

and a passage in Young which reads:

> death's subtle seed within,
> Sly, treacherous Miner! working in the dark,
> Smiled at thy well-concerted scheme, and beckon'd
> The worm to riot on that rose so red,
> Unfaded ere it fell--one moment's prey!
> (I, 13)[38]

Paley also sees a close resemblance between Blake's metaphor for the senses in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:

> 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. (Plate 14)

and Young's metaphor for the same in Night Thoughts:

[38] "Blake's Night Thoughts: An Exploration of the Fallen World," pp. 133-34. Quotations from Young, unless otherwise indicated, are from Essick and La Belle's Night Thoughts and will be annotated with night and page number as published in that edition.

Through chinks stiled organs, dim life peeps at light;
Death bursts the involving cloud, and all is day;
All eye, all ear the disembodied power.
(III, 60)

"Young," as Paley writes, "gives to death what Blake gives to life, but both agree not only in their use of an image but also in their view of spirituality as a heightening of sensory perception." In short, Young's Night Thoughts provided Blake with a "storehouse of familiar sentiments, expressions, and attitudes which suited [his] purposes."[39]

Another reflection of Young's influence on Blake is noted by Essick and La Belle, and even earlier by John Grant. This has to do with the influence of Young on Vala, or the Four Zoas and the fact that Blake divided his own prophecy into nine nights. This, say Essick and La Belle, is sufficient evidence of Young's influence, and they add that "perhaps it was a sense of symbolic continuity, rather than simply a paper shortage, motivating Blake when he wrote parts of Vala on proof sheets of his Night Thoughts engravings."[40] Essick and La Belle agree with John Grant who notes that "the selection of the Night Thoughts engravings was probably deliberate rather than accidental,"[41] that Blake instead of merely redrawing similar designs prompted by having the Night

[39] "Blake's Night Thoughts: An Exploration of the Fallen World, p. 134-35.

[40] Night Thoughts, p. iv.

[41] "Visions in Vala: A Consideration of Some Pictures in the Manuscript," Blake's Sublime Allegory, p. 144.

Thoughts designs on facing pages, may have seen significant thematic relationships among the two sets of designs.[42] Northrop Frye sees such a relationship between Vala and the Night Thoughts,[43] and H. M. Margoliouth sees reflections of the Night Thoughts in Milton and Jerusalem. "I am sure of one thing, Margoliouth says, "Blake did not despise his author. . . . The other worldliness of Young's poem, its insistence on immortality and the values which a firm belief in immortality compels, must have appealed to him strongly."[44]

Another influence which might have prompted Blake toward a sympathy with Young was Young's Conjectures on Original Composition. Mona Wilson, Geoffrey Keynes, and Morton Paley all see this as a possible influence. Mona Wilson notes that

> The muse who dictated the Night Thoughts was a daughter of the eighteenth century, but Dr. Edward Young, at the age of seventy-six, caught strange premonitory glimpses of the Daughters of Inspiration, recorded in his Conjectures on Original Composition, 1759. If, as is likely enough, Blake read this little treatise, his heart must have warmed towards the author while at work on his illustrations.[45]

Both Paley and Keynes cite specific passages in the Conjectures which

[42] "Visions in Vala," pp. 160-61.

[43] Fearful Symmetry, p. 278.

[44] "Blake's Drawings for Young's Night Thoughts," The Divine Vision, p. 197.

[45] The Life of William Blake, p. 89.

would have appealed to Blake. Paley's offerings note Young's comments on inspired blank verse and his opposition to Dryden's emphasis on the general as opposed to the specific:

> Blank is a term of diminution; what we mean by blank verse, is verse unfallen, uncurst; verse reclaim'd, reinthron'd in the true language of the Gods . . .
>
> Dryden had a great, but a general capacity; and as for a general Genius, there is no such thing in nature: A Genius implies the rays of the mind concenter'd, and determined to some particular point . . .[46]

Keynes writes that Conjectures on Original Composition "contains many sentences which Blake must strongly have approved." One of the examples used by Keynes is Young's

> So boundless are the bold excursions of the human mind, that, in the vast void beyond real existence, it can call forth shadowy beings and unknown worlds, as numerous, as bright, and perhaps as lasting, as the stars . . . when such an ample area for renowned adventure in original attempts lies before us, shall we be as mere leaden pipes, conveying to the present age small streams of excellence from its grand reservoir in antiquity, and those, too, perhaps muddied in the past.[47]

Young's theme of resurrection and his expression of a belief in immortality in the Night Thoughts, and his affinity for a poetry, a

[46] As quoted by Paley in "Blake's Night Thoughts: An Exploration of the Fallen World," p. 135.

[47] As quoted by Sir Geoffrey Keynes, Introductory Essay, Illustrations to Young's Night Thoughts Done in Water-Colour by William Blake, n. pag.

verse which emanated from an infinite human mind, a verse which was the "true language of the Gods," would certainly have appealed to Blake. But although Blake could appreciate some aspects of Young's poem and of his poetic theory, his designs to the Night Thoughts indicate that he did not always agree with Young. Sensing Young's genius, he perhaps intended to rescue the Night Thoughts from the clouds of religious orthodoxy that enveloped it. In short, although Blake was attracted by Young's treatment of the themes of the resurrection and the immortality of the soul, the religious orthodoxy that concentrated on an external God and a resurrection that occurred after the death of the physical body was not in accord with Blake's conception of Imagination that provided for the experience of Atonement in the mind of the living human being who came to recognize his own divine nature. Consequently, Blake sought in his illustrations to offer a corrective, to purify Young's distorted vision.

That the illustrations constitute a critical comment on Young's poem has long been recognized. Gilchrist, in his nineteenth-century biography of Blake, notes that in some instances Blake's designs to the Night Thoughts reflect his own themes, "parallel to, or even independent of the text."[48] The illustrations themselves and the comments of leading twentieth-century critics who have studied them attest to Blake's genius as a critic of Young's work. Sir Geoffrey Keynes

[48] Life of William Blake, p. 138.

writes that Blake "has taken the clay of Young's mind and with deft fingers has moulded it into the image of true poetry."[49] Morton Paley has noted that in the illustrations of Young's Night Thoughts Blake has "pictorialized his subject in a unique way," assimilating it "into the mythological system that he was creating in his own prophetic works," that "for Blake the pictorialized trope is often a means of making a symbolic statement which depends for its meaning not on Young's text but on the myths developed in the Lambeth books and in Vala." Blake, Paley says, "adapts, ignores, or even subverts Young's meaning in order to develop his own."[50] More recently attesting to Blake's critical approach to Young are Essick and La Belle, who note that though "Blake is a very careful illustrator of Young's text," at the same time he uses "motifs that appear in his other designs and in his own poetry" to refer us continually "to his own ideas and reactions to what Young is writing, so that the illustrations are not simply decorative but form a running commentary on Young's poem."[51]

Clearly, Blake in his illustrations to Young's Night Thoughts was interpreting and criticizing Young's work in terms of his own archetypal myth. Objecting to Young's preoccupation with a Urizenic

[49] Introductory Essay, Illustrations to Young's Night Thoughts Done in Water-Colour by William Blake, n. pag.

[50] "Blake's Night Thoughts: An Exploration of the Fallen World," pp. 136-37.

[51] Night Thoughts, p. iii.

religion of reason that found deity through order in nature, Blake sought to modify Young's hindered poetic vision with his own concept of Atonement and its correlative creative inspiration. Blake no doubt thought that Young, as Essick and La Belle have noted, "while writing of sin and death all too frequently forgot the visionary themes of salvation and resurrection."[52]

In the Introduction to his 1854 edition of the Night Thoughts, the Rev. George Gilfillan describes the argument of the poem in terms that to the Blakean initiate clearly register Blake's reasons for wanting to revise Young's vision:

> to shew the vanity of man as mortal, to inculcate the lowness, misery, and madness of the sensual life; to prove the superiority of the Christian to the man of the world, both in life and in death, and the worthlessness of merely human friendship; to argue, from nature and reason, the truth of man's immortality; to shew the reasonableness of religion, and to inculcate the necessity of a divine revelation, and of a propitiatory sacrifice.[53]

Though Blake would obviously have agreed with some of these concepts--especially the necessity of divine revelation--he certainly would have objected to the seeking of "the truth of man's immortality" through "nature and reason," and to the "reasonableness of religion." Young's references to "reason, that heaven-lighted lamp in man," to "reason,

[52] Night Thoughts, p. xv.

[53] Young's Night Thoughts, ed. George Gilfillan (New York: Appleton, 1854), p. xxii.

guardian angel, and our God!" (III, 45), to man "How complicate," "Distinguish'd link in being's endless chain!" (I, 3), must have dismayed Blake. And Young's concept of a God who has made "finite every nature but his own" (IV, 81) is hardly in tune with Blake, who finds infinity and God in the individual man. Young's advice to

> Read nature; nature is a friend to truth;
> Nature is christian; preaches to mankind . . .
> (IV, 90-91)

expresses a faith in Nature that Blake could not have accepted. For Young, Christ

> at the destined period shall return
> HE, once on earth, who bids the comet blaze;
> And, with HIM, all our triumph o'er the tomb.
> (IV, 91)

Where Young limits Christ's return to such a final Judgment Day, for Blake the apocalyptic experience of Atonement is a continually recurring possibility in the life of each individual. Christ for Blake lived every day in the heart of every human being and was there to be experienced by any one who could bring the warring factions of his mind into creative focus.

A study of some of Blake's illustrations to the Night Thoughts reveals his criticism of Young's adherence to Deistic and neoclassic principles that glorified reason as a means of knowing God, and of Young's preoccupation with the morbid aspects of life and death. Blake, in short, felt that in these respects Young lacked vision.

Thomas Helmstadter, noting that approximately fifty of the Night Thoughts illustrations are concerned with the faculty of Reason, writes that Young's assertion of the "supremacy of the faculty of Reason over Imagination, Sense, Instinct, and Faith" must have "impressed Blake as the tyranny of Urizen."[54] The design for Night III, page 46 is obviously a comment on Young's emphasis on reason.[55] The lines of text marked for illustration are:

> Where sense runs savage broke from reason's chain,
> And sings false peace, till smother'd by the pall.

The design personifies Sense, not as a savage, but as a beautiful young girl, long hair flying, stepping forth with arms raised and outspread, reminiscent of the posture of Albion in the Glad Day illustration. Overhead the personification of Reason, his hands and long white Urizenic hair the only visible elements of his humanness, swoops down, his black hood a pall, over the pleasant-faced young woman. Though Sense wears a chain on her right wrist and a manacle around her right ankle, she is nevertheless free from "reason's chain." Blake's sympathies, Helmstadter notes, are with the young girl--with Sense--yet "in Young's text she is getting what she deserves."[56] Essick and La Belle, in

[54] "Blake and the Age of Reason," 106.

[55] Unless otherwise indicated, all references to designs and text are to the Essick and La Belle edition.

[56] "Blake's Night Thoughts: Interpretations of Edward Young," The Visionary Hand, p. 385; reprinted from Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 12 (1970), 27-54.

commenting on this same design, note the similarity between this young girl's flight and that of Oothoon, who also fled repression in Visions of the Daughters of Albion.[57] Clearly the design, in terms of Blake's own mythology, emphasizes the repressive aspects of Young's concept of Reason. This hooded Spectre of Blake's design is certainly not a Reason which one might, as Young would have it, want as a restraint for his imaginative energy.

A similar sentiment is expressed by Blake in Night Thoughts illustration No. 404 which shows a blank-faced young man sitting on a rock, right foot forward, left foot hidden by a chained dog that lies sleeping in front of the foot. In his right hand, the young man holds over his head an eagle, symbol for Blake of the spiritual in humankind. This design was intended to illustrate the lines:

> His Appetite wears Reason's golden Chain,
> And finds, in due Restraint, its Luxury;
> His Passion, like an Eagle well-reclaim'd,
> Is taught to fly at nought, but Infinite . . .[58]

Helmstadter notes that "the chain restraining animal appetite, the tame eagle of passion, and the blank face of the young man indicate that Blake disagrees with his author." These aspects of the design "recall Blake's opposite assertion that 'Men are admitted into Heaven not because

[57] Night Thoughts, p. xii.

[58] Helmstadter, "Blake's Night Thoughts: Interpretations of of Edward Young," p. 399.

they have curbed & govern'd their Passions or have No Passions, but because they have Cultivated their Understanding.'"[59]

Blake expresses his opinion of the effect of Reason on education in his illustration for Night II, page 35. Here the lines marked for illustration are:

> Teaching, we learn; and giving, we retain
> The births of intellect; when dumb, forgot.

Also important to Blake's illustration are the lines which follow on the same page:

> Speech ventilates our intellectual fire;
> Speech burnishes our mental magazine;
> Brightens for ornament, and whets for use
> What numbers, sheath'd in erudition, lie
> Plunged to the hilts in venerable tomes,
> And rusted; who might have borne an edge,
> And play'd a sprightly beam, if born to speech!
> If born blest heirs to half their mother's tongue!
> 'Tis thought's exchange, which, like th' alternate push
> Of waves conflicting, breaks the learned scum,
> And defecates the student's standing pool.

These lines on intellectual stimulation are illustrated by Blake with the hunched-over Urizenic figure of a teacher marking off or counting on his fingers before two children who sit on a stool. Behind the two children a younger child hovers in the protection of its mother's knee. The mother, her hair covered by a hood, leans forward, a pained

[59] "Blake's Night Thoughts: Interpretations of Edward Young," p. 397. Helmstadter is quoting from A Vision of the Last Judgment," The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, pp. 553-54.

expression on her face. Out of and over the chair in which she sits grows a vine whose tendrils represent for Blake the world of Generation. Above the education scene hovers a female figure reclining, asleep in a cloud, perhaps an indication that the Muse of Inspiration sleeps in the face of such a quantitative, rational education. Above the text plate can be seen a poet strumming a lyre, totally unconcerned with the scene below. Helmstadter notes that this illustration, with its figure of authority "counting on his fingers and conducting a memory lesson," instead of participating in thought's exchange, "challenges Young's glib and disingenuous rhetoric with a sober view of an evil Reason, a Urizenic schoolmaster, imposing his disciplines upon his children."[60] Essick and La Belle remark that "the vegetative chair and the cloak draped over the old woman's head mark her . . . as a prototype for Blake's nature goddess, Vala." The old man bent "over from his sinister bat-winged chair" teaches "quantitative knowledge as restrictive as his own and his students' postures."[61] The implication is clear that Young's concept of education limits the students' vision, that Reason cannot lift the vision beyond the dull round of the generative life.

A veiled Vala figure, who for Blake often represents repression, appears in the illustration to Night II, page 27 as the personification of Conscience. Here the lines marked for illustration are:

[60] "Blake's Night Thoughts: Interpretations of Edward Young," pp. 394-96.

[61] Night Thoughts, p. xi.

O treacherous conscience! while she seems to sleep
On rose and myrtle, lull'd with syren song . . .

Young's intention in the passage that follows this is to caution the reveler that when his revelry is over Conscience must be faced. For Young, Conscience is a protector; she keeps man on the straight and narrow path. But in Blake's illustration she becomes Vala and a sinister figure, representing the repressive aspects of Reason, as she stands veiled, dressed in a dark gown and floor-length hood, writing in a book and looking to her right toward the reclining figure of a reveler.

Young's concept of religion was, like his concepts of morality and virtue, based on Reason. Yet for Blake a religion based on Reason was abominable. Thomas Helmstadter notes that in illustration No. 333, the text of which urges Young's friend Lorenzo to give up reading St. Egremont, whose work is fragmented, for a reading of St. Paul "'Who not in Fragments writes to Human Race,'" Blake uses the concept of fragmentation to express his own belief about the Mosaic law. The idea of fragmentation he illustrates ironically, with Moses breaking the Commandment tablets in anger. The implication is that the tyrannical religion espoused by Young is itself fragmented and mankind should instead "turn from the fragments of the Mosaic law."[62] In this respect one is reminded of a passage from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell in which the Devil explains how Jesus broke the Ten Commandments:

[62] "Blake's Night Thoughts: Interpretations of Edward Young," pp. 401-02.

> [I]f Jesus Christ is the greatest man, you ought to love him in the greatest degree; now hear how he has given his sanction to the law of ten commandments: did he not mock at the sabbath, and so mock the sabbaths God? murder those who were murderd because of him? turn away the law from the woman taken in adultery? steal the labor of others to support him? bear false witness when he omitted making a defence before Pilate? covet when he pray'd for his disciples, and when he bid them shake off the dust of their feet against such as refused to lodge them? I tell you, no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments. Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse. not from rules. (Plates 23 and 24)

The commandments, Blake says, should be broken. "One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression" (Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Plate 24), and it was just such a law that he found in the Ten Commandments and a religion that emphasized morality and Reason as opposed to faith and forgiveness.

The illustration to Night IV, page 92 emphasizes Blake's stand on religion based on faith, a faith not dependent upon Reason. Young's lines on this page subvert faith to Reason:

> Fond as we are, and justly fond of faith,
> Reason, we grant, demands our first regard;
> The Mother honour'd, as the daughter dear.
> Reason the root; fair faith is but the flower:
> The fading flower shall die; but reason lives
> Immortal as her father in the skies.

The illustration for this passage shows Reason sitting before a scale. The visible side of the scale holds nothing, yet it seems to be in perfect balance with the text of Young's poem, which could be construed as being weighed against the opposite side. Is Blake saying, then, that Young's text is as nothing? At Reason's feet sits Faith, a young girl, her back to the viewer, her eyes no doubt directed toward Reason and her

scale. She sits, her left foot extended, the right leg doubled back under her body, and a writing paper and pen are held by her right hand on her left leg. Essick and La Belle see the figure of Reason, her "giant foot and prominent knee," her crown and the "spiky pattern" around her neck, as reminiscent of Urizen.[63] Young's faith, then, is defective in its dependence upon Reason. A religion based on faith, Blake implies, must be independent of Reason.

Blake clearly opposed Young's concept of Reason, and he saw that it was from a Urizenic Reason that Young's concepts of Death and of the Judgment Day had evolved. Aware of the relationship between Young's perception of Reason and Death, Blake throughout Night I depicts Death as Young himself sees him. This personification of Death is the figure of Blake's Urizen, the long-haired old man who represents, throughout Blake's work, Reason and oppression and Blake's Nobodaddy God. On the frontispiece of Night I, Death sits, eyes closed, holding in his left hand a young girl whose spirit is being transported to the upper regions. In the shelter of his huge hunched-over body a family goes about their daily tasks, which include weaving, reading, writing, and playing a lyre, oblivious to his existence. On page 7, Death sits, his huge left leg visible from knee to foot from under his long flowing beard, as he rings a symmetrical, triangular-shaped bell near the head of a reclining male figure. On page 8 the same figure stands, his feet

[63] Night Thoughts, p. xvii.

on the heads of crowned tyrants, as he plucks the sun from its sphere and prepares to hurl his sharply pointed spear. On page 13 the same Urizenic Death, eyes closed, plunges from the sky, his spear directed at a mother and child embracing below. Yet such a Urizenic figure is not Blake's conception of Death. The reader familiar with Blake's iconography recognizes that Blake in these designs is criticizing Young's conception which dwells far too much, in Blake's eyes, on the morbid aspects of death.[64]

Blake's experience with death included the sight of the spirit of his brother Robert ascending, "clapping its hands for joy."[65] And he told Henry Crabb Robinson just before his own death that "I cannot consider death as any thing but . . . a removing from one room to another."[66] In Blake's eyes, the dead were as much alive as the living; hence death was not to be feared. In a letter to Hayley, written in May 1800 only three years after publication of Edwards' edition of the Night Thoughts, he wrote:

> I know that our deceased friends are more really with us than when they were apparent to our mortal part. Thirteen years ago I lost a brother & with his spirit I converse daily & hourly in the

[64] Essick and La Belle, in Night Thoughts, p. vi, note the similarities between Blake's illustrations of Death and the Urizen of Blake's Illuminated Books.

[65] Damon, Dictionary, p. 99.

[66] Blake Records, p. 337.

> Spirit & See him in my remembrance in the regions of my Imagination. I hear his advice & even now write from his Dictate. (p. 678)

Only the person confined by his own Selfhood, one lacking in imaginative vision, could fear death. Hence in depicting Young's conception of Death, Blake gives us the figure of Death conjured up by man's Reason, a figure resembling Urizenic man himself--the figure of Blake's Job and of Job's self-created God. Here Blake has illustrated Young "literally," and anyone who knows Blake immediately recognizes that the illustrations are critical of Young's restricted vision.

Young's limited concept of Death and Grief is illustrated again in the design for Night III, page 55. This illustration portrays a mourner crouched over in a ball, all his sensory faculties hidden from view, before a grave wound round by briars. The rectangles of a tombstone and of a large brick tomb dominate the lower section of the illustration. Here is Young's conception of Death and Grief. But Blake's more optimistic vision is apparent in the figure of a soul swooping down trying to draw the attention of the mourner toward the sky. The mourner, however, crouched over as he is, is oblivious to the promise of immortality afforded by the soul. At this point--Night III--Young's emphasis on the morbid aspects of death is not as strong as it was in Night I. By now he is trying to convince his reader that the contemplation of the death of one's friends can bring inspiration:

smitten friends
Are angels sent on errands full of love
. . . . . .
The thought of death shall, like a god, inspire.

Unfortunately, however, this contemplation--thinking on death--as Blake shows us in this illustration, has Young's mourner so bound up in himself that he is oblivious to inspiration.

A more optimistic picture of Death, perhaps closer to Blake's own conception, is the design executed to illustrate Night V, page 50.[67] The lines marked for illustration are:

When, against Reason, Riot shuts the door,
And Gayety supplies the Place of Sense,
Then foremost at the Banquet, and the Ball,
Death leads the Dance, or stamps the deadly Die . . .

The figure of Death in this design lacks some of the Urizenic features of the Death of Night I. This may be because Death is mostly hidden behind the text plate. But what one does see of Death, in spite of the vegetative crown on his head, bespeaks a more kindly figure. His arms are outspread, leading two figures below in a Dance of Death. The open postures of the dancers indicate that the dance may not be an altogether negative experience. Although the table on which the wine bowl sits is square and reminiscent of Blake's tomb iconography, to the left a figure pipes a flute-like instrument, and to the right a young woman

[67] Keynes, Illustrations to Young's Night Thoughts Done in Water-Colour by William Blake.

strums a lyre.

Death for Blake was not a negative experience. The death of the material body, he believed, freed the soul from its cavern and permitted it to return to Eternity, to a state of continuous fourfold vision or Atonement. But death in this material sense was not essential to Atonement, which could be achieved--and not, as Young would have it in Night Thoughts, by depriving the senses in favor of Almighty Reason or by finding God in the order of Nature--by liberating the senses and the passions and by finding the God in man.

Blake illustrates his own view of Atonement as it contrasts with Young's ideas in some of his depictions of Christ in the Night Thoughts designs. In addition to providing his version of Young's Christ, Blake depicts his own contrasting conception of Christ, symbol of Atonement, on the title page of Night IV. One of the figures depicting Young's Christ appears in the design which accompanies Night IV, page 87. These lines are marked for illustration:

> O how omnipotence
> Is lost in love! thou great PHILANTHROPIST!
> Father of angels! but the friend of man!

The illustration depicts Christ walking among men. But, as Essick and La Belle note, this is not a happy group of people among whom Christ walks. All seem "subdued and saddened, as if Christ has indeed made 'us groan beneath our gratitude' for His self-sacrifice." Noting that the halo around Christ's head bears the sharp points of a star rather

than a radiance streaming from his whole body, as depicted in the Christ of the title page of Night IV, Essick and La Belle write: "A 'great PHILANTHROPIST' who places man under the heavy obligations described by Young is, from Blake's point of view, a misleading conception of God."[68] The illustration on the verso of the half title page for Night VII again reveals Blake's conception of Young's Christ. Sir Geoffrey Keynes describes this image of Christ as "the figure of the Saviour" bursting "with outstretched arms through the dark clouds of doubt, irradiating with his beams the dark contorted figures of two Infidels. His open mouth is uttering the promise of immortality."[69]

Perhaps I could see this in the design if I did not have before me at the same time the illustration of Christ from the title page of Night IV. In this design, Christ with stigmata visible on his feet and left side bursts forth from the tomb. Light emanates from his body and lights up the entire design. In contrast to this energetic pose is the figure of Christ in the design for the title page of Night VII. In this illustration the light that Christ emanates makes only his upper torso visible, and instead of lighting up the entire design, it seems to have difficulty piercing the surrounding web-like shadows--what Keynes refers to as "clouds of doubt." The arms, it is true, are extended with the stigmata visible on the palms of the hands, but the

[68] Night Thoughts, p. xvi.

[69] Illustrations to Young's Night Thoughts Done in Water-Colour by William Blake, n. pag.

countenance looks almost pained in contrast with the pleasant face of Christ in the Night IV design. In fact, the lips of Christ and of the Infidel in the darkness at the right, in the Night VII design, are almost identical in shape. In this negative conception of Christ, the eyes are rolled upward emphasizing even more his pained expression. Clearly this conception of Christ lacks the wonder and glory of Blake's Christ as he portrays him on the title page of Night IV. It seems apparent that Blake intended the two designs, both of which are not arranged around the customary text plate, as contrasting designs to point once again at Young's limited vision of Christ and of Atonement.

Blake commented repeatedly, via his illustrations, on Young's shortcomings as a poet--the significance he attributes to Reason, his preoccupation with the morbidity of death, and his restricted vision of Atonement. But Blake went even further in the illustrations toward a more direct comment on the quality of Young's imaginative state. In so doing, he measured Young's poetic vision in terms of his own visionary perspectives of Ulro, Generation, Beulah, and Eden. Young he knew exhibited traces of genius, both in the Night Thoughts and in Conjectures on Original Composition, which placed him high in the imaginative stages of Beulah; but unfortunately his vision was limited, and he risked slipping back into the lower levels of Generation and Ulro. This criticism can be traced in the landscape of several of the illustrations which deal with the poet himself.

The illustration to Night I, page 1 clearly refers to the

melancholy of Young the graveyard poet. The picture is of a young pastoral poet, identified by John Grant as Young,[70] reclining with his head "propped on his arm in the traditional posture of the melancholic," and his "face drawn by thoughts of fancied misery." The poet is wound in a shroud-like cloak, which seems to bind him to "the mortality of earthly creatures"; he is a "companion to the vine" that climbs up the left side of the illustration.[71] Caught in the sleepy world of Beulah, his preoccupation with the personal aspects of mortality, with the death of the natural body, places him in danger of slipping back into the entombment of Ulro instead of permitting him to move forward into the Edenic state of prophetic vision.

The illustration to Night I, page 4 depicts the poet asleep, his head on a book, while his dreams are played out in the design surrounding the text. The poet of the dream bends over to explore the woods, reminiscent of Urizen exploring his dens, rises on "hollow winds," dangles over a "craggy steep," and then hurls "headlong" into a "mantled pool."[72] Blake illustrates the images of Young's poem, but the landscape is a blend of Beulah and Ulro. The sleeping poet is in Beulah, but his head rests on a book--an image of Ulro--and his dreams predict a rise and fall that leave him, arms extended in cruciform

[70] "Envisioning the First Night Thoughts," p. 310.

[71] Essick and La Belle, Night Thoughts, p. vi.

[72] Essick and La Belle, Night Thoughts, p. vi.

position, in the waters of chaos and Ulro. Again Blake implies that Young has not emerged from Beulah to Eden and that he sleeps in peril. He must either move upward to the fourfold perspective of Eden or slip backward into the spiritual death of Ulro.

On page 15, Night I, Blake depicts the poet-author, Young, lying on his stomach, entwined by briars, and reading a book. In addition, his left ankle is held by a leg iron. The shackles, briar and leg irons, are emblems of Ulro and Generation. The text of page 16 reveals the poet bemoaning his own shortcomings as a poet, desiring to reach the "strain" of Milton yet held back by his own mortality. In the illustration to page 16, the poet of page 15 has freed himself of book and briars; but the briar still dominates the lower portion of the design, and the poet is still restrained by leg iron and chain. In his hand he holds a lyre. Essick and La Belle note that it is a lyre--symbol of lyric poetry--and not the harp of epic poetry that the poet holds. And they suggest that Blake was saying through this illustration, which depicts Young's own conception of his limited poetic powers, that Young was "too limited in his inspiration and poetics to handle the grand themes of life, death, and immortality."[73] The landscape here and and in the previous illustration is clearly that of Ulro and Generation. And though one is reminded of Beulah as the poet attempts to ascend with

[73] Essick and La Belle, Night Thoughts, p. viii. Grant identifies the poets of these two illustrations as Young ("Envisioning the First Night Thoughts, p. 315).

his lyre, it becomes obvious that the leg iron has bound him to the world of Generation.

The poet is depicted again in the illustration to Night IV, page 72. This time he cowers in the lower right of the illustration as Young's

> sense and reason shew the door,
> Call for my bier, and point me to the dust.

But Blake's personifications of Sense and Reason are not negative figures. They are Adam and Eve in Beulah, pointing to a Gothic arch, supposedly an entrance to a bier. And the fact that this is a Gothic arch--symbolic for Blake of "Living Form"--instead of the rectangular form he usually associates with a negative conception of the tomb, indicates that the tomb for Blake is not the bier that points toward dust but one which leads to immortality. In the words of Essick and La Belle, the poet of the Night Thoughts design "understands only the physical results of death and fails to see its promise of spiritual immortality which, even for Adam and Eve, can offer a 'balm of peace' and allow one to look 'undaunted on the tomb.'" The design, they note, implicitly comments on Young's emphasis on sin and death at the expense of the "visionary themes of salvation and resurrection."[74] Unfortunately, Blake's poet, presumably Young, turns away in fear from the

[74] Night Thoughts, p. xv.

Beulah represented by Adam and Eve towards the Ulro of self-absorption.

A final design which is significant to Blake's conception of both Young and Gray as poets, although it does not explicitly depict a poet, is the one which illustrates Night V, page 11.[75] The accompanying text indicates that "midnight" revisits man in his last hour to bring

> Truths, which Eternity lets fall on Man
> With double Weight . . .

The illustration shows a man reclining while an apparently sleeping female figure, pencil in left hand, reaches downward as though handing him a book. This design recalls Blake's Design 4 to Gray's "Ode on the Spring," where a sleeping muse presides over an ineffectual poet. The dark mooniness of night and the reclining figures of the Young design are emblems that bespeak a Beulah landscape, that state of mind that fosters the creative work of the poet but from which he must move toward Eden for fourfold fulfillment. The volume handed down in this instance may be the "Truths, which Eternity lets fall on Man," but coming to the poet in the moony night of Beulah, and especially from a sleeping muse, they lack the efficacy of those acquired in the imaginative world of Eden. The illustration seems to comment on Blake's concern with Young's limited vision. Blake considered Young, much as he

[75] Keynes, Illustrations to Young's Night Thoughts Done in Water-Colour by William Blake.

did Gray, worthy of illustration because he had seen glimpses of poetic truth, he verged on poetic Genius. But his vision was incomplete; it lacked the fourfold fullness of Blake's archetypal Eden.

Blake's Criticism of Gray

Blake recognized in Thomas Gray, just as he had in Young, a touch of genius, but at the same time he was concerned with Gray's penchant for melancholy. Humankind, Blake thought, should focus on the joys and the apocalyptic experiences of life instead of on its woes. As Irene Tayler has noted,

> Blake's intention . . . throughout his entire series of illustrations to Gray, was on the one hand to correct by pictorial emphasis what he felt to be a rather morbid turn in the poet--his pallid caution, his melancholy, his retreat from life--and on the other hand to pay homage to his very great if sometimes latent poetic power.[76]

The date of the execution of the Gray designs was probably sometime between 1794 and 1805.[77] Sir Geoffrey Keynes estimates their

[76] "Two Eighteenth-Century Illustrators of Gray," Fearful Joy: Papers from the Thomas Gray Bicentenary Conference at Carleton University, p. 122.

[77] Blake's illustrations to the poems of Gray were virtually lost in the library of Hamilton Palace until 1919 when they were discovered by Professor H. J. C. Grierson. In 1922, the Oxford University Press published the designs with an introduction by Grierson (see Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 4). More recent publications of the designs are Irene Tayler's Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray and Sir Geoffrey Keynes' William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for the Poems of Thomas Gray.

completion "in the early months of 1798,"[78] and Irene Tayler dates them sometime after 1794 and prior to 1805. The paper of the originals, Tayler notes, bears a 1794 watermark. And the poems were presented to Mrs. Flaxman before 1805 since she mentions them in a letter in September 1805.[79] The illustrations, which Blake was obviously concerned with at about the same time or during the years immediately following his execution of the Young designs, consist of 116 drawings illustrating thirteen of Gray's poems. The Gray designs, like the ones for Young, are arranged on the page to surround the text plate for the poem. In addition to marking the specific lines he has chosen for illustration, Blake assigns to each of the designs a separate title. These titles, which sometimes provide clues to Blake's interpretation of Gray's poems, are usually listed in Blake's handwriting on the verso of the frontispiece of the poems.

As with the Young designs, there is little doubt among critics that Blake, in illustrating the poems, was offering his own critical comment on Gray's poems and on the efficacy of Gray's poetic vision. Irene Tayler compares Blake's illustrations of Gray's poems and his critical intention with his criticism of Milton.[80] "Gray's metaphors

[78] William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for the Poems of Thomas Gray, p. 5.

[79] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 3.

[80] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 157.

and personifications," Tayler writes, "were written to be visualized; Blake complied--and then used this very visualizing capacity in Gray's language to go beyond it, to make connections and arouse feelings only dimly present in some of Gray's figures of speech."[81] Blake, she says, reveals "certain congruent suggestions not actually present in Gray and not necessarily noticeable to someone who did not know Blake's other work and some of his other opinions," and at many points he apparently condemns "what he felt to be Gray's perilous misconstruings of the truth."[82] Sir Geoffrey Keynes notes that Blake adds to the list of titles of his illustrations for "Ode on the Spring," first of the poems in Blake's illustrated edition, the lines:

> Around the Springs of Gray my wild root weaves
> Traveller repose & Dream among my leaves.
> --Will Blake

These lines Keynes sees as Blake's means of indicating to the observer that "he is going to allow himself some license in adding pictorial glosses of his own." And, Keynes notes, Blake's "'wild roots' often draw curious nourishment from Gray's 'springs.'"[83]

[81] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 45.

[82] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 80.

[83] William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for the Poems of Thomas Gray, p. 41.

Blake himself defends the need for vision in the illustration of the poetry of others in his commentary in A Descriptive Catalogue. Praising Gray's poem "The Bard," he writes:

> Weaving the winding sheet of Edward's race by means of sounds of spiritual music and its accompanying expressions of articulate speech is a bold, and daring, and most masterly conception . . .

And he goes on to claim the same power for painting:

> Poetry consists in these conceptions; and shall Painting be confined to the sordid drudgery of fac-simile representations of merely mortal and perishing substances, and not be as poetry and music are, elevated into its own proper sphere of invention and visionary conception? No, it shall not be so! Painting, as well as poetry and music, exists and exults in immortal thought. If Mr. B.'s Canterbury Pilgrims had been done by any other power than that of the poetic visionary, it would have been as dull as his adversary's. (p. 532)

This visionary painting that Blake speaks of has a most astonishing effect on the reader of the illustrated poems. If one reads the Gray poems in an unillustrated edition first, and then rereads them in the light of Blake's illustrations, he cannot but be impressed by the compelling power of the illustrations to modify the experience of the reading.

For purposes of organization, and in order to clarify the nature of Blake's revision of Gray's poems, I have separated the poems into three groups: those which are chiefly of legendary origin, the illustrations to which exhibit less revision than do those of the other poems; those in which Blake criticizes Gray's melancholy perspective;

and finally those which in essence revise Gray's poems to emphasize the full force of Blake's archetypal myth that includes the fourfold vision of Atonement.

Three of the poems do not fit this schema. One is "Ode for Music," which was written by Gray for the 1769 installation of the Duke of Grafton as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge. Gray's obligation to Grafton, who was responsible for his obtaining the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge, prompted him to write the poem, of which Gray himself did not have a high opinion. Though the first and final illustrations in this group depict Gray's personification of Fame, and may, as Tayler notes, reflect that for Blake Fame "is neither good nor bad," yet "may be put to good or bad uses," the set of illustrations as a whole seems to lack direction.[84] Perhaps Blake was aware of Gray's opinion of the poem. Perhaps it was the poem's "occasional" nature--its treatment of the Grafton installation--that led Blake to treat it as a whole less seriously than he did the other poems.

Neither does "The Progress of Poesy," which traces "the power and place of poetry" and its development from Greece to England and Gray himself,[85] lend itself to my schema; yet it contains in Blake's illustrations of Gray's lines on Dryden and Shakespeare insights into

[84] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, pp. 121-26.

[85] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 82.

Blake's ideas about these poets which I have been able to use elsewhere. Blake's illustrations to this poem also contain one of his most direct comments on Gray as poet, and this I shall reserve for later discussion.

Third is "A Long Story," written as Gray explains in response to a visit from two ladies, Lady Schaub and Miss Speed:

> These two ladies waited upon the author at his aunt's solitary mansion, where he at that time resided; and not finding him at home, they left their names. Mr. Gray, surprised at such a compliment, returned the visit. And as the beginning of this acquaintance wore a little of the face of romance, he soon after gave a fanciful and pleasant account of it in the following copy of verses, which he entitled "A LONG STORY."[86]

Gray's poem is quite humorous, making fun of various popular notions of poets--the dangerous character "associated with black magic and perhaps even bad morals," and the stuffy bore. Blake's response to Gray is likewise humorous, particularly in his response to Gray's portraits of poets. For Gray's "wicked Imp they call a Poet," he pictures a gentle poet from whom barnyard animals and children flee in fear as he strolls among them unaware of the commotion he is causing (Design 6). In the final illustration (Design 12), in response to Gray's text which jokingly indicates "[Here 500 Stanzas are lost.]," Blake characterizes a "ceaselessly droning" poet. From the reactions of the poet's audience in Blake's illustration, their looks of dismay, it becomes obvious

[86] See Design 2 (verso of title page), Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray. All citations from Gray and Blake's illustrations of Gray are from this edition.

that the poet is reciting these 500 stanzas. But, as Irene Tayler notes, the series presents no unified comment or argument on Gray--"The designs, in short, illustrate Gray's intelligent and finely varied humor rather than forming a sequential argument among themselves."[87]

With regard to that group of illustrations concerned with ancient legend--"The Bard," "The Fatal Sisters," "The Descent of Odin," and "The Triumphs of Owen"--both Keynes and Tayler testify to Blake's failure to deviate from Gray's text. The four poems, Tayler notes, Blake considered translations and in that respect he saw himself as an illustrator not of Gray but of

> ancient poets whose works appeared on Gray's pages largely through an accident of history; they were not necessarily better poetry for this, but they were somewhat closer to unspoiled vision; and Blake treated them accordingly, searching not for traces of creative insight hidden from Urizen's watchguards, but for bold and daring ways of exhibiting the visionary surface.[88]

The designs are more closely related to the subject matter of the poems than to Blake's conception of Gray as a poet. As Sir Geoffrey Keynes writes, Blake was chiefly interested in picturing Gray's "embattled lines," the illustrations "contain nothing of his characteristic touches, symbolic or fanciful."[89]

[87] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, pp. 72-76.

[88] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 128.

[89] William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for the Poems of Thomas Gray, p. 62.

Blake's appreciation of Gray's "translations" may at first seem contradictory in view of his expressed antipathy toward the neoclassic tendency to translate and imitate. But because of Blake's affinity for primitivism with its belief in the inherent goodness of human nature, Gray's translations were not to be compared with Pope's translation of Homer. Of Gray's "The Bard" he writes in A Descriptive Catalogue:

> in the reign of that British Prince, who lived in the fifth century, there were remains of those naked Heroes, in the Welch mountains; they are there now, Gray saw them in the person of his bard on Snowdon; there they dwell in naked simplicity . . . (p. 534)

"The Descent of Odin," "The Triumphs of Owen," and "The Fatal Sisters" deal with Norse and Welch legend, and the illustrations with few exceptions are concerned mostly with a direct explication of the text. "The Bard," however, while it also deals with legendary themes, does provide some Blakean commentary on British Poets. This Poem, as Gray indicates in the Advertisement on the verso of the title page, is an ode

> founded on a Tradition current in Wales, that Edward the First, when he completed the conquest of that country, ordered all the Bards that fell into his hands to be put to death.

Gray's bard foretells the return of Welch power (the Tudors) to the English throne and a renaissance in English poetry, but where Gray has the poetic renaissance returning with the reign of Elizabeth I, Blake

depicts these lines to indicate that it is not the Tudors who are "genuine Kings" but bards themselves (Design 11).[90] Curiously, in illustrating Gray's allusions to Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and their successors, Blake depicts Spenser (Design 12) rather than Shakespeare or Milton. More than likely his intention here was to further emphasize the theme of conflict between kings and bards. Blake considered Spenser's vision endangered by his allegiance to Elizabeth I. Hence by depicting Spenser he availed himself of yet another opportunity to play on the motif of the king-bard conflict.

The second group of poems, those through which Blake criticizes Gray's melancholy perspective, includes "Ode on the Spring," "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," Ode to Adversity," and "Epitaph on Mrs. Clarke." "Ode on the Spring" presents rather clearly the very contemplation on mortality that Blake abhorred. Gray's poet contemplates the natural phenomena of the coming spring--the flowers that "wake the purple year!" "The Attic warbler," "the cuckow's note," the whispering zephyrs (Design 3)--and finally focuses on the "insect youth," whom he compares to man:

> To Contemplation's sober eye
> Such is the race of man:
> And they that creep, and they that fly,
> Shall end where they began.
> (Design 5)

[90] Tayler, Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, pp. 102-03.

But the melancholy, contemplative poet thinks he hears

> in accents low.
> The sportive kind reply;
> Poor Moralist! and what art thou?
> A solitary fly!
> Thy joys no glitt'ring female meets,
> No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets,
> No painted plumage to display:
> On hasty wings thy youth is flown;
> Thy sun is set, thy spring is gone--
> We frolic while 'tis May.
> (Designs 5 and 6)

Here the insects, with whom Gray compares the youthful man, assume the familiar carpe diem theme--We will make merry now while we are young since our day will soon end, as yours, bitter poet-moralist, has already. You speak that way because you are no longer able to join us in our fun. But Blake could not abide such morbidity. To him only a very limited poet could see human life in such terms. The sporting sexuality represented by the insects was a state of mind that existed in Beulah, and Beulah was but one step below the fourfold state of Eden. Hence Blake depicts the poet of Gray's poem (Design 4) in a pastoral setting--the landscape of Beulah--presided over by a sleeping muse. Gray's poet instead of moving from the repose of Beulah into the imaginative world of Eden has slipped back to the barren world of self-contemplation in Ulro. And the final illustration (Design 6) pictures the poet reclining on the barren root of a barren tree, an almost barren branch forming a Urizenic arch overhead. The barren roots and arching branch and the drawn-up posture of the poet depict the landscape

of Ulro. Hanging from the branch is a spider web in which is caught a tiny human figure, perhaps symbolic of the poet's constricted imagination.

"Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" is somewhat similar in theme to "Ode on the Spring." Gray's poem depicts the innocent youth of Eton whose "ignorance is bliss" (Design 9). Nature is full of terrors; the youth have little to anticipate but the recognition that they are men, "Condemn'd alike to groan" (Design 8). Again the folly and gaiety of youth are contrasted with the bleakness of mature life with its "painful family of Death." Blake's illustration of the "family of Death" (Design 8) depicts a mass of ugly characters apparently swirling in a river before their queen, a hideous, spike-crowned figure entwined by serpent coils. In the background and upstream is a group of aged mourners, and presiding over all is the figure of a Urizenic God. True to Blake's conception of the power of the human mind, the effect of the illustration suggests that it is the mourners themselves who, as they move downstream in the river of life, become the grotesque creatures that spill down the river in the lower half of the illustration. The mourners themselves indeed become the family of horrors. What Blake is saying is that if life holds only what Gray indicates, it is because mankind makes this existence for himself. He has created out of his own Reason a Urizenic God and a cast of horrors to plague his life. Gray's poem refers to the agonies that plague the human race as "vultures of the mind" (Design 6), but instead of a vision that seeks to enlighten

the race with self-knowledge that could free human beings of these vultures, he espouses instead an educational system that does not "tell them they are men" (Design 6), but instead seeks to protect them:

> Yet, ah! why should they know their fate!
> Since sorrow never comes too late,
> And happiness too swiftly flies,
> Thought would destroy their paradise.
> (Designs 8 and 9)

Gray's option for prolonged ignorance means not prolonged bliss but spiritual death. The youth of Eton, Blake would say, share the same fate as Thel, whose retreat to Har in her attempt to retain her innocence brings her instead to ignorance and the self-enclosed world of Ulro.

Gray's "Ode to Adversity" picks up the theme he develops in "Ode on the Spring," and "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College"--man's life plagued by adversity--and carries it a step further so that adversity becomes a necessary and desirable part of life in that it helps to build character. Gray's poet prays to Adversity,

> To soften, not to wound my heart.
> The gen'rous spark extinct revive,
> Teach me to love, and to forgive,
> Exact my own defects to scan,
> What others are to feel; and know myself a man.
> (Design 6)

This is one of those instances where Blake's designs clearly modify the meaning of Gray's poem so that read <u>with</u> the designs the poem becomes a

new experience. As Irene Tayler notes, Blake believed that virtue or moral strength derived not from "abstinence but with 'The lineaments of Gratified desire,'"[91] and the designs throughout, though their grimness reflects the tone of Gray's poem, make a clear statement about Blake's conception of Gray's Adversity. The title page depicts a widower and two children mourning beside a gravestone in poses that suit Gray's poem yet at the same time reflect, for those who know Blake's iconography and symbols, that the mourners are responsible for their own grief. And the closed posture of these mourners--the widower's arms clasped tightly to his breast, the children huddled against him--indicates that they grieve because they are bound up in the Ulro of themselves. The next illustration, which Blake entitles "Grief among the roots of trees," depicts a woman huddled in a tomb, or womb, under the roots of trees, trees cut off by a visible axe, preparing to nurse a child. The Ulro landscape of the cut-off trees, axe apparent, and barren roots is clearly one of human nature's making--who else destroys trees with an axe. The woman, Grief, though apparently young, is crone-like in that the tree roots and her own hair and body blend so that in places they are indistinguishable from one another. Her bent-over posture and the Ulro landscape reflect Blake's negative criticism of Gray's concept of Grief. The first page of the poem proper depicts a "purple tyrant" imprisoned by Adversity. He sits on a square, tomb-shaped

[91] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 76.

structure, left arm and leg in shackles, and left foot jutting forward beneath his gown. On his head is a crown of short, sharp spikes. His right arm is drawn up to his chest. The entire landscape is that of Ulro--the scene that Adversity creates for the individual. Design 4 depicts an aged crone, Adversity, seated, left foot forward, a book in her left hand and compasses in her right. In her lap sits Virtue writing in a book. Remarkable here is that, as Irene Tayler notes, Adversity in this illustration is the same woman Blake uses to depict "Virtue, kept alive by care and toil" in Night Thoughts design No. 294. In the Night Thoughts design Virtue has matured "into the same gaunt, stern woman who had 'nursed' her."[92] The obvious inference then is that Virtue nurtured by Adversity grows up to become Adversity, that adversity abstracted--as Gray would have it--indeed breeds itself. The final illustration of the series (Design 6) depicts Adversity in her "form benign" hovering hooded over the cowled poet, her left hand on his head, her right pointing upward. The poet, hands clasped before him, broods. Significantly, the faces of Adversity and poet bear a close resemblance--the "s" shaped brows, prominent noses and down-turned mouths. Adversity here, in her benign form, is a figment of the poet's self-centered, limited vision.

The final poem of this group, "Epitaph on Mrs. Clarke," focuses on the morbidity of death. Gray's poem is short enough to quote here

[92] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, pp. 78-79.

in full:

> Lo! where this silent marble weeps,
> A Friend, a Wife, a Mother sleeps;
> A Heart, within whose sacred cell
> The peaceful Virtues lov'd to dwell.
> Affection warm, and Faith sincere,
> And soft Humanity were there.
> In agony, in death resign'd,
> She felt the wound she left behind.
> Her infant image, here below.
> Sits smiling on a father's woe:
> Whom what awaits, while yet he strays
> Along the lonely vale of days?
> A pang to secret sorrow dear;
> A sigh; an unavailing tear;
> Till time shall ev'ry grief remove,
> With Life, with Memory, and with Love.

Such an attitude toward death Blake deplored, for he could not see it as a reason for mourning. Hence he marks as lines for illustration in the final design for the poem:

> Her infant image, here below,
> Sits smiling on a father's woe . . .

In Gray's poem the lines indicate, though Gray may not have been aware of it, that the daughter may be unaware of the dire consequences of her mother's death. And Blake focuses on these lines because of the truth they imply. The child in her infant innocence--not ignorance--senses a truth that the father bound up in himself--bent over in his chair, knees crossed and arms entwined across his chest--cannot perceive, and that is that the mother is indeed more really with them than when she was apparent to their mortal part. The child's hopeful countenance

contrasts with the greyness of the remainder of the illustration, a design out of Ulro with its square mantle decorated with sepulchral ornaments.[93] But in spite of the gloom of Gray's poem, which can overcome the reader of an unillustrated version, the reader of the illustrated poem is affected by the hope in the young girl's face, which dominates over the message of the text and the Ulro iconography of the design.

The next group of poems--those which expand Gray's poems into a statement about Atonement--are "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" and "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat." Blake's designs for these two poems are also remarkable in that, like "Epitaph on Mrs. Clarke," it is impossible to experience the illustrated poems in the same sense that Gray had apparently intended them.

Irene Tayler remarks on the fact that Blake's illustrations to "Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard" are "all 'landscape' designs, and for the first time the natural setting, colored in beautiful greens, seems as prominent a figure as its human occupants."[94] There are at least two ways in which one might interpret Blake's interest in landscape in connection with this poem. My first response was to interpret the emphasis on landscape as an emphasis on the vegetative life of Generation--to interpret it as Blake's implication that Gray's

[93] Tayler, Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 127.

[94] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 132.

preoccupation with death reflects a human nature chained to the cycle of vegetative life, a life without Atonement. But a closer study of the designs leads me to agree with Tayler that in these landscapes it is not Blake's dull round of Generation but energy and life that are emphasized. And Blake is contrasting the life of the landscape to the death emphasized in Gray's poem.

The first textual design, for which Blake marks the line "The plowman homeward plods his weary way" for illustration, shows the poet in the foreground looking upward toward a palled figure sweeping downward in a dark cloud. But the poet's concentration on this figure of Death seems insignificant in view of the vivid landscape scene that dominates the design. And in the background stands a Gothic church, a symbol to Blake of "Living Form." Ben Jones notes a similar emphasis on energy or life in Design 5, which pictures a reaper busy at work in the field. Behind him stands a woman carrying what appears to be a cask of fluid refreshment. Jones notes that the text on this page is "controlled by the melancholy reflection on the dead." Yet "the illustration reverses the emphasis in the passage. What was in Gray a reflection on death becomes in Blake a revelation of life."[95] Another of the scenes which reiterates this same point, one noted by Tayler, is Design 10, for which Blake has marked the line "Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne" for illustration. In view of the fact

[95] "Blake on Gray," p. 128.

that Blake marked this line, one would expect to find the funeral procession dominating the scene. Instead, a group of women and children, ironically, dominates the foreground of the scene. The life and energy they represent, combined with the heavy foliage of the landscape, render insignificant the funeral procession discernible in the distance. On this scene, Tayler writes:

> The pastoral bounty of the scene in the foreground--mothers and children, and particularly the nursing infant, in a setting of lush greenery--provides a contrast with the drab order of the distant funeral march at the same time that it reminds us that the end of life is not the grave but eternal rebirth, that "new and greater sunrise."[96]

This emphasis on life and energy in the designs clearly makes reading the illustrated poem an experience in irony, for though Gray's lines speak of grim death, the reader is ever presented with the images of energetic life. Similarly ironic is Blake's depiction of his own tombstone in Design 8. I can only agree with Tayler that this is Blake's statement on the significance of death--What does it matter if I'm living or dead? My immortal spirit is unaffected by the change. "What Gray, the self-enclosed 'author' has forgotten in this poem about death," says Tayler, "is the world of 'Imagination,' which Blake believed to be eternal and open to all men." Blake's designs to this poem are a reminder "that eternal life awaits those who will have it."[97]

[96] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 142.

[97] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, pp. 143-46.

An even more obvious statement about the limitations of Gray's world as opposed to the open apocalyptic world of Blake is evident in the designs to "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat." One of the most startling effects of reading what one expects to be a frivolous ditty on cats who can't keep their paws out of the water, or at most about women who can't keep themselves out of trouble, is the realization upon reading the illustrated poem that the frivolous delight of Gray's poem has become instead an experience of a different delight--Blake's concept of Atonement. Although Jean Hagstrum sees Blake's illustrated comment as merely "a brief narrative of how society suppresses love,"[98] and Sir Geoffrey Keynes says that Blake has transmuted "Gray's conventional moralizing . . . into a barbed allegory of woman's frailty,"[99] both Irene Tayler and Arnold Fawcus see the designs as an illustration of Blake's own concept of Fall and Atonement.[100]

In his illustration for the title page of Night IV of Young's Night Thoughts, Blake provides a conception of Christ against which Young's conception of Christ can be measured. Now Blake takes one of Gray's most trivial poems and uses it as a vehicle for his own vision,

[98] William Blake: Poet and Painter, p. 131.

[99] William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for the Poems of Thomas Gray, p. 45.

[100] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 66; "William Blake's Watercolour Designs Illustrating Gray's Poems--and Mr. Mellon," Connoisseur, 179 (January 1972), 13.

a standard against which Gray's vision can be measured. The illustrations to "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat" portray not Gray's cat but Blake's Thel who, instead of retreating to a world of selfish innocence--and hence Ulro--plunges, with the help of Fate, into the waters of materialism, the world of Generation, and emerges redeemed to the higher innocence of Eden. Blake's illustration accompanying the first page of the text shows Selima, half cat and half woman, looking out over the water. Below, in the water, but not the object of Selima's interest, two tiny angelic-winged lovers embrace. What Selima narcissistically sees instead is her own reflection in the water, a signal of her own growing self-awareness, the first step in a redeeming self-knowledge. In the next design, her cat-like features predominant, Selima glimpses the "two angel forms . . . / The Genii of the stream." Behind her, Fate, whose features are those of Adversity in Design 4, "Ode to Adversity," prepares to cut the restraining cord. In the next design Selima plunges, apparently pushed by Fate and implying that her fall, unlike Thel's refusal to fall, may not have been a matter of choice, but perhaps a necessary part of human experience. In this design Selima has become almost fully human, and her image plunging downward assumes erotic outlines. At the same time the two angel lovers have become scaled or mailed warriors bearing spears and a shield, representative perhaps of the sexual strife of the generative life. In the text to this plate Blake marks two sets of lines for illustration:

(Malignant Fate sat by, and smil'd)
The slipp'ry verge her feet beguil'd,
She tumbled headlong in.

and:

Eight times emerging from the flood
She mew'd to ev'ry wat'ry God,
Some speedy aid to send.

It is clearly Blake's reading of the first set of lines which he illustrates in the design depicting Selima's plunge. The latter set of lines he illustrates in the next and final design. But significantly Blake has given, in his list of designs on the verso of the title page, a new title to this last design, a title which reflects the redemptive symbolism of the number "nine." Instead of "Eight times emerging from the flood," Blake's title reads "Nine times emerging from the flood." In this design, the warriors are two goldfish and Selima is a young woman emerging head thrust upward, hands and mouth in attitudes of praise. The implication is clearly that of a redeemed Selima, and that the goldfish of Gray's poem are pictured as goldfish here is not necessarily without significance as Blake was surely aware of the age-old Christian symbolism of the fish as symbol for Christ and a representation of baptism and new life. Selima's fall and redemption express Blake's optimistic vision of Atonement, of eternal life for all men, a theme he found few glimpses of in the melancholy graveyard poetry of Gray. It was this error in Gray's vision that he sought to correct.

Directly commenting on Gray as a poet are the three portraits of Gray that are discernible throughout the volume of thirteen poems:[101] Design 2, "Ode on the Spring"; Design 2, "The Progress of Poesy"; and Design 1, "Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard." In the first of the designs, which illustrates Blake's list of designs for "Ode on the Spring," Gray sits, legs crossed, his left leg in the foreground and bent underneath him, foot visible, the right leg crossed over the left and extended. In his left hand he holds a book in which he writes. A round arch frames the poet, and light flows through the archway from a huge sun. The rays of light flood the poet at his work. This portrait of Gray, though the prominent, bent back left leg and foot, the round arch, and the fact that the poet is writing in a book might be construed as Urizenic iconography and an expression of Blake's reservation, is largely positive. The rays of light coming from the sun indicate that Blake felt Gray was an inspired poet with potential for Edenic, fourfold vision.

The second and third designs are not so optimistic. The second design, which contains his list of illustrations to "The Progress of Poesy," Blake entitles "Study." Here Gray bends "thoughtfully, almost wearily, over a book in his lap." This illustration Tayler sees as an allusion--"at least indirectly"--to the "academic weight," of his

[101] As identified by Tayler, Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, pp. 46, 82-83, 129; and Keynes, William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for the Poems of Thomas Gray, pp. 41, 53, 68.

poems, "as well as to the derivative nature of Gray's inspiration."[102] Another design from "The Progress of Poesy" warrants mention at this point because it is used to illustrate the text in which Gray describes his own view of himself as a poet:

> Oh! Lyre divine, what daring spirit
> Wakes thee now? Tho' he inherit
> Nor the pride, nor ample pinion,
> That the Theban Eagle bear,
> Sailing with supreme dominion
> Thro' the azure deep of air:
> Yet oft before his infant eyes would run
> Such forms as glitter in the Muse's ray,
> With orient hues, unborrow'd of the fun:
> Yet shall he mount, and keep his distant way
> Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate,
> Beneath the Good how far--but far above the Great.
> (Designs 10 and 11)

The line marked specifically for illustration is "Such forms as glitter in the Muse's ray." The poet in the illustration stands with his back to the viewer under the arch of the Muse's ray. But the Muse, whose body forms the ray, is a vague cloudy form with a troubled face. Clinging to her are two equally troubled children or infants. Irene Tayler notes with regard to this design that it implies

> that the muse-seeing "infant" part of Gray is now dead, leaving the grown man to see only blurred and troubled muses. The clinging infants in the muse's ray are perhaps some of the products of Gray's muse--that is, his poems--and in their haziness

[102] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, pp. 82-83.

> and her distress may be seen Blake's judgment of the danger that besets Gray's inspiration.[103]

Tayler suggests that Blake was displeased with Gray's favorable picture of Dryden in "The Progress of Poesy" and that he felt that "as an admirer of Dryden, Gray is in danger of becoming, like him, 'Subservient to the interest of the Monopolizing Trader,'"[104] that he, in other words, might succumb to the evils of writing merely to please an audience.

The third portrait of Gray, which illustrates the title page of "Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard," shows the poet writing, hunched over on a seat at one side of a Gothic arch. His face is turned outward toward the viewer; his expression is pained, eyes cast downward. His hood, falling forward over his head, seems to hinder his work. At the very least it precludes his vision of the Gothic arch under which he sits and behind which a series of such arches leading into what is possibly a church extend. Tayler notes that this portrait differs from the other two in that no source of brilliant light is shown--no source of inspiration.[105] But more important than the missing light source, I think, is that the poet, because of his hooded, drawn-up posture, is incapable of seeing what is so evident if he would only look--the

[103] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 93.

[104] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 93.

[105] Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, p. 129.

"Living Form" of Gothic architecture, which represents a source of inspiration. Clearly, the implication of this portrait, and of the other pictures of Gray, is that Gray, though he had potential, lacked vision. His perception had not been fully developed.

One last aspect of the Gray illustrations seems to have a significant bearing on Blake's criticism of Gray as a poet. This is the final short poem by Blake, "To Mrs. Anne Flaxman," with which he concludes his illustrated volume of Gray's poems:

> A little Flower grew in a lonely Vale
> Its form was lively but its colours pale
> One standing in the Porches of the Sun
> When his Meridian glories were begun
> Leapd from the steps of fire & on the grass
> Alighted where this little flower was
> With hands divine he moved the gentle Sod
> And took the flower up in its mature Clod
> Then planting it upon a Mountain brow
> 'Tis your own fault if you don't flourish now.

Keynes notes the possibility that the reference in the poem to "One standing in the Porches of the Sun" may be to Flaxman, and the "little flower" may refer to Blake's artistic powers. Such a reading would indicate Blake's appreciation for Flaxman's introducing him to William Hayley and thus making it possible for him to go to Felpham in 1800 to work under Hayley's patronage. On the other hand, Keynes notes that the design accompanying this poem "could be taken to represent the spirit of Blake's creative powers introducing Ann Flaxman's delicate perceptions to a greater appreciation and design on the mountain of the double genius of Gray and Blake, the mountain being a symbol often used

by Blake to express spiritual elevation."[106] It is possible, I think, to interpret the poem and illustration as Keynes indicates; perhaps both interpretations are what Blake expected the Flaxmans to see. But I suspect that Blake had another more important interpretation to assign to the poem. I would like to interpret it as Blake pointing the way for Gray, leading him toward spiritual fourfold vision. Hence the "little flower" becomes not Blake's artistic powers, but Gray's. And the "One standing in the porches of the Sun" is Blake, who with his "hands divine" plants Gray's flower and his poems "upon a Mountain brow" where it is Gray's own fault if he does not "flourish now." Such a reading extends the nature metaphor with which Blake introduces the volume of illustrated poems--"Around the Springs of Gray my wild root weaves"--to its conclusion. And coming at the close of the work, it could well be Blake's assessment of his own achievement. Blake did indeed enhance the environment of Gray's poems. Finding Gray's work lacking in optimism because he had dwelt too long on themes of "the race of man" coming finally "in dust to rest," Blake assumed the task of revising and expanding his vision.

106 William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for the Poems of Thomas Gray, pp. 4-5.

Blake's Criticism of Blair

Robert Blair's The Grave was the subject of Blake's third major work of illustrated criticism of the eighteenth-century English poets. The Grave, like Young's Night Thoughts, deals with the horrors of death and dying, with that "foul monster" (l. 600) Sin and "great man-eater" (l. 639) Death, and finally with a glimpse of the Judgment Day when the soul like a bird that

> Cowers down, and dozes till the dawn of day,
> Then claps his well-fledged wings, and bears away.
> (ll. 766-67)[107]

But there is a major difference between the poems of Young and Blair. Where Young's is some 10,000 lines of mostly morose blank verse, Blair's is a mere 767 lines and hence at least readable.

Blake was engaged by Cromek in 1805 to do a set of forty illustrations for The Grave, from which Cromek had indicated he would select twenty for engraving and publication. Apparently, Blake produced only about twenty designs, and then, Cromek, instead of engaging Blake

[107] All quotations from The Grave are from The Poetical Works of Beattie, Blair, and Falconer, ed. George Gilfillan (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1854).

to do the engraving, commissioned Lewis Schiavonetti to do this work. The result is that we have extant a set of twelve illustrations drawn by Blake and engraved by Schiavonetti.[108]

The Blair designs, unlike the Young and Gray illustrations which form a frame for a text plate, are on separate sheets. Yet like the others, they reveal that Blake found the author's vision lacking in perspective. In short, as S. Foster Damon notes, "Blake despised the text he was illustrating," and wherever he could, he flatly contradicted it.[109]

The Grave, to anyone familiar with Blake's vision, represents, as Damon indicates, a "false religion." Blair begins by noting that

> the task be mine,
> To paint the gloomy horrors of the tomb . . .
> (ll. 4-5)

And so he does. The cemetary is described with its yews, haunted by spirits. The grave is depicted as "Furr'd round with mouldy damps, and ropy slime" (l. 18), and it is addressed as one who rends "in sunder / Whom love has knit" (ll. 85-86), the leveler of humankind--bard, tyrant, beauty, strength. The warrior, the physician, the miser, all must meet

> That awful gulf no mortal e'er repass'd
> To tell what's doing on the other side.
> (ll. 372-73)

[108] See S. Foster Damon's Commentary in Blake's Grave: A Prophetic Book (Providence: Brown Univ. Press, 1963), n. pag.

[109] Blake's Grave, n. pag.

The last half of the poem, however, becomes more optimistic. Blair's thesis, as he dwells on the hideousness of Sin, defacer of "A whole creation's beauty" (l. 618), but for whom "Sorrow had never been" (l. 604), has been that at death body and soul must part:

> For part they must: body and soul must part;
> Fond couple! link'd more close than wedded pair.
> This wings its way to its Almighty Source,
> The witness of its actions, now its judge:
> That drops into the dark and noisome grave,
> Like a disabled pitcher of no use.
> (ll. 376-81)

But as the poem closes, Blair writes:

> Thrice welcome death!
> That after many a painful bleeding step
> Conducts us to our home, and lands us safe
> On the long-wish'd-for shore. . . .
> (ll. 706-09)

Death is now the "gloomy path" that lies between the agonies of this life and that "long-wish'd-for shore" where

> The glad soul
> Has not a wish uncrown'd.--Even the lag flesh
> Rests, too, in hope of meeting once again
> Its better half never to sunder more.
> (ll. 730-33)

The Judgment Day then becomes the event where soul and body are rejoined, and the fact that the worm has had its turn at the body now makes no difference:

Each soul shall have a body ready furnish'd;
And each shall have his own.--Sure the same power
That rear'd the piece at first, and took it down,
Can re-assemble the loose scatter'd parts,
And put them as they were . . . .

Nor shall the conscious soul
Mistake its partner, but, amidst the crowd,
Singling its other half, into its arms
Shall rush, with all the impatience of a man
That's new come home; and, having long been absent,
With haste runs over every different room,
In pain to see the whole . . .
(ll. 741-46; 754-60)

Surely Blake, who could paint his own tombstone into Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard" as a means of emphasizing his disdain for the material and mortal body, must have been appalled at the physical emphasis Blair placed on death in The Grave. Blake, as we have already seen, joyously embraced death because it freed the senses from their caverned chinks in the body. Thus Blair's vision, like that of Gray and Young, lacked the fourfold Edenic perspective. This Blake expresses in a series of illustrations which both contradict Blair's poem and expand upon his themes in a manner that forces Blair's reader into an awareness of the distance between the two poets' visions.

S. Foster Damon has noted that with one design--The Descent of Man into the Vale of Death--Blake has depicted most of Blair's poem.[110] In contrast, he used four illustrations to cover some twenty-eight lines toward the end of the poem, lines where Blair "scurried through the

[110] Blake's Grave, n. pag.

general Resurrection, the Reunion of Soul and Body, and the Last Judgment." The effect, of course, is to diminish the effect of Blair's concentration on the horrors of the grave and to expand that section of the poem which has to do with those aspects of life and of the poem more tenable to Blake.

The first section of the poem deals with the descent of mankind into the grave, and Blake's illustration depicts a number of characters, some of which are Blair's, in their descent. The design, unlike most of Blake's designs which feature caves or tomb-like apertures, places the viewer so that his perspective is that of looking upward and outward from the interior of a cave, the landscape of which is clearly that of Ulro, with square steps and stones over which men, women, and children of various ages rush, grope, and crawl. The opening, in this case to the outer world, is a round arch, and the effect of the light coming through the round arch and down over the stairs leading into the cave is to form the outline of a keyhole. Clearly, Blake thinks little of Blair's emphasis on the descent to the grave, and the keyhole effect of the light flowing through the entrance of the cave may represent Blake's counterpointing contention that the descent is not as agonizing as Blair would have it. Damon notes that "the proud monarchs and others set in authority, over whose downfall Blair gloated so loudly," are not among those descending.[111]

[111] Blake's Grave, n. pag.

Another instance of Blake's contradiction of Blair is the design entitled Death's Door, which illustrates the lines:

> 'Tis but a night, a long and moonless night,
> We make the grave our bed, and then are gone.
> (ll. 762-63)

Here an aged man bent over a walking stick enters the rectangular-shaped doorway of the tomb. This lower half of the illustration is dominated by Urizenic iconography. But in sharp contrast is the iconography of the upper half of the design. On top of the tomb poses a young man who radiates immense light and energy as he looks upward and away from the lower recesses. This illustration of the two prominent figures of Blake's Orc-cycle, Orc and Urizen, Energy and Reason, contrasts Blair's dire conception of death with Blake's optimistic conception of the new life or rebirth of the spirit inherent upon the death of that which is material.

The illustrations entitled The Death of the Strong Wicked Man and The Death of the Good Old Man, while they are on one level literal illustrations of lines from Blair's poem, also provide an excellent contrast between the two poets' conceptions of death. The first of these illustrations deals with Blair's lines describing how even the strong man, who by the way is not described as wicked by Blair, is not immune to death:

> Heard you that groan?
> It was his last.--See how the great Goliath,

Just like a child that brawl'd itself to rest,
Lies still . . .
(ll. 277-80)

Blake's illustration shows a young Goliath prone and writhing in agony. At his side and head young women grieve over him, while his male spirit, rising in flames, appears to protest leaving the body. In the latter illustration, The Death of the Good Old Man, Blake literally illustrates lines from a later stage in Blair's poem where Blair has assumed the stance that death is to be welcomed because it

Conducts us to our home, and lands us safe
On the long-wish'd-for shore.--Prodigious change!
Our bane turn'd to a blessing!--Death, disarm'd,
Loses his fellness quite.--All thanks to him
Who scourged the venom out!--Sure the last end
Of the good man is peace!--How calm his exit!
(ll. 708-13)

Here the Good Old Man dies peacefully, his right hand on a Bible open to the New Testament. Around him his children kneel in prayer. Overhead his soul, a threefold winged figure--perhaps the Good Old Man and two angels--willingly ascends. In contrasting these two deaths, Blake seems to be remarking that death for the man without imaginative vision --in whom Urizenic reason prevails--is the death of the Strong and Wicked Man who fights to retain his soul. Having never experienced Eternity the Strong and Wicked Man fears the unknown. But for the Good Old Man, whose vision is fourfold, death is a peaceful and enlightening experience. And although Blake depicts Blair's Good Old Man--a man who for Blair has renounced sin--Blake would not have considered him good

because he had "renounced sin." Hence in the illustration he is shown with his hand on the Bible which is open to the New Testament, an indication that he embraces death not because he has obeyed a Urizenic, repressive God, but because he embraces Christ and the principle of forgiveness of sins. We are reminded here of Blake's words in Jerusalem, that the "Spirit of Jesus is continual forgiveness of Sin," and that the person "who waits to be righteous before he enters into the Saviours kingdom, the Divine Body; will never enter there" (Plate 3).

Closely resembling these two illustrations of the soul leaving the body is the one entitled The Soul hovering over the Body Reluctantly parting with Life. Here Damon notes that Blake's illustration clearly contradicts Blair's text, which describes the departing soul "as shrieking in terror."[112] This soul could not be more peaceful. Again the implication is that for the man of vision, and Blake did not see Blair as such, death was not a formidable state; it was indeed no more than entry into another room. A similar contradiction is evident in the illustration The Counsellor, King, Warrior, Mother & Child in the Tomb. Here these five characters lie peacefully in a well-lighted tomb, a sharp contrast to Blair's text which would have them mouldering and corrupted by the worm.

The final three illustrations are all apocalyptic reunion

[112] Blake's Grave, n. pag.

scenes. The Reunion of the Soul & the Body portrays a male body rising from the grave and being met and embraced by a female soul descending from above. The landscape of Eden overcomes that of Ulro as the tombstone and rectangular crypt are consumed in flames. The meeting of a Family in Heaven is a scene not mentioned by Blair, but which, as Damon writes, Blake included because "the family is an extension of the Individual."[113] Even more important, I think, is that the family reunion is representative of the union of the warring faculties of the mind which Blake saw as essential if the individual is to achieve the fourfold vision of Eternity. It is such a union which constitutes the final resolution of the prophecies Vala, or the Four Zoas and Jerusalem, and its emphasis here, in spite of Blair's failure to mention the family reunion in heaven, is Blake's means of imposing his own vision on that of the graveyard poet. Blair's idea of man's union with God was hindered by his orthodox, materialistic interpretation of death and resurrection. Though Blake might have conceded that Atonement is achieved after the death of the physical body, for him the true Atonement occurred when the creative faculties came into focus in such a way as to make the human individual himself both God and Creator. In the final illustration, The Day of Judgment, Christ sits haloed and enthroned, the Book of Life upon his lap. On either side of the throne recording angels are at work and the elders are seated prepared to judge

[113] Blake's Grave, n. pag.

the world. At Christ's right the souls, unified in family groups, rise upward, while on the left those figures representing error fall downward. With regard to this picture, Damon writes that

> the souls ascending to heaven are all individual persons unidentifiable except as members of families. Not even Adam and Eve are there. But those who are falling are not individuals at all, but Errors or, "States" as Blake called them in A Vision of the Last Judgment; and these are identifiable. One sees the Whore of Babylon, now stripped naked; her seven-headed Beast; Satan entwined with his serpent; armed soldiers seeking to hide among the rocks; two Pharisees frantically pleading their self-righteousness; and dimly in the background, the domed Church of This World, from which the cross is broken.[114]

Hence the Judgment Day for Blake consists not in judging men either good or evil and thus "qualified" for heaven or hell, as Blair's orthodox thought maintained. Instead it involves a judgment and a casting out of error, and a spirit of forgiveness in the souls of humankind. In A Vision of the Last Judgment, Blake writes:

> whenever any Individual Rejects Error and Embraces Truth a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual[.] (p. 551)

It is not incidental that the Church of This World is destined for the lower regions along with Blake's personifications of Error, for in Blake's eyes it was this church which helped to perpetuate in humankind just such error and limited vision which Blair had expressed in The Grave. Blair's limitations become apparent in this series of drawings

[114] Blake's Grave, n. pag.

that emphasizes the theme of Atonement. Blake's designs tell a story not of physical death but of death that results from a spiritual Fall. And the true Apocalypse occurs in an at-one-ment in the mind of the human individual and not alone in some far off Judgment Day.

CHAPTER V

NINETEENTH CENTURY

Blake was born in 1757 and died in 1827; hence he lived throughout two important literary periods--the Age of Johnson and the Romantic era. And although his work reflects a general reaction to eighteenth-century literature, he is still not wholly in consonance with the writers of the early nineteenth century. Blake spoke out directly on only two of the romantic poets--Wordsworth and Byron. As he had done with the other English poets whom he had criticized, he measured their work against his own myth. And both Wordsworth and Byron failed to achieve fourfold vision because of their preoccupation --albeit in each instance a different form of preoccupation--with nature.

Wordsworth and Blake apparently shared for one another somewhat ambivalent feelings. Wordsworth liked Blake's work well enough to have copied several of Blake's poems in his Commonplace Book,[1] and Henry Crabb Robinson reports that of Blake Wordsworth said:

[1] Paul F. Betz, "Wordsworth's First Acquaintance with Blake's Poetry," Blake Newsletter, 3 (1970), 84.

> There is no doubt this poor man was mad, but there is something in the madness of this man which interests me more than the Sanity of Lord Byron & Walter Scott![2]

Blake, on the other hand, saw things he liked in Wordsworth's poetry and was said to have referred to him as "the only poet of the age."[3] Robinson reports that Blake's "delight in Wordsworths poetry was intense" and that the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality," particularly the stanza

> --But there's a Tree, of many, one,
> A single Field which I have looked upon,
> Both of them speak of something that is gone:
> The Pansy at my feet
> Doth the same tale repeat:
> Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
> Where is it now, the glory and the dream?
> (IV, 51-57)[4]

threw him "almost into an hysterical rapture."[5] Of Wordsworth's poem "To H.C.: Six Years Old," he wrote in his marginalia:

> This is all in the highest degree Imaginative & equal to any poet but not superior I cannot think that Real Poets have any competition None are greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven it is so in Poetry[.] (p. 654)

[2] Blake Records, p. 536.

[3] Arthur Symons, William Blake (London: Archibald Constable, 1907), p. 274.

[4] The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, Vol. IV, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947).

[5] Blake Records, p. 544.

But at the same time Blake could admire Wordsworth as a "Real Poet," he could not abide Wordsworth's emphasis on nature. Here was Blake's chief quarrel with Wordsworth, and Blake's reaction is found chiefly in his marginalia to Wordsworth's poems. In response to Wordsworth's introductory Preface in the first volume of the 1815 edition of his poems,

> The powers requisite for the production of poetry are, first, those of observation and description, . . . whether the things depicted be actually present to the senses, or have a place only in the memory . . . . 2ndly, Sensibility, . . .

Blake writes:

> One Power alone makes a Poet.--Imagination The Divine Vision[.] (p. 654)

On page one of the same volume, under Wordsworth's subtitle, "Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood," Blake writes:

> I see in Wordsworth the Natural Man rising up against the Spiritual Man Continually, & then he is No Poet but a Heathen Philosopher at Enmity against all true Poetry or Inspiration[.] (p. 654)

On page three, following the familiar lines from Wordsworth:

> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety . . . ,

Blake strikes out again at the reference to nature:

> There is no such Thing as Natural Piety Because the Natural Man is at Enmity with God. (p. 654)

And when, in "To H.C.: Six Years Old," Wordsworth writes of the

> Influence of Natural Objects
> In calling forth and strengthening the Imagination
> in Boyhood and early Youth. . . .

Blake comments that

> Natural Objects always did & now do Weaken deaden & obliterate Imagination in Me Wordsworth must know that what he Writes Valuable is Not to be found in Nature . . . (pp. 654-55)

Blake reiterates his emphasis on the lacuna between the Imagination and the "Natural Man" in another marginal note, on page 375 of the same volume:

> It appears to me as if the last Paragraph beginning With "Is it the result" Was writ by another hand & mind from the rest of these Prefaces. Perhaps they are the opinions of a Portrait or Landscape Painter Imagination is the Divine Vision not of The World nor of Man nor from Man as. he is a Natural Man but only as he is a Spiritual Man Imagination has nothing to do with Memory. (p. 655)

And in his Annotations to <u>The Excursion</u>, where Wordsworth writes of

> How exquisitely the Individual Mind
> (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
> (Of the whole species) to the external World
> Is fitted.--& how exquisitely, too,
> Theme this but little heard of among Men
> The external World is fitted to the mind . . . ,
> (ll. 63-68)

Blake erupts with,

> You shall not bring me down to believe such fitting & fitted I know better & Please your Lordship[.] (p. 656)

A few lines later, in response to Wordsworth's

> --Such grateful haunts forgoing. if I oft
> Must turn elsewhere--to travel near the tribes
> And fellowships of Men, & see ill sights
> Of madding passions mutually inflamd
> Must hear Humanity in fields & groves
> Pipe solitary anguish; or must hang
> Brooding above the fierce confederate storm
> Of Sorrow barricadoed evermore
> Within the walls of cities; may these sounds
> Have their authentic comment--that even these
> Hearing I be not downcast nor forlorn . . . ,

Blake writes:

> does not this Fit & is it not Fitting most Exquisitely too but to what not to Mind but to the Vile Body only & to its Laws of Good & Evil & its Enmities against Mind[.] (p. 656)

Blake's general objection to Wordsworth's Preface--that it reflected "the opinions of a Portrait or Landscape Painter"--may have originated in part from Wordsworth's claim that the "powers requisite for the production of poetry" were the faculties of observation and description, sensibility, reflection, imagination and fancy, and invention. Blake perceived but one requisite power--Imagination. Blake must also have objected to the role Wordsworth assigned to memory. The poet, Wordsworth wrote, needed the powers of observation and description, the "ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any

passion or feeling existing in the mind of the describer; whether the things depicted be actually present to the senses, or have a place only in the memory."[6] Such an emphasis on things in themselves and on memory, in spite of the fact that Wordsworth qualifies his statement by saying that this power is used only "in submission to necessity" since it supposes the mind to be in "a state of subjection to external objects,"[7] was antithetical to Blake's belief in an Imagination whose function relied not on memory but on tension between the contrary faculties of the human mind. For Wordsworth, poetry was the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," which took its origin from "emotion recollected in tranquillity."[8] Wordsworth's muse, Blake probably feared, was more nearly related to the Daughters of Memory than to the Daughters of Inspiration. And where Wordsworth saw the individual mind and the external world as "fitted" one to another, Blake saw the external world as a creation of the internal world, one which "tho it appears Without it is Within / In your Imagination of which this World of Mortality is but a Shadow" (Jerusalem 71:18-19).

Henry Crabb Robinson testifies to Blake's objection to Wordsworth's reliance on nature, a reliance Wordsworth makes clear in

[6] The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, II, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944), 431-32. (Italics mine.)

[7] The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, II, 432.

[8] "The Preface to the Second Edition of the . . . 'Lyrical Ballads,'" The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, II, 400.

passages throughout his work and most explicitly in the Preface to the 1802 edition of his poems when he notes that the poet "considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature." The "general passions and thoughts and feelings of men," which it is the poet's task to convey, are connected with

> our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the operations of the elements, and the appearances of the visible universe; with storm and sunshine, with the revolution of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friend and kindred . . .[9]

But this worship of nature, Blake thought, constituted Atheism. Robinson relates that

> The eloquent descriptions of Nature in Wordsworth's poems were conclusive proof of Atheism, for whoever believes in Nature said B: disbelieves in God--For Nature is the work of the Devil[.] On my obtaining from him the declaration that the Bible was the work of God, I referred to the commencemt of Genesis--In the beginning God created the Heaven & the Earth[.]--But I gained nothing by this for I was triumphantly told that this God was not Jehovah but the Elohim . . .[10]

Indeed, Blake's own writings testify to this concern that nature hinders the spiritual life and prohibits the individual from experiencing Atonement--the God within the self. In his Annotations

[9] The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, II, 396-97.

[10] Blake Records, p. 545.

to Boyd's Historical Notes, Blake writes that "Nature Teaches nothing of Spiritual Life but only of Natural Life" (p. 624). And in Jerusalem he writes:

> I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination Imagination the real & eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow . . . (Plate 77)

Perhaps a partial explanation for Blake's objection to Wordsworth's religion of nature can be found in some of the lines of a poem included in a letter to Thomas Butts (22 November 1802):

> To drive them off & before my way
> A frowning Thistle implores my stay
> What to others a trifle appears
> Fills me full of smiles or tears
> For double the vision my Eyes do see
> And a double vision is always with me
> With my inward Eye 'tis an old man grey
> With my outward a Thistle across my way
> . . . . . .
> Now I a fourfold vision see
> And a fourfold vision is given to me
> Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
> And three fold in soft Beulahs night
> And twofold Always. May God us keep
> From Single vision & Newtons sleep
> (pp. 692-93)

The first level of vision, then, is single vision, Newton's sleep--the perspective of the individual caught in the self-absorption of Ulro. At the second level of vision, in Generation, one is capable of reading his own subjective reflections into the objects of the external or natural world, as Blake did when he saw an old man in the thistle that

crossed his way. At the threefold level, in Beulah, the individual rests in a world of dreams and hallucinations. But the supreme vision is the fourfold vision of Eden, a vision which permits a vivid eidetic image which requires no external representation. Hence it is possible to see where Blake's objection to Wordsworth lay. Wordsworth, in half perceiving and half creating, was projecting his own feelings into natural objects, the level of twofold vision, and at best was achieving--when he "recollected in tranquillity"--the threefold vision or Beulah level which resulted in a hallucinatory vision. For Blake, the poet of fourfold vision experienced the tension of contrary states, and putting off the things of the external or natural world he perceived that vision of Eternity that resulted from realizing the God within himself.

A "Dialogue between Blake and Wordsworth" by Malcolm Kingsley Macmillan, written prior to 17 April 1889,[11] provides an interesting commentary on Blake's criticism of Wordsworth. Here the hypothetical Blake and Wordsworth exchange these words:

> Blake: Doubtless, Mr. Wordsworth, you could write noble lines. . . . But you were a Pagan, a worshipper of stocks and stones, of natural life and growth, with no intuition of Jehovah and Jesus, the creative Mind and the redeeming Activity.
>
> Wordsworth: I felt those august Presences diffused and interfused through all things.
>
> Blake: Yes, and lost in the "Elements of this world," which the apostle tells us are not "according to Christ."

[11] Blake Newsletter, 8 (1974), 38-41.

In the dialogue Blake goes on to tell Wordsworth that

> You, sir, with an original capacity for imaginative expression infinitely greater than his [Byron's], succumbed to the delusion and lie of Nature, asserting mendaciously that she
>
> "Never did betray
> The heart that loved her,"
>
> and have done your best to leave the human spirit in the art-destroying and blind limbo of the Greek and Roman sophists.[12]

Harold Bloom has also commented on Blake's argument with Wordsworth's conception of nature and finds in "The Mental Traveller" Blake's "most anti-Wordsworthian moment."[13] Bloom notes that as the traveller in the poem

> has aged, Nature has become younger, and she reappears as a changeling little Female Babe emerging from the hearth fire:
>
> And she is all of solid fire
> And gems & gold, that none his hand
> Dares stretch to touch her Baby form,
> Or wrap her in his swaddling-band.
>
> This terrible child grows older and seeks a form of man in her own sexual phase. With an earlier version of himself secured, she drives out the now-aged host.[14]

This allegory demonstrates, according to Bloom,

> the dark end of Wordsworth's vision of nature. When in the Intimations ode or Tintern Abbey the poet loses or fears to lose the glory of nature, he is consoled by memory of an earlier self

[12] Blake Newsletter, 8 (1974), 40.

[13] The Visionary Company, p. 61.

[14] The Visionary Company, p. 61.

> that shared in the glory. Here in The Mental Traveller "they soon drive out the aged Host," and so one's earlier self is nature's ally against one in the darkening years.[15]

Clearly Blake could not have accepted memory as a consolation for loss or aging. "Imagination," he says, "has nothing to do with Memory" (p. 655). If one is to escape the cycle of "The Mental Traveller," of the energy of Orc repressed by Urizen, of the deterioration of the physical body by age, it must be through Imagination, not through memory. To rely upon memory of one's earlier self is a sure way to the damnation of Ulro.

Northrop Frye offers a succinct analysis of Blake's criticism of Wordsworth's emphasis on nature. For Blake, he writes, "There is no divinity in sky, nature or thought superior to ourselves. . . . Nor is there any idea of finding in nature external hints or suggestions of God; all such intuitions are implanted by the mind on nature." "Blake criticized Wordsworth sharply," Frye notes, "for ascribing to nature what he should have ascribed to his own mind and for believing in the correspondence of human and natural orders."[16]

In spite of this fundamental difference in the visions of Blake and Wordsworth, the two men did share some affinities. Both Blake and Wordsworth were strongly influenced by Milton; both were

[15] The Visionary Company, p. 61.

[16] Fearful Symmetry, p. 39.

interested in the workings of the human mind and with the process by which the poet achieved the prophetic state. Thomas Vogler holds that Blake's Milton and Wordsworth's Prelude were both concerned with "achieving a state of consciousness or mode of vision that would be a sustaining basis for the creation of an epic vision of man to succeed Milton's Paradise Lost."[17] Blake's Milton was to his Jerusalem as Wordsworth's Prelude was to the Excursion.[18] Both Blake and Wordsworth were, as John Beer writes, "preoccupied with the prospect of producing some great and lasting work" conceived in psychological terms.[19] Blake's Vala, or the Four Zoas and Jerusalem constitute his mythological conception of the human mind. Wordsworth's Prelude traces the growth of a poet's mind. Consequently, it was to be expected that both Blake and Wordsworth would derive theories for the creative act. Blake's poet achieved fourfold creative vision when he achieved a balance between the warring contraries of his being--between Orc and Urizen, Tharmas and Los--and experienced the God in himself. For Wordsworth the poet's goal was to achieve a state of "creative sensibility," "a feeling of 'one life' in the universe, a 'sentiment of

[17] Preludes to Vision: The Epic Venture in Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, and Hart Crane (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971), p. 61.

[18] Preludes to Vision, pp. 58-59.

[19] "Blake, Coleridge, and Wordsworth: Some Cross-Currents and Parallels, 1789-1805," William Blake: Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes, p. 257.

Being spread / O'er all,' . . . transferring 'To unorganic natures . . . My own enjoyments.'"[20] In return for spreading himself thus, he felt:

> Incumbencies more awful, visitings
> Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul,
> . . . . . .
> To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower,
> Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
> I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,
> Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
> Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
> That I beheld respired with inward meaning.
> . . . . . .
> I had a world about me--'twas my own;
> I made it, for it only lived to me,
> And to the God who sees into the heart.
> (The Prelude, III, ll. 116-17, 127-32, 141-43)[21]

Both Wordsworth and Blake sought to recover a state of consciousness through "discovery and cultivation of the proper mode of vision."[22] But "Wordsworth was drawn toward the idea of truth as the result of a union or interaction between the perceiving eye . . . and the perceived object or manifestation of nature,"[23] while Blake's truth was found in the purely subjective state. For Wordsworth vision depended upon a

[20] Jack Stillinger, ed., William Wordsworth: Selected Poems and Prefaces (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. xiv.

[21] Wordsworth: Poetical Works, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, rev. ed., Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974).

[22] Vogler, Preludes to Vision, p. 61.

[23] Vogler, Preludes to Vision, pp. 64-65.

mediation between the natural scene and the human mind, but Blake sought reality through a mythological conception of the human mind.

Blake's quarrel with Wordsworth largely concerned Wordsworth's dependence on nature. Similarly, his quarrel with Byron focused on Byron's dependence on nature. But the circumstances were different. Where Wordsworth's emphasis on external nature had hindered his vision and kept him from looking inward for his own union with God, Byron's preoccupation with the death of the physical body, his emphasis on death and vengeance, had prevented him from apprehending the significance of Atonement through love and forgiveness.

Byron's Cain, A Mystery (1821) with its iconoclastic interpretation of the Biblical story Blake found of sufficient interest that he endeavoured to provide a final scene of his own for the drama. Consequently, his The Ghost of Abel constitutes a criticism of and an answer to Byron.

The Ghost of Abel Blake etched on two copper plates in or about the year 1822. The plates at any rate are dated 1822, but they carry the note "W. Blake's Original Stereotype was 1788." This note has confused scholars for some time. In 1924 when he first published William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols, S. Foster Damon interpreted this to mean that the poem had originally been written in 1788 and had lain forgotten until 1821 when Byron's Cain was published. Then, he says, Blake revised and re-engraved it with the dedication to

Byron.[24] Scholars, including Damon, however, have revised their views on this point, and it is now conceded that the reference to the date 1788 is a reference to the date of Blake's first relief-etching of the Songs of Innocence and not to the writing of The Ghost of Abel.[25] The consensus now is that Blake wrote The Ghost of Abel as a direct comment on Byron's drama.

It is not difficult to understand why Blake was drawn to the drama. In Cain, Byron had aroused the indignation of the religious world with his iconoclastic reversal of the orthodox symbols of good and evil, a reversal which had much in common with Blake's own reversal of these symbols in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.[26] Blake was sympathetic with this revolutionary tendency in Byron, but Byron's iconoclastic drama satirized orthodox theology and social mores without offering a solution or remedy. Blake saw an opportunity, then, as he had with the work of Young, Gray, and Blair, to expose what he saw as incomplete vision and to answer with a true, fourfold vision, which added to Byron's vision the element of Atonement through Christ, of forgiveness through love, that Byron had failed to comprehend. Hence Blake wrote The Ghost of Abel as the final scene for Byron's Cain.

[24] William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols, p. 239.

[25] See Damon's Dictionary, p. 154; and Truman Guy Steffan, Lord Byron's Cain, p. 321, n. 20.

[26] Edward E. Bostetter, "Byron and the Politics of Paradise," PMLA, 75 (1960), 575, n. 8.

Byron's drama employs two themes which caught Blake's attention. First of all, Cain is unable to accept the piety and religious orthodoxy of his family; and second, Byron hints at Christian Atonement without incorporating it into his vision.

Act I of Cain finds Cain unable to join in the orthodox worship of Jehovah with Adam and Eve, Abel, and his and Abel's sister-wives, Adah and Zillah. Instead, he questions the goodness of God who could cause the innocent to suffer:

> They have but
> One answer to all questions, "'Twas his will
> And he is good." How know I that? Because
> He is all pow'rful, must all-good, too, follow?
> I judge but by the fruits--and they are bitter--
> Which I must feed on for a fault not mine.
> (ll. 74-79)[27]

Lucifer joins Cain to sympathize with him in his misery. Between them they express Byron's iconoclastic opinion--which Blake could have appreciated--on orthodox theology and society. God, Lucifer points out, is both maker and destroyer (ll. 266-68), and his omnipotence requires adulation not out of love but from "terror and self-hope":

> Higher things than ye are slaves, and higher
> Than them or ye would be so, did they not
> Prefer an independency of torture
> To the smooth agonies of adulation

[27] Quotations from Byron's Cain, A Mystery are from the text edited by Truman Guy Steffan, Lord Byron's Cain.

In hymns and harpings and self-seeking prayers,
To that which is omnipotent, because
It is omnipotent, and not from love,
But terror and self-hope.
(11. 382-89)

And the Tree of Knowledge, Cain implores, in spite of the agony it has brought to countless generations of innocents, has not even fulfilled its promise because it keeps from humankind the "mystery of Death" (11. 441-62).

In Act II Lucifer and Cain journey into "The Abyss of Space" with the aim of satiating Cain's thirst for the knowledge of death. Glimpses of the concept of Atonement begin to appear here, in spite of Byron's insistence in the Preface that "my present subject has nothing to do with the New Testament" (l. 17). Lucifer, reversing the traditional notions of good and evil, light and darkness, presents himself as his name implies, a light bearer, the "Power of Light and Reason opposed to the Tyrannical Creator of the Material World."[28] One of the earliest allusions to Christ comes at the beginning of Act II, Scene I as Cain and Lucifer begin their voyage on the air and Cain fears he will sink. Lucifer reminds him that he is not of a kind with the other God whose edict runs "Believe and sink not; doubt and perish" (11. 4-5), but that

[28] Edward E. Bostetter, ed. George Gordon, Lord Byron: Selected Works, rev. ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972), p. 231, n. 8.

Worship or worship not, thou shalt behold
The worlds beyond thy little world, nor be
Amerced for doubts beyond thy little life
With torture of my dooming. There will come
An hour when, tossed upon some water-drops,
A man shall say to a man, "Believe in me,
And walk the waters"; and the man shall walk
The billows and be safe. I will not say,
"Believe in me," as a conditional creed
To save thee; but fly with me o'er the gulf
Of space an equal flight, and I will show
What thou dar'st not deny--the history
Of past and present and of future worlds.
(ll. 13-25)

Journeying until, in Scene II, they find themselves among the shades of Hades, Cain curses both God and Adam:

Cursd be
He who invented life that leads to death!
Or the dull mass of life that being life
Could not retain, but needs must forfeit it,
Ev'n for the innocent!
(ll. 18-22)

Cain quests after the mystery of death, and Lucifer alludes again to Christ when he asks Cain,

What? Hath not he who made ye
Said 'tis another life?
(ll. 35-36)

Cain's response is negative, and Lucifer replies,

Perhaps.
He one day will unfold that further secret.
(ll. 37-38)

And as Cain continues to despair that the tree was "a lying tree," that

> At least it promised knowledge at the price
> Of death, but knowledge still; but what knows man?
> (ll. 161-63)

Lucifer consoles him:

> It may be that death leads to the highest knowledge,
> And being of all things the sole thing certain
> At least leads to the surest science; therefore
> The tree was true, though deadly.
> (ll. 164-67)

But Lucifer's attempt to show Cain death is unsuccessful. Cain complains that "all / Seems dim and shadowy" (ll. 175-76). Disconsolate, he deprecates God:

> E'en he who made us must be, as the Maker
> Of things unhappy! To produce destruction
> Can surely never be the task of joy,
> And yet my sire says he's omnipotent.
> Then why is evil, he being good? I asked
> This question of my father, and he said,
> Because this evil only was the path
> To good. Strange Good, that must arise from out
> Its deadly opposite . . .
> (ll. 281-89)

The light shed by Lucifer has had little positive effect on Cain, though he does perceive that part of his woe is caused by the warring of the two principles of good and evil, in this case Lucifer and God:

> Would there were only one of ye! Perchance
> An unity of purpose might make union
> In elements which seem now jarred in storms.
> (ll. 377-79)

But the essence of Cain's new self-knowledge is that humanness is as nothing. In Lucifer's confirming words:

> And this should be the human sum
> Of knowledge, to know mortal nature's nothingness.
> (ll. 421-22)

And Act II ends with Lucifer's consoling words in praise of reason, which reinforce Cain's, and Byron's, penchant for revolt against the orthodox theology of Adam and Abel:

> One good gift has the fatal apple giv'n--
> Your reason; let it not be over-swayed
> By tyrannous threats to force you into faith
> 'Gainst all external sense and inward feelings.
> Think and endure and form an inner world
> In your own bosom, where the outward fails.
> So shall you nearer be the spiritual
> Nature, and war triumphant with your own.
> (ll. 459-66)

Act III, which brings Cain back to earth to play out the climax of the death drama of Genesis 4, contains still more of Cain's iconoclasm and more hints of Atonement. In response to Cain's protests that all must die for their parents' error, Adah, his sister-wife, expresses the wish that "I could die for them so <u>they</u> might live" (l. 79). And then she speculates:

> How know we that some such atonement one day
> May not redeem our race?
> (ll. 85-86)

But Cain, whose response echoes Byron's own objection to the orthodox

theory of Atonement,[29] reacts violently:

> By sacrificing
> The harmless for the guilty? what atonement
> Were there? Why, we are innocent; what have we
> Done that we must be victims for a deed
> Before our birth, or need have victims to
> Atone for this mysterious, nameless sin,
> If it be such a sin to seek for knowledge?
> (ll. 86-92)

Protesting the altar arranged for the offering of his sacrifice, Cain revolts against the use of it and is deaf as Adam hints at Atonement through love. Again, there is a clear allusion to Atonement in Abel's dying words of forgiveness:

> Oh God, receive thy servant and
> Forgive his slayer, for he knew not what
> He did.
> (ll. 318-20)

Here in Abel's words is a clear echo of Luke 23:34, Jesus' words from the cross. Ironically, in Abel's death Cain now experiences the death he sought to know in Act II. Eve responds to the murder by cursing Cain, and Adam sends him forth. But Adah in the true spirit of love prepares to depart with him. The Angel of the Lord arrives to set the mark upon Cain's brow and drive him out, "A fugitive and vagabond on earth" (l. 480). The mark or seal is set on Cain's brow "that he

[29] See Byron's letter to Francis Hodgson, September 3, 1811, Byron's Poetry, Authoritative Texts, Letters and Journals, Criticism, Images of Byron, ed. Frank D. McConnell, Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 1978), pp. 326-27.

may go forth in safety" (l. 495).

In short, Byron's God was both maker and destroyer, while Lucifer served to illuminate life, to point out that the Tree of Knowledge was a source of truth and that the Fall had forced mankind from the narrow existence of Paradise and given him the gift of Reason. Hence in Byron's conception of the Biblical story, Blake found much appeal. Yet at the same time, Byron's emphasis on Reason and his failure to deal with the concept of Atonement was evidence of short sightedness in his poetic vision. Blake, then, engraved his illuminated poem, The Ghost of Abel, to provide the final act of the drama. Byron's vindictive God was clearly Blake's Urizen or Nobodaddy, and Byron's antagonism toward the orthodox conception of Atonement was one Blake shared. But Blake's vision--his myth--provided for an Atonement, a true oneness between man and God which Byron's hindered vision and his preoccupation with the death of the natural body failed to perceive.

Blake's title and dedication of The Ghost of Abel to Byron summarize in a few lines his whole intention. The full title of the drama, The Ghost of Abel: A Revelation In the Visions of Jehovah, Seen by William Blake, indicates that Blake's purpose is to revise, to make known the vision in its true form as he has seen it. The dedication to Byron emphasizes this point and questions Byron's vision:

> To LORD BYRON in the Wilderness
> What doest thou here Elijah?

> Can a Poet doubt the Visions of Jehovah? Nature has no Outline: but Imagination has. Nature has no Tune: but Imagination has! Nature has no Supernatural & dissolves: Imagination is Eternity[.]
> (Plate 1)

The dedication, which contains both praise and rebuke, cryptically summarizes Blake's quarrel with Byron. And as Leslie Tannenbaum has noted, it becomes more readily decipherable once the reader is familiar with the story of the prophet Elijah, who having indicted the nature worship of Baal, isolated himself in the wilderness where he received a theophany--an experience of God. Blake's dedication, then, addresses Lord Byron, comparing him with Elijah, thus indicating that his iconoclastic drama places him in the class of the true poet-prophet. But at the same time, Byron remains in the wilderness because he has not yet experienced the theophany that Elijah had experienced. It is this theophany--the experience of God in man--that Byron's drama lacks and which Blake intends to add to it.[30] Blake then goes on to rebuke Byron for doubting the "Visions of Jehovah," referring to Byron's allusions to Atonement and his failure to exploit the theme and hence achieve theophany in Cain. Instead of focusing on the theme of Atonement, Byron has bound himself up in his concern with nature--death, and this the first of human deaths, is purely, in Blake's concern, a function of nature. By concentrating on death, Byron has limited himself to the natural world, a world which "has no Supernatural and dissolves." Had he heeded the

[30] "Lord Byron in the Wilderness," 351.

"Visions of Jehovah" and exploited the theme of Atonement, Byron would have exhibited imaginative vision, and in "Imagination is Eternity."

Blake's drama takes up where Byron's leaves off. Cain has been banished--accompanied by Adah--and Abel lies beside his grave where Adam and Eve are in mourning. Jehovah, whom the reader now recognizes as Blake's representation of Christ instead of his conception of a Urizenic God and the destroyer of Byron's drama, is present. This change in identity Blake signals by placing on the engraved plate a flying bird before Jehovah's name in the stage instructions:

> Scene. A rocky Country. Eve fainted over the dead body Of Abel which lays near a Grave. Adam kneels by her Jehovah stands above

In addition, four small birds fly above the words "Can a Poet" in the Dedication. Other birds decorate Jehovah's name throughout the two plates, and on plate two a series of "small hieroglyphs summarize the Gospel story" after Jehovah's words "Such is My Will."[31] Clearly the Jehovah of Blake's The Ghost of Abel is not the Old Testament Jehovah of Byron's Cain; he is instead Christ, symbol of Atonement.

In the drama Jehovah calls to Adam, but a grieving Adam refuses to hear him. Eve, who has been in a faint, revives to see the Ghost of Abel arising from the grave to claim vengeance--"Life for Life! Life for

[31] See David V. Erdman's description of the plates in The Illuminated Blake, ed. David V. Erdman (New York: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 381-83.

Life!" But contrary to her character in Cain, where she cursed Cain violently, she has now acquired the understanding which permits her to see that this "Visionary Phantasm" is "not the real Abel," and to convince Adam, who in Byron's drama evicted Cain from their midst, that she sees Abel living as

> Jehovah sees him
> Alive & not Dead: were it not better to believe Vision
> With all our might & strength tho we are fallen & lost.
> (Plates 1 and 2)

Hence Atonement, a spirit of loving forgiveness, is achieved by both Adam and Eve in contrast to the vengeance they express in Byron's Cain.

In this drama the motif of vengeance is developed through the conflict between Abel's ghost and Jehovah-Christ as the Ghost of Abel cries out "Life for Life!" and

> O I cannot Forgive! the Accuser hath
> Enterd into Me as into his House & I loathe thy Tabernacles
> As thou hast said so is it come to pass: My desire is unto Cain
> And He doth rule over Me: therefore My Soul in fumes of Blood
> Cries for Vengeance: Sacrifice on Sacrifice Blood on Blood[.]
> (Plate 2)

But Jehovah-Christ has pointed out that such vengeance merely calls for perpetual murder, that the answer lies in forgiveness and Atonement, else "no Flesh or Spirit could ever Live" (Plate 2). At Jehovah's refusal, the Ghost of Abel sinks into the grave and arises again in the form of Satan, this time to cry out again for

Human Blood & not the Blood of Bulls or Goats
And no Atonement O Jehovah the Elohim live on Sacrifice
Of Men: hence I am God of Men: Thou Human O Jehovah.
By the Rock & Oak of the Druid creeping Mistletoe & Thorn
Cains City built with Human Blood, not Blood of Bulls & Goats
Thou shalt Thyself be Sacrificed to Me thy God on Calvary

That the Ghost returns as Satan, one of the Elohim, who live by a code of vengeance rather than forgiveness, allies Satan with the Jehovah God of Byron's Cain, a God whose symbols are "the Rock & Oak . . . creeping Mistletoe & Thorn" and human blood--all symbols of the Druid nature religion abhorred by Blake, a "whole Druid Law" which Jesus "removes away" (Jerusalem 69:39). Here Satan takes on a negative role. Unlike the Satan of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, who represents energy and the spirit of revolution, the Satan of The Ghost of Abel takes on a more conventional role to become the spirit of vengeance, the adversary of Jehovah-Christ, symbol of Atonement. In line with Blake's view of Atonement, Satan is unsuccessful in his curse that holds that Jehovah "shalt Thyself be Sacrificed to Me thy God on Calvary," for it is Jehovah instead who sends Satan

to Eternal Death
In Self Annihilation even till Satan Self-subdud Put off Satan
Into the Bottomless Abyss whose torment arises for ever & ever
(Plate 2)

This conflict and Jehovah's victory illustrate Blake's unorthodox conception of Atonement and help to explain his sympathy with Byron, who was likewise unable to accept the orthodox view of Atonement and yet lacked the perspective that might have permitted him to perceive the

true vision. Byron's refusal to accept Atonement as a solution is reflected both in Cain's explicit rejection of Adah's suggestion of Atonement--"By sacrificing / The harmless for the guilty? What atonement / Were there?" (Act III, ll. 86-88)--and in Byron's proclaiming in the Preface to Cain, in spite of his New Testament references, that he intends a "literalist approach to Old Testament material."[32] Byron, like Milton, rejected the crucifixion concept of Atonement; but unlike Milton, he failed to offer a positive conception of Atonement. As we have already seen, Blake also felt that the innocent could not atone for the guilty, that the orthodox concept of Atonement was "a horrible doctrine--If another man pay your debt I do not forgive it."[33] Instead, he saw the true Atonement as an "identification . . . whereby man recognizes his identity with God and thereby recognizes his own centrality in what formerly was the alien and inhospitable universe that tormented Cain."[34] And realizing his own centrality meant that man recognized his own godliness, as opposed to the sense of nothingness experienced by Cain at the climax of his education at the hands of Lucifer.

Thus, having disposed of Satan by having him "go to Eternal Death / In Self Annihilation," Blake concludes his scene with a Chorus of Angels who sing:

[32] Tannenbaum, "Lord Byron in the Wilderness," 360.

[33] Blake Records, p. 337.

[34] Tannenbaum, "Lord Byron in the Wilderness," 364.

The Elohim of the Heathen Swore Vengeance for Sin! Then thou stoodst
Forth O Elohim Jehovah! in the midst of the darkness of the Oath! All Clothed
In Thy Covenant of the Forgiveness of Sins: Death O Holy! Is this Brotherhood
The Elohim saw their Oath Eternal Fire; they rolled apart trembling over The
Mercy Seat: each in his station fixt in the Firmament by Peace Brotherhood and Love

(Plate 2)

It is the Elohim of the Heathen, the nature worshippers, who seek vengeance; they are the same Elohim who created the heavens and the earth, Blake's Urizen and Nobodaddy God. By casting out the error of self-hood which they represent, personified in The Ghost of Abel by Abel's Ghost and by Satan, and embracing the "Covenant of the Forgiveness of Sins," which sets the mark on Cain's head as a sign of forgiveness and not for mere protection against vengeance, Blake's imaginative vision overcomes the cycle of nature, which has no supernatural and can bring but death to the body, and becomes itself a true at-one-ment with the God in man. In short, as Tannenbaum states it, Cain's, and hence Byron's, error had been in following Lucifer, "the outward path of Nature" and of Reason "rather than the inward path of Imagination."[35]

In Blake's eyes, though he found certain facets of their work he could admire, both Wordsworth and Byron had limited vision, vision hampered by a reliance on the Elohim of nature. Wordsworth's vision was hindered because his interest in external nature prevented a fully

[35] "Lord Byron in the Wilderness," 355.

subjective experience of Atonement. Byron, entangled in the paradox of the natural death of the body and a Urizenic god who created mankind only to destroy him thus, failed to envision the Atonement that could come with the death of selfhood inherent in forgiveness and mercy.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

> This world of Imagination is the World of Eternity it is the Divine bosom into which we shall go after the death of the Vegetated body[.] (A Vision of the Last Judgment, p. 545)

The dominant and unifying pattern that emerges from a comprehensive review of Blake's criticism of the English poets is that of his own archetypal myth that drives toward the goal of Atonement or fourfold vision. From Chaucer to Byron, Blake's concern is with the visionary perspective of the poet.

In A Vision of the Last Judgment, Blake describes the experience of the individual with fourfold vision:

> If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought if he could Enter into Noah's Rainbow or into his bosom or could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder which always intreats him to leave mortal things as he must know them then would he arise from his Grave then would he meet the Lord in the Air & then he would be happy. (p. 550)

For the artist as well as the spectator, art was a vehicle to vision. The imaginative world was the Eternal world, a world that meant leaving behind the vegetative world, the world of memory and mortality, for the

visionary and the divine, the recognition of Christ in the individual human being, of at-one-ment with the God within. Christ was Blake's symbol of the Imagination, representing that state in which mankind frees himself from the prison or grave of his selfhood and preoccupation with the finite or temporal. He represented the fourfold imaginative state, a state of forgiveness and love, a state which moved beyond a concern with the changing world of Generation and vegetation, the world of the death of the natural body, to a comprehension of Eternity.

Of the nine English poets whose works seem most to have drawn Blake's attention, it is with Shakespeare that one finds it most difficult to assess Blake's criticism. But it is clear from many of his illustrations that Blake recognized in Shakespeare an affinity for psychological states. Blake's preoccupation with Shakespeare's fairies and ghosts indicates an appreciation of the poet's genius at portraying human character. Both Shakespeare and Chaucer he recognized as masters of characterization, portrayers of "the Four Zoas who are the Four Eternal Senses of Man" (Jerusalem 32:31). And in Chaucer, as he did in Spenser, Blake recognized glimpses of his own fourfold Edenic vision. In the underlying irony of Chaucer's work, the conflicting tension of the human individual caught between allegiance to God and to the world, Blake recognized the progressive effect of his own doctrine of contraries. With Spenser, though Blake took issue with his allegiance to the monarchy, he saw in his allegory the lineaments of his own archetypal levels of vision.

In Young, Gray, Blair, and Byron, though Blake saw glimpses of prophetic vision, he took issue with the poets' preoccupation with the death of the natural body. Gray's gloom offered no hint of imaginative fourfold vision. And Young and Blair were so intent on orthodox and literal conceptions of death and an ensuing resurrection that they offered no hope of the Atonement that Blake envisioned as a reality for all of humankind. Byron, whose refusal of the orthodox conception of Atonement appealed to Blake, was preoccupied with the death of the natural body and failed to present a positive concept of Atonement, one that would substitute love and forgiveness for the vengeance signified by the crucifixion.

Both Wordsworth and Blake had as their primary concerns the growth of the human mind and attempted to establish theories for the creative act. But where Wordsworth's theory required a natural external world in order that the creative act might occur in a union between perceiver and perceived, for Blake fourfold vision occurred in a purely subjective experience. Blake's muses were the Daughters of Inspiration; Wordsworth's the Daughters of Memory. Hence Blake criticizes Wordsworth for permitting the vegetative world to interfere with his vision.

Milton, Blake's master, and the poet with whom he felt the greatest affinity, treated the archetypes of the Fall and the Atonement. With Milton's treatment of the Fall Blake seems either to have seriously disagreed or to have felt that it needed clarification because of its concealment in narrative technique and religious orthodoxy. Blake's

conception of the Fall was clearly that of the felix culpa. It was essential that humankind pass from primal innocence into the world of experience if further progression toward the imaginative fourfold vision of Eden was to be achieved. But Blake approved fully of Milton's unorthodox treatment of Atonement in Paradise Regained, a treatment which played down the crucifixion in favor of a vision of Atonement concerned not with vengeance and punishment but with love and forgiveness. In Milton's conception of Atonement Blake recognized, more clearly than he had in the work of any other of the English poets, a feature of his own conception of Atonement--that the "Human Imagination . . . is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus" (Milton 3:3-4).

Blake, in short, was a mythmaker. His prophecies provide ample evidence of his intention to formulate his own system rather than be enslaved by another man's. This penchant for myth making dictates his archetypal critical approach to the works of the English poets. Concerned with the archetypes of the Fall and the Atonement, archetypes vital to Western civilization and through which theologians and artists have for centuries attempted to explain mankind's tribulation and express his hope for salvation, Blake sought, through his prophecies and through his criticism of the works of others, to revise these archetypes in order to provide a truer myth of human existence. Hence he offers an interpretation of life that finds Understanding through a Fall into Generation or Experience, and Atonement or salvation through a mental warfare between the contraries of Energy and Reason, Sensory

Perception and Intuition, that finds Jesus Christ, the Imagination, in the human mind.

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APPENDIX A

ILLUSTRATIONS



No. 1 The Canterbury Pilgrims



No. 2 Pity



No. 3 Fiery Pegasus



No. 4 Hecate



No. 5 Oberon and Titania



No. 6 The Characters in Spenser's Faerie Queene

IV.

The eternal gates terrific porter lifted the northern bar:
Thel entered in & saw the secrets of the land unknown:
She saw the couches of the dead. & where the fibrous roots
Of every heart on earth infixes deep its restless twists:
A land of sorrows & of tears where never smile was seen.

She wandered in the land of clouds thro' valleys dark, listning
Dolours & lamentations: waiting oft beside a dewy grave
She stood in silence, listning to the voices of the ground,
Till to her own grave plot she came, & there she sat down.
And heard this voice of sorrow breathed from the hollow pit.

Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction?
Or the glistning Eye to the poison of a smile!
Why are Eyelids given with nerves to touch & shrink,
Where a thousand fibres meet in ambush for?
Or an Eye of gifts & graces, shewing fruits & roses
gold!
Why a Tongue impurpled with living blood
Why an Ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in
Why a nostril wide inhaling terror trembling at itself

The Virgin started from her seat, & with a shriek
Fled back unhindered till she came into the vales of



No. 7 The Book of Thel, Plate 6



No. 8 Mirth



No. 9 The Youthful Poet's Dream



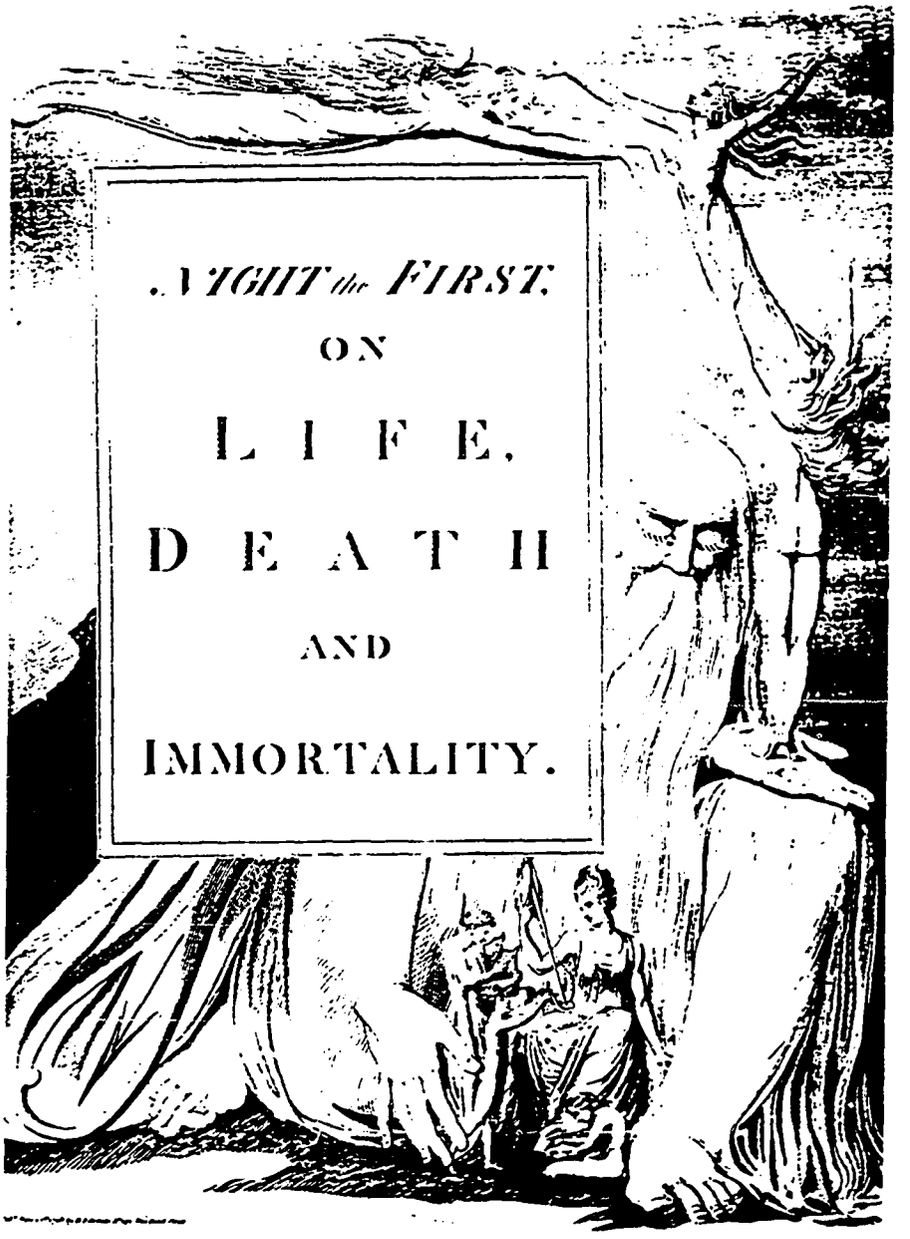
No. 10 Melancholy



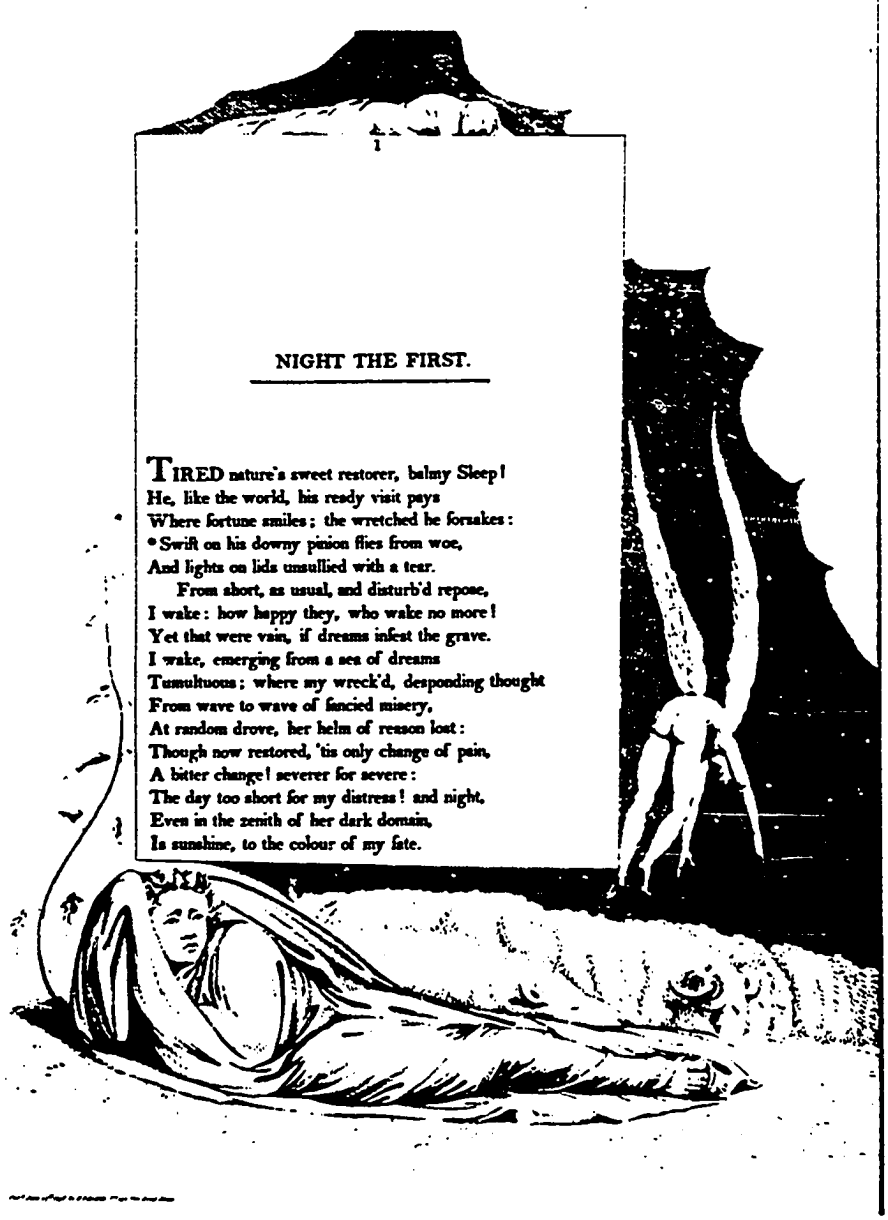
No. 11 Milton, Old Age



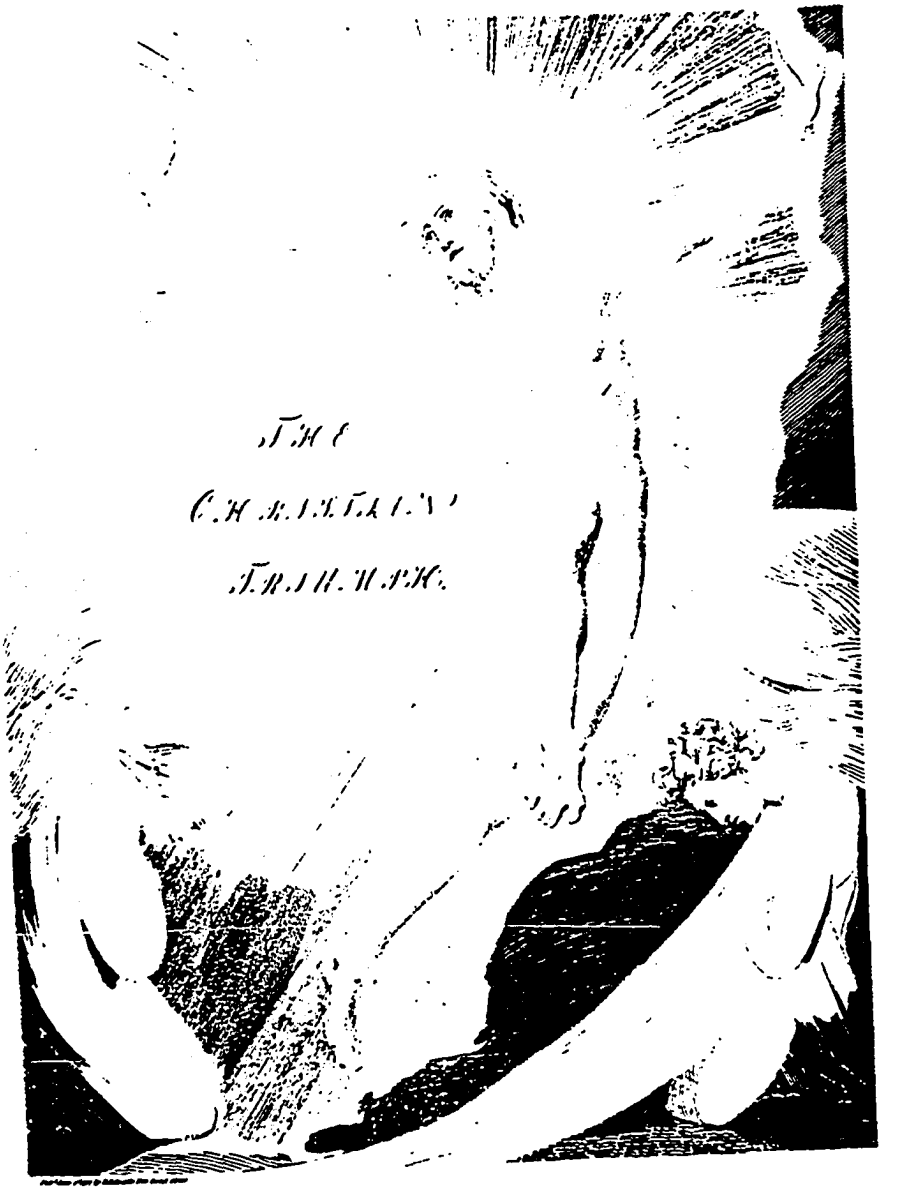
No. 12 Paradise Regained: The Third Temptation



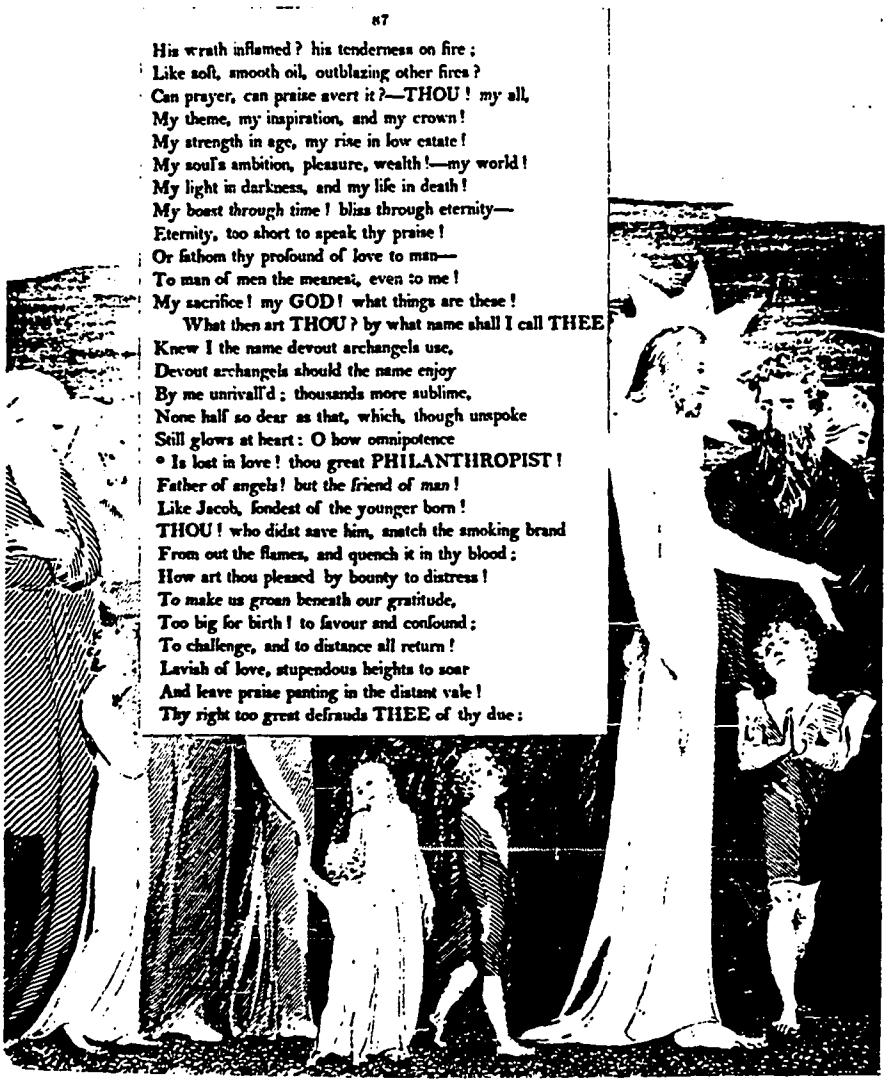
No. 13 Night Thoughts: Frontispiece, Night the First



No. 14 Night Thoughts: Page 1, Night the First



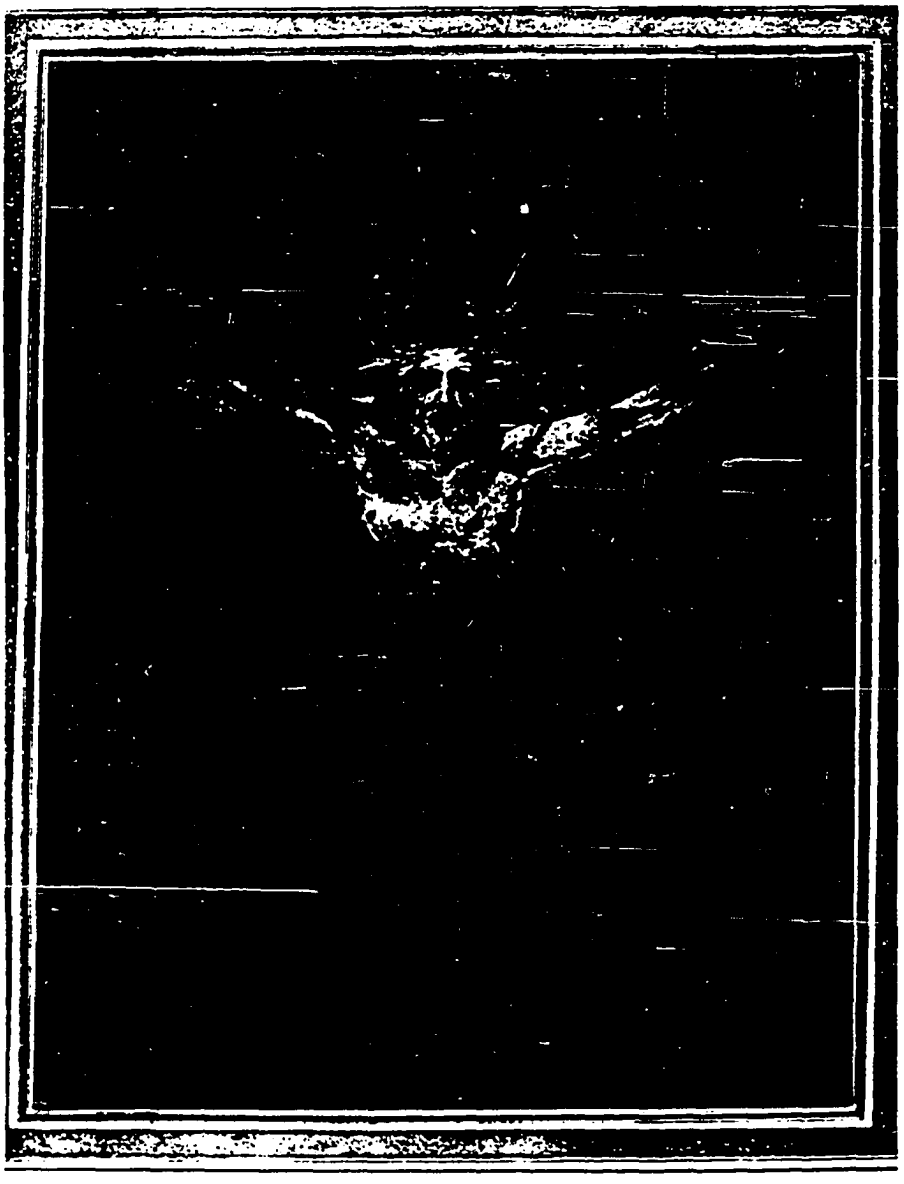
No. 15 Night Thoughts: Frontispiece, Night the Fourth



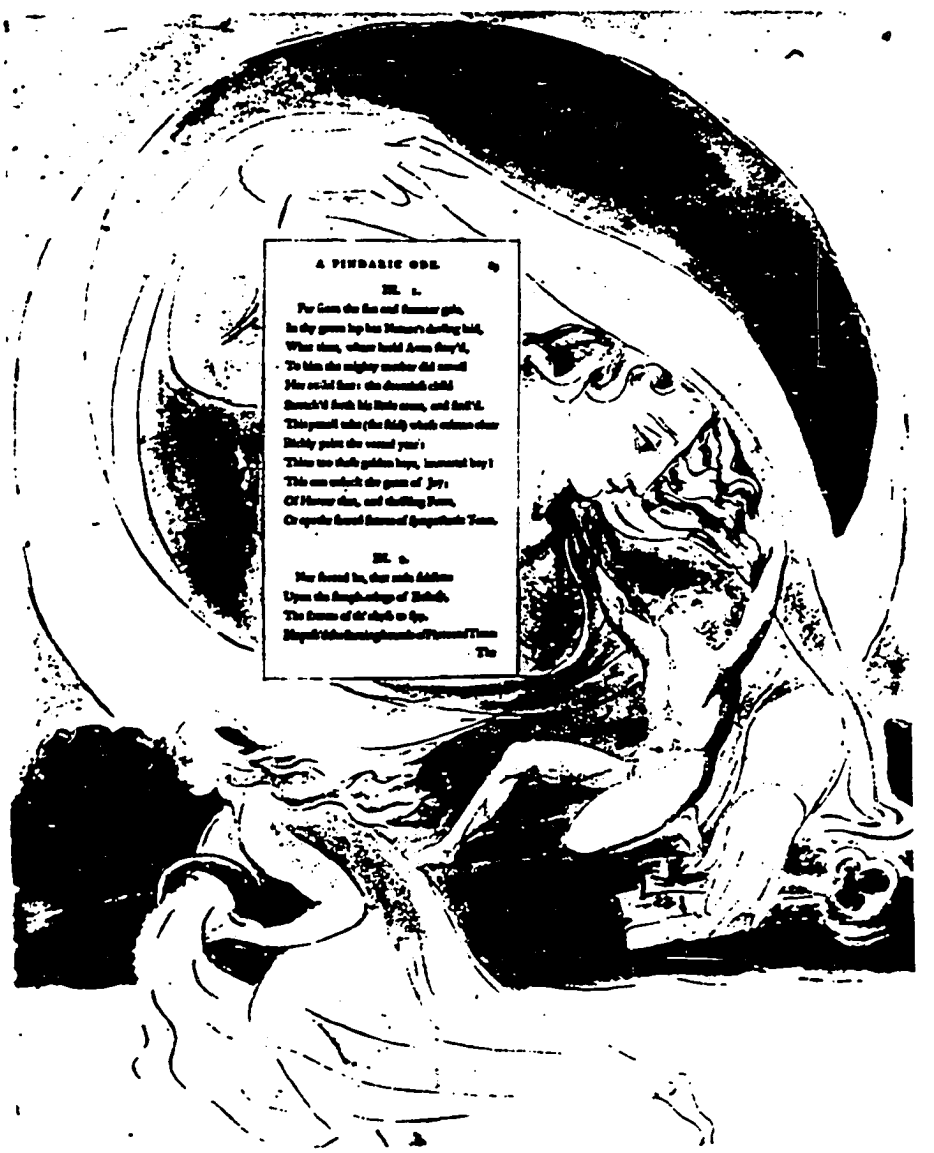
87

His wrath inflamed? his tenderness on fire;
Like soft, smooth oil, outblazing other fires?
Can prayer, can praise avert it?—THOU! *my* all,
My theme, my inspiration, and my crown!
My strength in age, my rise in low estate!
My soul's ambition, pleasure, wealth!—my world!
My light in darkness, and my life in death!
My boast *through time*! bliss through eternity—
Eternity, too short to speak thy praise!
Or fathom thy profound of love to man—
To man of men the meanest, even to me!
My sacrifice! my GOD! what things are these!
What then art THOU? by what name shall I call THEE?
Knew I the name devout archangels use,
Devout archangels should the name enjoy
By me unrivall'd; thousands more sublime,
None half so dear as that, which, though unspoke
Still glows at heart: O how omnipotence
Is lost in love! thou great PHILANTHROPIST!
Father of angels! but the *friend of man*!
Like Jacob, fondest of the younger born!
THOU! who didst save him, snatch the smoking brand
From out the flames, and quench it in thy blood;
How art thou pleased by bounty to distress!
To make us groan beneath our gratitude,
Too big for birth! to favour and confound;
To challenge, and to distance all return!
Lavish of love, stupendous heights to soar
And leave praise panting in the distant vale!
Thy right too great defrauds THEE of thy due:

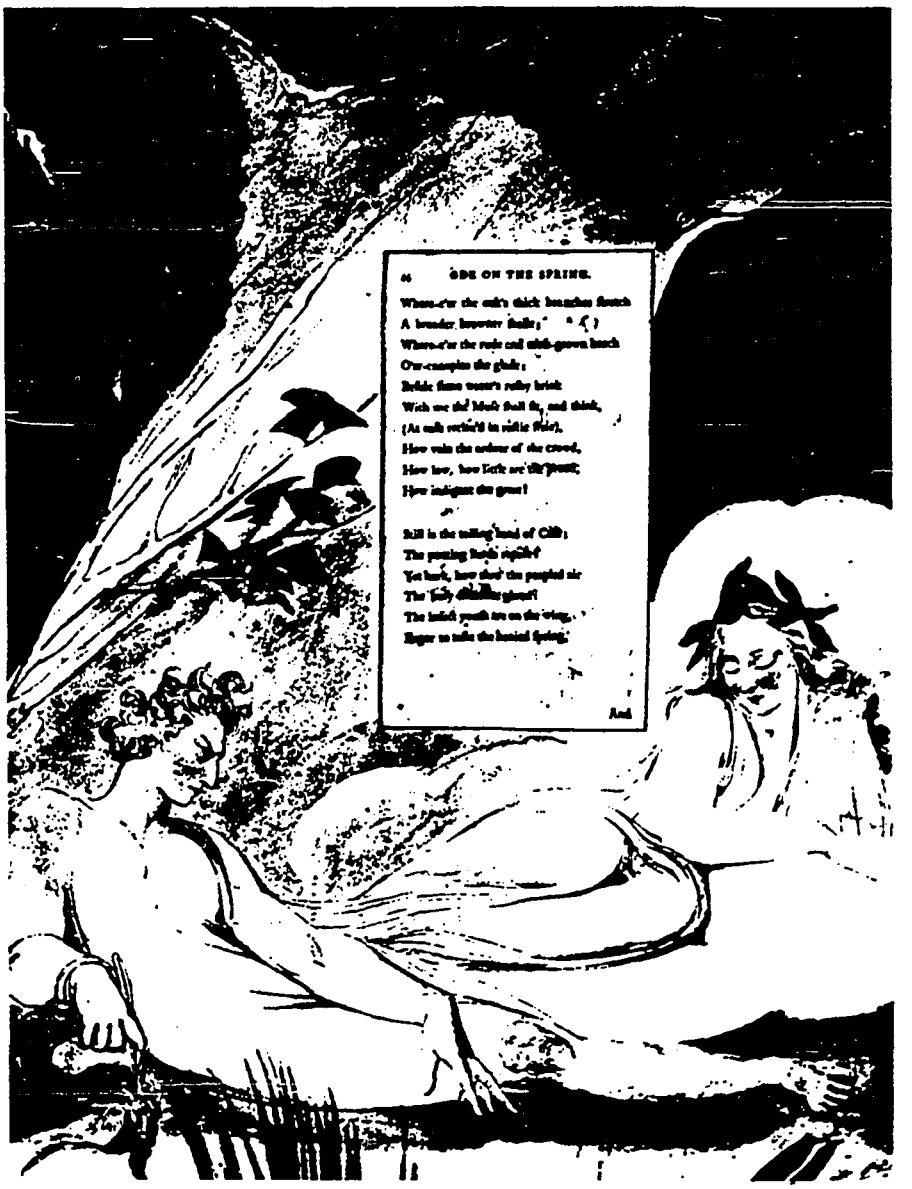
No. 16 Night Thoughts: Page 87, Night the Fourth



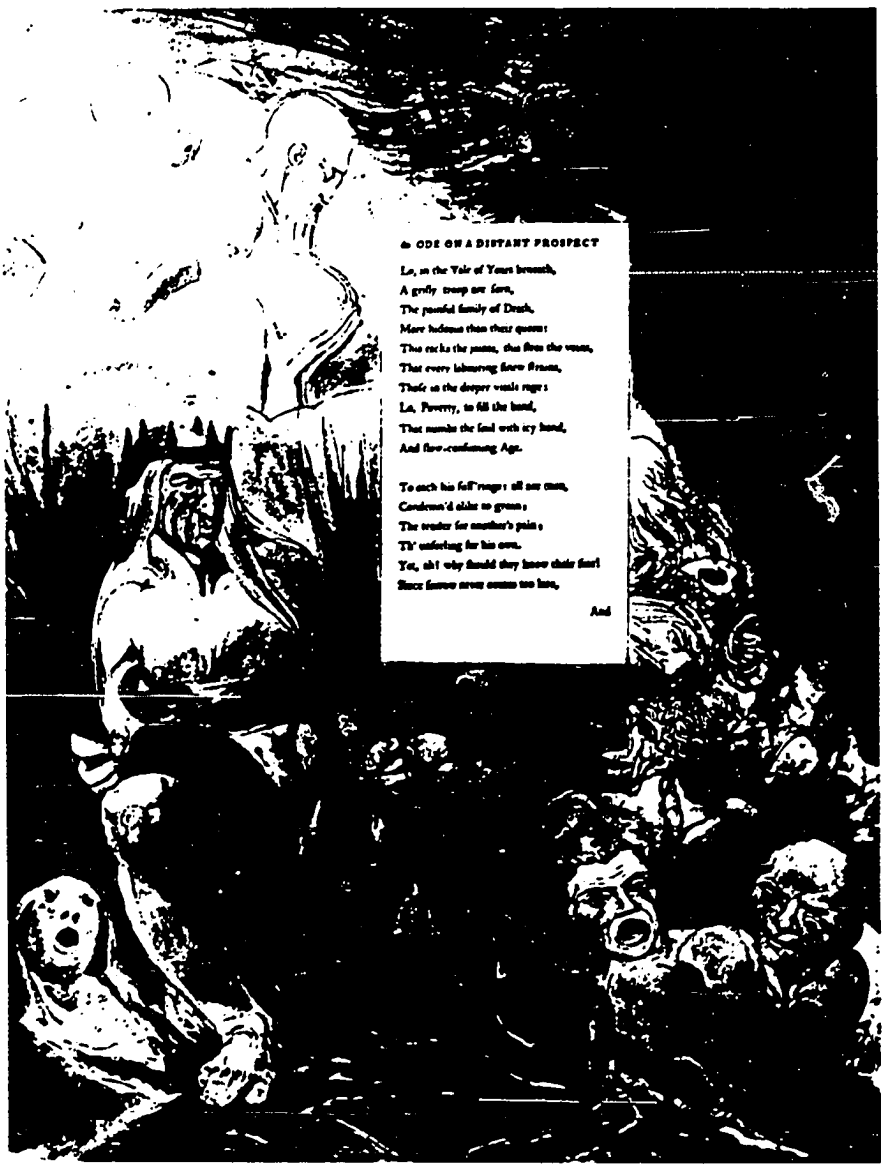
No. 17 Night Thoughts: Frontispiece, Night the Seventh



No. 18 "The Progress of Poesy," Design 9



No. 19 "Ode on the Spring," Design 9



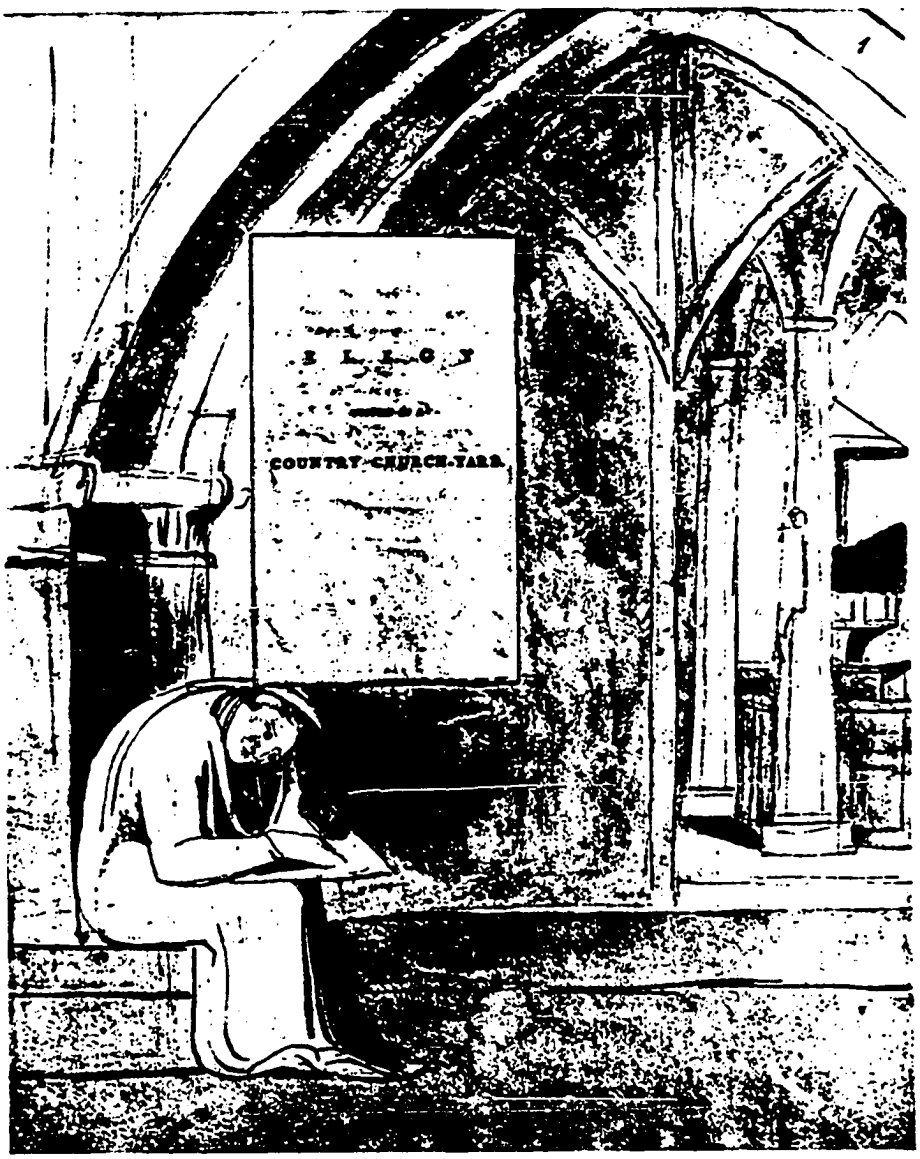
No. 20 "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," Design 8



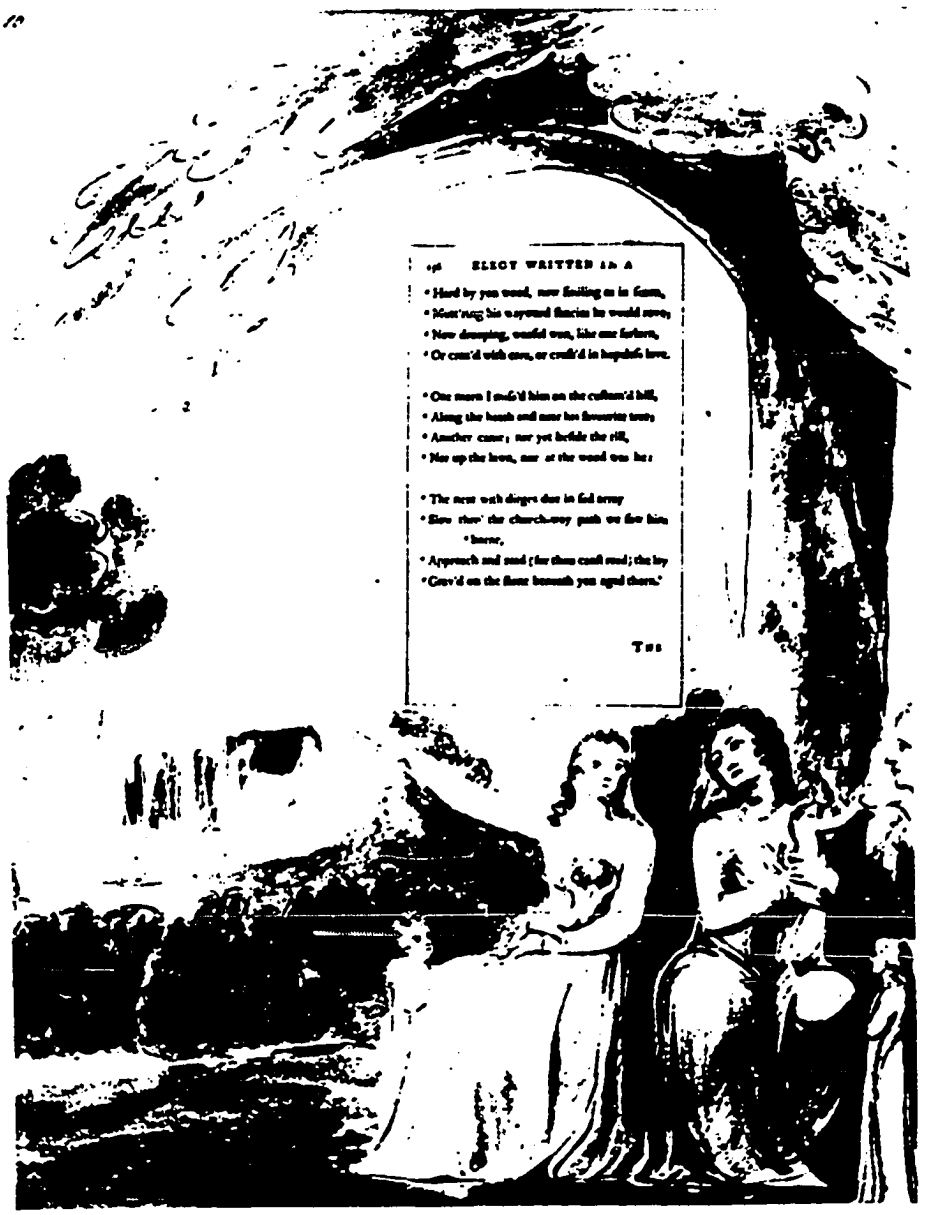
No. 21 "Ode to Adversity," Design 4



No. 22 "Epitaph on Mrs. Clarke," Design 2



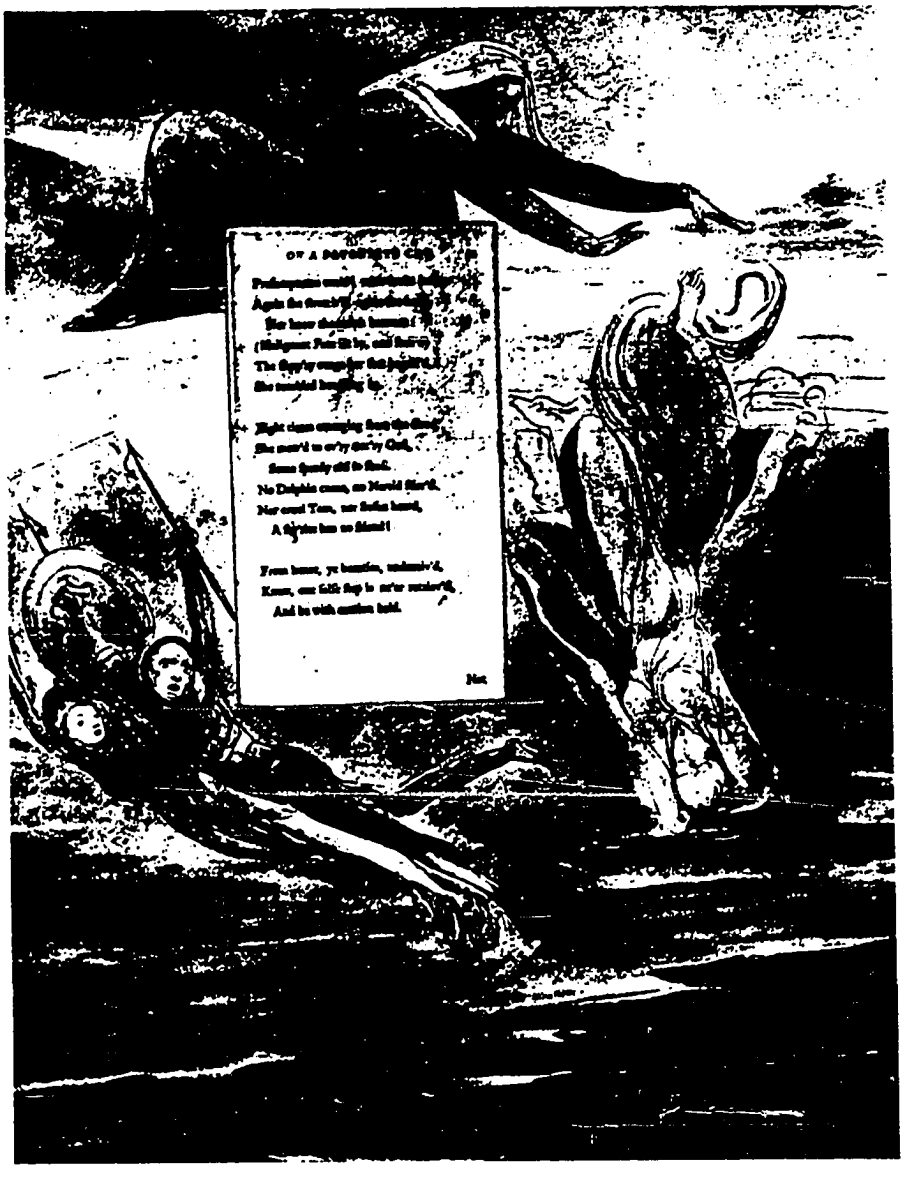
No. 23 "Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard," Design 1



No. 24 "Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard," Design 10



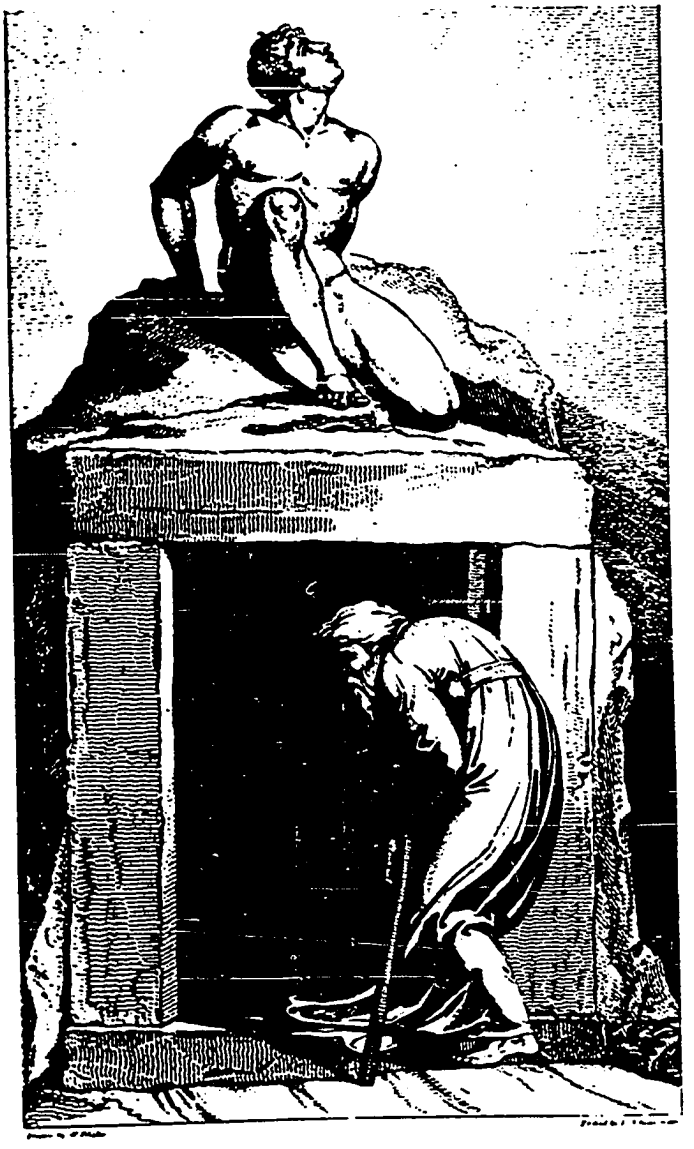
No. 25 "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat," Design 3



No. 26 "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat," Design 5



No. 27 The Descent of Man Into the Vale of Death



No. 28 Death's Door



No. 29 The Counsellor, King, Warrior, Mother & Child in the Tomb



No. 30 The Day of Judgment

APPENDIX B

A SELECTIVE SOURCE-LIST OF BLAKE'S CRITICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE ENGLISH POETS AND THEIR WORK

Heads of the Poets

William Blake's Heads of the Poets project, carried out for William Hayley while he was at Felpham, included the portraits of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Dryden, Pope, and Cowper. The original paintings are now in the Manchester City Art Gallery, and all eighteen of the portraits are reproduced in William Wells, William Blake's "Heads of the Poets" for Turret House, The Residence of William Hayley, Felpham ([England]: n. p., [1969]).

Chaucer

Original versions of the large Chaucer illustration, The Canterbury Pilgrims, are in the Rosenwald Collection, National Gallery of Art, currently housed at the Alverthorpe Gallery, Jenkintown, Pennsylvania; and in the Stirling Maxwell Collection, Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries, Pollok House. The drawing has been reproduced in Blake Studies, 1 (1969); Colby Library Quarterly, 13 (1977); and Genre, 11 (1978).

Shakespeare

The extra-illustrated Second Folio in the British Museum, London, contains six of Blake's illustrations to Shakespeare: Brutus and Caesar's Ghost, Fiery Pegasus, Richard the III and the Ghosts, Hamlet, Jacques and the Stag, and Queen Katherine's Dream. Also in the British Museum, in a sketchbook, are Hamlet Administering the Oath, Lady Macbeth with Candle and Dagger, and Hamlet and the Ghost of His Father. Two additional versions of Queen Katherine's Dream are in the holdings at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, England--one in the Stopford A. Brooke Collection and one in the Dilke Collection. Pity, Hecate, Lear and Cordelia in Prison, and Oberon, Titania, and Puck with Fairies Dancing are at the Tate Gallery, London; and a version of Jocund Day is available in the Rosenwald Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, holds the seven character heads; and Oberon and Titania, Romeo and the Apothecary, and Macbeth and the Ghost of Banquo are in the collections of Philip Hofer, Robert Essick, and Sir Geoffrey Keynes, respectively.

The seven character heads, Hecate, Lear and Cordelia in Prison, Brutus and Caesar's Ghost, Fiery Pegasus, Pity, Queen Katherine's Dream, Romeo and the Apothecary, Hamlet Administering the Oath, Oberon, Titania, and Puck with Fairies Dancing, Oberon and Titania, and Jocund Day or Glad Day are all reproduced in Apollo, n.s. 79 (1964) and in The Visionary Hand: Essays for the Study of William Blake's Art and Aesthetics, ed. Robert N. Essick (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1973).

Reproductions of Glad Day, a character head of King Lear, Lear and Cordelia in Prison, Hecate, Macbeth and the Ghost of Banquo, Lady Macbeth and Duncan, Pity, and Hamlet and the Ghost of His Father are published in Anthony Blunt, The Art of William Blake (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1959).

Spenser

The Spenser illustration, The Characters in Spenser's Faerie Queene, is the property of the National Trust, Petworth House, Sussex. Blake Newsletter, 8 (Winter 1974-75) contains a large color fold-out of the illustration along with half-tone reproductions of each quarter of the painting. Damon, A Blake Dictionary (Providence: Brown Univ. Press, 1965) also contains a copy of the print.

Milton

A complete catalogue of Blake's illustrations to Milton is contained in Appendix B to Calm of Mind: Tercentenary Essays on Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes in Honor of John S. Diekhoff, ed. Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve Univ. Press, 1971). The following list is largely derived from Wittreich's catalogue.

The 1801 set of the Comus designs is in the Huntington Library and Art Gallery, and the other set (1805-1810) is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Huntington set is reproduced in Catalogue of William Blake's Drawings and Paintings in the Huntington Library, comp. C. H. Collins Baker, rev. R. R. Wark (San Marino, California, 1957); and

in Blake's Sublime Allegory: Essays on The Four Zoas, Milton, Jerusalem, ed. Stuart Curran and Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1973). The Boston set is reproduced in Illustrations of Milton's Comus, William Briggs (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1880); Comus: A Mask by John Milton (London: Julian Edition, 1926); and William Blake, Water-Color Designs, comp. Helen D. Willard (Boston, 1957).

The 1807 set of twelve illustrations to Paradise Lost is in the Huntington Library and Art Gallery, and is reproduced in the Catalogue of William Blake's Drawings and Paintings in the Huntington Library (1957). The 1808 set of nine drawings is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the designs have been published in William Blake, Water-Color Designs, comp. Helen D. Willard (Boston, 1957), and in Paradise Lost by John Milton, with the Illustrations by William Blake (New York: Heritage Press, 1940).

There are two sets (both 1809) of six illustrations to the Nativity Ode. One is in the Whitworth Institute Gallery, Manchester; the other is in the Huntington Library and Art Gallery. The Whitworth set has been reproduced in On the Morning of Christ's Nativity: Milton's Hymn with Illustrations by William Blake and a Note by Sir Geoffrey Keynes (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1923). The Huntington set is contained in Catalogue of William Blake's Drawings and Paintings in the Huntington Library (1957).

The twelve illustrations to L'Allegro and Il Penseroso (1816) are in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City. These designs have

been reproduced in Adrian van Sinderen, Blake the Mystic Genius (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1959) and in John Milton, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, with the Paintings by William Blake, Together with a Note upon the Poems by W. P. Trent (New York: Heritage Press, 1954).

The twelve illustrations (ca. 1816) to Paradise Regained are in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, England. They are reproduced in Darrell Figgis, The Paintings of William Blake (London: Ernest Benn, 1925) and in Joseph A. Wittreich, Jr., Angel of Apocalypse: Blake's Idea of Milton (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1975).

Young

The 537 Night Thoughts watercolors are in the British Museum, London. The Harvard Univ. Press Illustrations to Young's Night Thoughts Done in Water-Colour by William Blake (1927), with introductory essay by Sir Geoffrey Keynes, reproduces thirty of the designs, five in color and twenty-five in monotone. Robert Essick and Jenijoy La Belle, Night Thoughts or the Complaint and the Consolation (New York: Dover, 1975), reproduces Richard Edwards' 1797 edition of Nights I-IV of the Night Thoughts, which included 43 of Blake's designs. The two-volume William Blake's Designs for Edward Young's Night Thoughts: A Complete Edition, ed. John E. Grant, Edward J. Rose, and Michael J. Tolley, published by Oxford: Clarendon Press in December 1978, reproduces all 537 of the watercolors.

Gray

The illustrated volume of Gray's poems was presented to Mrs. Anne Flaxman prior to 1805. After her death in 1820 it was virtually lost until 1919, when it was discovered by H. J. C. Grierson at Hamilton Palace. The volume was reproduced by Oxford University Press in 1922, with an introduction by Grierson; and in 1966 the original passed into the possession of Mr. Paul Mellon.[1] Since then two complete editions of the designs have been published: Irene Tayler, Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971); and William Blake's Water-Colours Illustrating the Poems of Thomas Gray, with an introduction and commentary by Sir Geoffrey Keynes (London: Methuen, 1972).

Blair

The original copperplates for the twelve illustrations to Robert Blair's The Grave are in the Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress and the National Gallery of Art. The twelve designs have been reproduced with a commentary by S. Foster Damon in Blake's Grave: A Prophetic Book: Being William Blake's Illustrations for Robert Blair's The Grave, Arranged as Blake Directed (Providence: Brown Univ. Press, 1963).

[1] Keynes, William Blake's Water-Colours Illustrating the Poems of Thomas Gray, pp. 5-6.