Shovel for the Blake root

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A SHOVEL FOR THE BLAKE ROOT

by

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This paper is intended to relieve some of the difficulty readers may have in understanding William Blake's poetry. The paper focuses on Blake's *Europe*, and progresses from more general discussions to a close reading of the poem. Much of the discussion addresses Blake's peculiar style and techniques, which often confuse those who try to make strict sense of what they read. Blake's difficulties derive mainly from his unrelenting reliance on his own imaginative forms. Blake's subjective mythology is a vivid cosmos, seemingly loose at the joints, which is designed, in part, to incapacitate the rational faculties and engage instead the imagination so that experience more comprehensive than the merely material may be addressed. The realms which Blake explored we might today call psychic or psychological. The structure of his works is dictated by a wholeness innate to the human mind, but beyond rational comprehension—that unified, possible self whose yearning we know from dreams. The structural patterns are much more easily discerned if the reader can become engrossed in the poetry itself, seeing and feeling it rather than looking with analytical remove. *Europe* helps explore a portion of Blake's myth known as the Orc-cycle, which occupied much of the poet's early prophetic writing. Specifically, it bares for us two aspects of life in the Orc-cycle—domination by the "female will," and social repression by tyrannical governments, an issue which was current in Blake's London, since reactionary forces had tightened their grip after the French Revolution. The poem also shows Blake breaking out of the chapter-like form of his early prophecies, into the more comprehensive epic mode which he would employ in his major works. This is especially evident in Enitharmon's dream, in which we get a complete mythic context for everything that happens in the poem. The evolution of Blake's more mature forms can also be noted in the fact that Orc, who expresses his knowledge of the infinite with simple violence against the material world, makes no progress in this poem, whereas Los, the maker of new forms, rises in the end to go to work.
INTRODUCTION

Reading William Blake is a tough job for anyone less gifted intellectually than, let's say, a Milton or a Joyce. I'm sure that countless potential readers of Blake have halted themselves at the gate, trying to make sense of the vast, complicated surface texture of Blake's prophetic writings. Over thirty-five years ago Northrop Frye, one of the greatest critics on Blake, wrote in Fearful Symmetry that "the prophecies form what is in proportion to its merits the least read body of poetry in the language," and this is probably still true today.  

Blake's prophetic writings have been called "hermetic," "turgid," and just plain "weird" by many who have read him, and for many this might be a healthy initial reaction to poetry such as:

Sundering, darkening, thundering,
Rent away with a terrible crash
Eternity rolled wide apart,
Wide asunder rolling
Mountainous, all around
Departing, departing, departing--
Leaving ruinous fragments of life,
Hanging, frowning cliffs, and all between
An ocean of voidness unfathomable

(Book of Urizen, 96-104).

This stanza itself is an "ocean of voidness unfathomable." What would Richard Hugo have said to this in a workshop? It seems vague and unrealized, latches onto nothing very specific, and sounds about as melodious as a crow. What are "ruinous fragments of life," anyway?

But now we have identified the Antichrist to reading Blake, and Antichrist shouldn't scare us off—we should accept him, once identified, and work him into our entire view. It will repay the faltering reader at this point to take Blake's own advice on his difficulties: "There-
fore, dear reader, forgive what you do not approve, and love me for this energetic exertion of my talent." This is no appeal to "fit audience, though few." This appeal occurs at the beginning of Blake's last major work, Jerusalem, in a chapter addressed "To the Public." Blake asks only that the public use "love," something available to almost everyone, in response to his own "energetic exertion." Note how Blake is already, before the poetry itself of Jerusalem begins, trying to dissemble the rational faculty which judges approval, and reach beyond it to the more sublime and human faculties which fuel art and advance humanity.

Much of the difficulty in reading Blake centers, I think, on the poet's near-perfect escape from gravity. All great poets reach beyond the rational faculties to explore, with imaginative forms, the numinous experiences which remain with us and cannot be abstracted from us, explained away. They use deep images, lyrical language, comedy, tragic occurrences, or whatever the occasion calls for. Blake is unique, however, in his extreme emphasis on the forms of his own imaginative reality. In most of his poetry he completely disregards any of the binding laws of what he calls the "natural" or "vegetative" world, which is simply the world that we perceive with our five senses. Hence in Blake you will find a general disregard for external logic of any kind, and a dependence instead on the internal logic of his own mind. He is not bound to time and space, so traditional narrative and place go by the wayside, in much the same way that we are now used to in artists such as Joyce, Beckett, and Faulkner. Blake is a successful anarchist who
speaks the language of his own mind, with its own peculiar symbols and syntax.

The discouragement of rational apprehension is built into Blake's poetry carefully. You cannot, for example, follow the path of any character in The Four Zoas and make sense of it in terms of narrative continuity. The characters in their various guises and enterprises fit together psychically or psychologically, to suggest modern terms which might be applied. They show one representative instant in the human mind. Thus the antics of Ahania, for example, cannot be explained as part of a story which continues through time. She is thrown out by her husband (which is like Dante throwing out Beatrice), then orbits on the edge of his vision until she is accepted back by him, at which time she falls over dead with joy! These actions, of which I've given only the broad outlines, are visualizations of archetypal patterns which the mind projects, and they express certain human potentialities which Blake has identified with his imagination. For me, they make sense in no other way.

Even finer details of Blake's dislodgement of rationale can be seen in his writing. Vincent A. De Luca, in his article "Ariston's Immortal Palace: Icon and Allegory in Blake's Prophecies," pinpoints specific passages where "Blake's meaning seems to recede from attempts to interpret it," where any narrative flow which the work has developed suddenly stops, as the windows come open. The quasi-historical flow of America, De Luca points out, is suddenly interrupted by a vision of "an ancient palace, archetype of mighty Empires," which is seen
"on those vast shady hills between America and Albion's shore."

This palace was "built in the forest of God / by Ariston, the king of beauty, for his stolen bride" (America, ll. 106-112). The passage presents a sudden shift in characters, setting, theme, and even style. This kind of sharp transition occurs over and over in Blake, and we must get used to it to read him. Blake felt that at this point in America, with the thrashings of revolutionary energy built to a crescendo (Orc's "ever-hissing jaws / and parched lips drop with fresh gore," ll. 98-100), the imaginative form of his work required a vision of the lost Atlantis. If one is reading with the empathetic and imaginative side of the intellect, rather than with common sense, the juxtaposition of a frenzied and alarming revolutionary situation with a serene vision of a lost world makes a perfect fit.

Like other Romantic poets—Shelley and Keats, for example—Blake wrote in the mythological mode, but this offers no aid to reading him, since the mythology he creates in his prophetic writings is purely his own. Blake shunned the characters of Western mythology. He thought those stories were bad art, inspired by the muses of memory rather than imagination. He also knew that to employ familiar characters and situations would put preconceptions in the reader's mind, and Blake firmly believed in imaginative individuality. He wanted to make sure that no equivalencies would be applied to his poetry. For him, the form and meaning of the poem were the same thing. Purely speaking, you cannot talk about "meaning" in any analytical or comparative sense abstracted from the form of the poem, without ceasing
to discuss Blake's poetry. Blake wants you to experience his poetry
directly, stripped of preconceptions and analytical separation as much
as possible.

In a sense, Blake tests every person who reads some of his poetry.
If the reader has the rock clapped shut on his stony cave, and thinks
that to make sense of something he or she must find equivalencies for
it in the already-known world, then the Blake book will be shut. But
if the reader can sense the titanic forces, the large units that Blake
is working with, then the first step has been taken in meeting his
poetry on its own terms, and the rock will move a bit with each reading.
It has been my experience that Blake reaches first for an emotional
and psychic response, and often gets his message across at pre-
conscious levels first. When "Urizen stooped down / And took up water
from the river Jordan, pouring on / To Milton's brain the icy fluid
from his broad cold palm," the image makes itself known somewhere be-
tween the heart and the stomach first, before the intellectual ramifi-
cations finally make their way into the head (Milton, 19, 8-9). The
image of a star-stricken populace might haunt a reader for days, begging
for some concentrated consideration, after he or she has read "the
stars rain down prolific pains" in Europe (l. 15). Under consideration,
and making sure to read the line in context, it becomes apparent that
the stars rain down prolific pains because they are a part of the nat-
ural world. They suggest the natural limitations of man, and thus his
pains. Perhaps the reader may realize (or at least this reader real-
ized) that the image has been so haunting because it precisely defines
a predicament which he or she has felt, looking at stars. And then he or she may read carefully around the line, putting it in context, and see that the "nameless shadowy female," who speaks the line, laments just before this that "my roots are brandished in the heavens, my fruits in earth beneath / Surge, foam, and labour into life" (ll. 8-9). This inverted image of life in the natural world, where fruitfulness, whether it be childbearing or creativity, causes great pain, can suddenly be connected with man's pain as he looks up at the stars. The stars overflow man with a perception of the infinite--his roots draw from the awe and wonder of the sky, but his fruits are subject to the mundane limits of the natural world. This is a painful falling off from what can be to what is, felt by any human being who limits himself to the material world. It begins to become apparent why the image made such an impression in the first place--in one simple form it suggests some profound aspects of life on earth, which is what good poetry should do.

What is the aim of Blake's poetry? In a word, vision. For Blake, imaginative vision was a way of apprehending the world much superior to its small-scoped counterpart, scientific explanation. The protagonists of scientific explanation, men limited to the material world explained by Newton's laws, could take into account only natural causes and occurrences. Blake held out for another view. He said that "a natural cause only seems," and that "every natural effect has a spiritual cause." Blake directly addresses these "spiritual causes" which are visible to the man of vision, and in his art the natural world is usually used only as an emblematic representation of the spiritual.
History itself is a symbol of sorts in Blake, because it is the mate-
rial manifestation of spiritual dynamics. This is why "history repeats it­self," as they say. These "spiritual" patterns always exist, and the man of vision can see into this eternal realm, identifying the forms which run through all temporal history and experience. Blake said, "Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists. Really and Unchangeably." He wanted to show his fellow Englishmen the spiritual causes that he saw, in the same way that other seers with big minds, such as Ezekiel, Job, John of Patmos, and Britain's own Milton had done.

By "spiritual causes" Blake intended no mystical leap, nor does he seek communion with nature (which sets him apart from the other great poets of his age). For Blake, the human being is the center of the universe, and the human imagination is the spirit, the life force, the living God among all men. Man makes a mistake when he believes in inspirational agents or dieties outside the human. All that exists is each and every person's individual consciousness. This is the only possible reality. The imagination is the faculty that develops and informs the human consciousness. It is also the faculty which grants that consciousness its own individuated life, and thus the fullest release from the barren world of nature. For these reasons, imagination is the source of life, is life itself. This is no startlingly new reve­lation, but it is worth noting that these ideas were fully and clearly treated by Blake, and had a direct bearing on his art, a hundred years before Sartre or Stevens ever wrote.
For Blake's "spiritual causes," then, go no further than the human skin. These causes are simply the forms and patterns taken by the imagination. Since imagination is the active principle of the consciousness, its forms and patterns must necessarily make their way into the world of experience. All human experience is informed, at the fundamental level, by imagination, yet the imaginative patterns, the "spiritual causes" behind experience, are often unrecognizable and mysterious because the unbounded desires of the pure imagination are always compromised by the common sense and sophistication of the world of experience. Thus to see the pure, unfettered forms of the imagination is to identify the first causes of natural events, to expose the roots of man's most significant yearning and feelings. Man's mythologies have always explored this realm, though perhaps no writer of mythology was ever so conscious of the fact as Blake.

Blake's task as an artist was to consciously find the imaginative forms upon which his own experience was based, and thus make visible his own inner cosmology. The vague and unformed world of chaos outside the human consciousness haunts all his works, invoked in passages like "the ocean of voidness unfathomable" quoted above, or by figures such as the "nameless shadowy female" in his early prophetic writings, or Vala, the alluring female temptress, in the major prophecies. Against this veiled world Blake pitted his own concentrated imagination, working incessantly and carefully for years to write a canon of mythological poetry which would put his own entire world of experience into imaginative forms which could be seen.
By the paradox that creates art and prophecy, a complete and faithful rendering of what any great seer is able to see makes that vision interesting and communicable to others. But with Blake we are making a great mistake if we think he is showing us "the way things are" in some sort of diagrammatic or fixed way. In Blake there is never any fixed order for long. The only truth is the imaginative pattern of each individual's consciousness, and this pattern is subject to constant changes as it undergoes expansions, collapses, revisions. If we look in Blake for a fixed set of universal archetypes, we are suddenly trying to see through the point of view of an anarchistic, very smart, female-fearing Englishman who lived in the 19th century. It is certainly true that Blake raises some forms in his works which we might call archetypal. The takeover of rational intellect during a time of confused emotion, which occurs in The Four Zoas when Urizen takes control, is something that most human beings have experienced, for example. But Blake has so arranged it that we cannot simply carry off an abstract "archetypal form" from his poetry. It almost goes without saying that the same techniques which disrupt an immediate rational apprehension, discussed above, also disrupt any systematic or philosophical formulations about Blake. For example, the fact that Blake's mythological characters and cosmos are unique within literature helps keep us from formulating any comprehensive metaphysical systems from them. They are all too obviously the product of only one man's mind. The Zoas might suggest to us our own archetypes, but they should not in their specifics represent our own imaginative truths. Only an imaginative simpleton
would try to describe his or her own experience completely in terms of Tharmas and Enion, Luvah and Vala, etc.

Rather than giving us a universal order, Blake wants us to experience a process, something which is holy to him—the creative mind at work. He does this first of all by addressing his own inner cosmology, as I have mentioned. Showing what S. Foster Damon calls an affinity for "psychological realism," Blake gives us a fascinating view of the internal dynamics of an incredibly powerful mind, his own. But, even more important than this is the fact that Blake engages our minds, our imaginations, as well. Blake tries to make us experience the oneness of God, his God, directly, because to read him with understanding we must make a creative leap ourselves, and thus experience the creative process directly. Just as Blake's poetry discourages an immediate rational apprehension, it encourages a strong and immediate subjective response from the reader. Rather than lingering long and getting metaphysical with the Zoas, who come to us as complete strangers, we should experience the Zoas on an imaginative level and then move on, with the breadth and scope of our imagination enlarged, and our creative processes more fully awakened. We will, Blake must have hoped, move on to create our own characters, or identify more of the universal elements in characters around us.

Some of the same aspects of Blake's poetry which are designed to draw out the reader's imagination are also those most often labeled confusing, further evidence that Blake is testing his reader in a binary way. One says either yes or no to Blake, with not much room for hedg-
ing, because the imaginative leap is either made or it is not. One of the primary lures for the reader to leap is the riveting imagistic power of Blake's poetry. Blake was a painter and engraver by trade, and perhaps his strongest suit as a poet is his ability to make profound and detailed visions come to life on the page. One of my favorites is Urizen criss-crossing the world with his moist, cold web trailing behind him ("and the web is a female in embryo"), to finally bind the entire world in "The Net of Religion" (Urizen, ll. 456-69). This is poetry meant to be imaginatively seen. Blake knew very well the strength of his own images:

If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination, approaching them on the Fiery Charior of his Contemplative Thought, if he could Enter into Noah's Rainbow or into his bosom, or could make a Friend and Companion of one of these Images of Wonder, which always intreats him to leave mortal things (as he must know), then would he arise from his Grave, then would he meet the Lord in the Air and then he would be happy. 14

By imaginatively entering into Blake's images, we will experience the oneness of creative activity, and see as God as Blake saw him.

Confusingly juxtaposed to these striking and specific images, though, are the generalities and general descriptions that Blake often employs. Blake leads us into a passage's possibilities with his strong imagery, but he seldom completes the whole scene or situation. That is left to the reader; this is another method for drawing the reader into imaginative participation. On almost any page of Blake's prophetic writings phrases such as "lightnings of discontent," "a building of magnificence," or even "reptile forms" can be seen (The
Four Zoas, 26, 63; 27, 32; Urizen, l. 84). Here we must fill in our own particulars. We know from Blake's strong images that he could easily show us his "building of magnificence," but he wants us to participate and see our own. A context provided in part by the developed images shows us where to look for these particulars, what they are related to and how they come about, but it is the reader's imagination who will complete the poetry. Passages which require this kind of subjective response to become finished poetry can be found throughout Blake's canon.

It may already be evident that the purpose of this paper is to aid prospective students in reading Blake. A paper which pretends to add to the body of scholarly knowledge on Blake in any comprehensive way would require a perspective that can only be developed over many, many years of reflective, wide-ranging literary study. Such a study would lead us, first and foremost to the Bible, and also to other major religious works such as the Bhagavad-Gita, the Norse Eddas, and of course to Milton and other major English writers. While I have undertaken study in these directions, it would be ridiculous to assert that I have the perspective to add much knowledge to a body of critical study dominated by men such as Northrop Frye and Harold Bloom. Reading criticism on Blake, I have noticed that Blake either attracts great scholars or great eccentrics. Rather than add my name to the latter list, I am envisioning as my audience prospective readers of Blake who may need an introduction to this difficult poet. Any general comments I have made in this introduction have been toward this end, as I think
the first step in understanding Blake is to understand his artistic aims and techniques, and most especially his emphasis on imaginative reality. In the body of this paper I will become more specific, focusing my discussion through one of Blake's minor prophecies, *Europe*, written in 1794 or perhaps a year or two earlier. This work, as we will see, is very well suited to an introductory discussion of Blake's poetry.
NOTES


2 William Blake, The Poems of William Blake, ed. W.H. Stevenson (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1971). Most of my textual quotations are taken from this source, and I will hereafter note them parenthetically. The editor Stevenson’s annotated comments will be noted frequently in this paper.

3 The identification of the Antichrist is an important aspect of Blake’s major prophecies. Christ to Blake is the fully realized imaginative potential of man, thus the Antichrist is the systematizing, material aspect of consciousness which limits imaginative development. Chapter three of Jerusalem is largely given to an identification of the Antichrist.


5 See Blake’s preface to Milton.

6 Frye, p. 10.

7 Milton, 27, 44-45.


9 See The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, plate 11.

10 Frye notes that "imagination" was the "regular term used by Blake to denote man as an acting and perceiving being," p. 19.


13 Jerome J. McGann brought me close to this realization, saying "Blake’s art offers not an explanation of, but an occasion for experiencing, the oneness of man and God and their creations." "The Aim of Blake’s Prophecies and the Uses of Blake Criticism," in Blake’s Sublime Allegory, ed. Stuart Curran and Joseph Anthony Wittreich Jr. (University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), p. 4.
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1. Europe's Mythic Context: The Orc-Cycle

Europe helps fill out a part of Blake's mythology known as the Orc-cycle among critics. We cannot go any further without knowing this: Orc is a rebel, a representative free spirit who wars against any type of systematic restraint. His driving force is the unbonded desire of innocent energy. He is usually associated with red flames, and occasionally he is also given serpentine imagery, since the Biblical serpent is the advocate of desire over restraint. Four very important works which help to tell his story are Africa, America, Europe and Asia, which go together in that order to give a complete mythic history of the world.¹ This is the history of the archetypal conflict between Urizen and Orc—man's lawmaking and systematizing tendencies versus his revolutionary tendencies. Blake was obsessed with this conflict, especially in his early prophetic writings. One is beginning to understand Blake when he or she understands how the image of Urizen dividing the heavens, in the print entitled "Ancients of Days," which is the frontispiece to Europe, circumscribes the subject matter of much of Blake's early myth.

Africa begins with Adam and Noah watching "Urizen give his laws to the nations / By the hands of the children of Los." For Blake, creation and fall occur simultaneously.² Creation is the moment when individual consciousness begins to perceive and engage its world.³ One good example of this is when a baby learns that there is a difference between the self and non-self, and starts orienting itself to the world. But an even more comprehensive example occurs each and every moment that a human being takes a fresh look at the world, engaging it once again
with the active principle of the mind—imagination—so that it can be assimilated once again into the unenfolding pattern of the total self. In this sense, creation is usually occurring for those who won't accept a fixed view of the world for long, such as poets, while those who live life wholly according to dogma are hardly ever reborn.

Always coexistent with creation is the fall. This tragic predicament comes about because man's consciousness is necessarily limited in many ways to the finite world of nature in which he lives. Man depends on his five senses, on mundane forms, the physical facts of himself and the world around him. Moreover, man has a tendency to systematize and concretize his views of the world, so that he can build a house and know what to expect as he goes through time. Thus many of man's laws and philosophies are based on his limiting faculties—his dependence on the natural world and his tendency to rationalize it—rather than upon the infinite possibilities which are shown, and developed, by the imagination. In Blake, then, man is inherently fallen, and the above two lines suggest as much, with two original ancestors of mankind, Adam and Noah, looking on as Urizen gives his laws. Urizen's name is probably meant to suggest "your reason," and throughout Blake's work this character personifies man's rational tendencies to bind himself in already-known terms and create systematic viewpoints. This binding in inseparable from man's conscious activities, and in many ways it is necessary. As soon as man's consciousness begins (as soon as Adam and Noah begin looking), the tendency to make rigid laws comes into play.

The fact that Urizen's laws are given "by the hands of the children
of Los" further indicates their implicitness. Los will develop to
become the hero of Blake's canon, the poet-prophet who forms the world
into imaginative order. He represents the imagination, but here we must
use the term broadly, for Los is simply that part of the consciousness
which acts, the renewed energy with which man perceives his world.
The fact that Urizen's laws are given by the children of Los, then,
indicates that the acting consciousness must form Urizenic laws. Los,
in short, is sometimes perverted to the aims of Urizen.

As soon as Urizen's laws are put down, various terrors and repressions begin to inflict the human race. The race "began to wither, for
the healthy built / Secluded places, fearing the joys of love" (Africa,
11. 25-26). Philosophies such as Newton's and Locke's, based entirely,
as Blake saw it, on the apprehension of the natural world with the
senses, spread through the race from the hands of Urizen. Man's sense
of an original innocence, represented in the following by the sons of
Har, becomes increasingly obfuscated by the acting consciousness, repre-
sented by Los and his wife Enitharmon:

Thus the terrible race of Los and Enitharmon gave
Laws and religions to the sons of Har, binding them more
And more to earth; closing and restraining
Till a philosophy of the five senses was complete.

(Africa, 11. 44-47)

Man cannot attain a purely innocent state in which his desires are
thoroughly met by experience, yet he also cannot leave behind the haunting knowledge, provided by the imagination and dreams, that an innocent state of unbounded desires exists. This is the source of man's predica-
he knows a better, purer, more fully realized state exists, yet in the world of experience he can never exactly get to it. The desires which systematic viewpoints always repress leave a residual dissatisfaction in man that grows and grows until some sort of revolution occurs, and the systematic view is broken up and overturned by the energy it has been smothering. Countless examples of this from human life can be given, for this is a contrary which underlies all human existence, one of the fundamental patterns taken by man's consciousness and thus infesting his actions. At the personal level it might become manifest as a breakthrough in the understanding of a work of literature, to give a simple example. The old explanation doesn't quite encompass all the significant aspects of the work, and a nagging dissatisfaction grows until the old view is thrown out, and a new one adopted. It can be seen how this dialectic applies to intellectual history also. Over and over, man's knowledge is expanded, concretized in some sort of system, then broken apart and expanded again as new information comes in. The quintessential example of this can be seen in the science of physics, since physics is an intellectual activity which focuses entirely on the natural world.

At the political level, the Orc-Urizen conflict is evident in revolution. The desires of a certain segment of the population are not fulfilled under the fixed laws of the government, so that segment revolts in hopes of forming its own system. The factual starting point of America is the American Revolution, but it soon becomes clear that Blake goes far beyond the facts to show us the "spiritual causes" of
the revolution, as he further develops the conflict between fiery Orc and icy Urizen. Blake focuses initially on the "warlike men" on the American continent—Washington, Franklin, Paine, and Warren (ll. 3-5). But soon we begin to leave facts behind, as Blake begins to address the truths behind the facts. Britain’s hold on America is described as "a heavy iron chain / which descends link by link from Albion’s cliffs across the sea to bind / Brothers and sons of America (ll. 7-9). A vision of Orc rising in mid-Atlantic is given: "in the red clouds rose a wonder o’er the Atlantic sea— / Intense, naked, a human fire, fierce glowing as the wedge / Of iron heated in the furnace" (ll. 23-26). Orcean energy is shown to be the driving force behind the "terrible men" who stand on the shores of America, but Orc himself shows us that it is not just the freedom of the American Revolution which is being addressed in this poetic vision of archetypal freedom:

The morning comes, the night decays, the watchmen leave their stations;
The grave is burst, the spices shed, the linen wrapped up;
The bones of death, the covering clay, the sinews shrunk and dried
Reviving shake, inspiring move, breathing awakening;
Spring like redeemed captives when their bonds and bars are burst.
Let the slave grinding at the mill run out into the field;
Let him look up into the heavens and laugh in the bright air;
Let the enchained soul shut up in darkness and sighing,
Whose face has never seen a smile in thirty weary years,
Rise and look out—his chains are loose, his dungeon doors are open. (America, ll. 37-46)

This is not simply the freedom of American rebels from English rule. This is more comprehensive, an ideal vision of freedom which appeals to all who are bound in any way—to all of us, in other words. If
one is reading the passage sympathetically, trying to see the poetry, as Blake intended, he or she might run out into the field with the freed slave, and know freedom in the way Blake meant it to be known. By the end of America, the energy suggested by this freedom has slipped loose to create an incredible apocalypse: "But the five gates were consumed, and their bolts and hinges melted, / And the fierce flames burnt round the heavens and round the abodes of men" (ll. 225-226). This, of course, is much more than the American Revolution. It is the ideal revolution of consciousness, the absolute cleansing suggested but never really attained by political revolution. In this kind of cleansing, a rational dependence on the natural world, as perceived by the five senses, would be left behind, the barring "gates" to infinity consumed.

Europe, though, plunges right back into the painful bondage of the natural world. The "Praeludium" to the poem is mainly a lament, in the style of the Book of Job, by the nameless shadowy female. This character, who is purposefully unformed and vague in the poem, rises "from out of the breast of Orc," from within the Orc-cycle, in other words, to bemoan her painful generative life. She laments against the very same thing that Orc flames against—the painful binding of material circumstances.

The "Prophecy" portion of the work switches to a different frame of events, though the Orc-Urizen conflict is still the central dynamic. A link is immediately made between Jesus and the Orc-cycle with the opening lines, because they resemble the opening lines of Milton's "On
the Morning of Christ's Nativity": "The deep of winter came, / What
time the secret child / Descended through the orient gates of the
eternal day. / War ceased, and all the troops like shadows fled to
their abodes." Compare Milton's: "It was the winter wilde / While
the Heav'n-born childe / All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies ... /
No war, or Battails sound / Was heard the World around." The secret
child born to Blake's poem is Orc.

How does Jesus relate to the Orc-cycle? Here we must digress.
In Blake's fully developed myth religious history is visualized as the
seven eyes of God, seven phases of history named Lucifer, Moloch,
Elohim, Shaddai, Pachad, Jehovah, and Jesus (Jerusalem, 55, 23). These
phases show the successive domination of major religious viewpoints,
thus each is an Orc-cycle, a "plateau of imaginative development," as
Northrop Frye puts it. Each is a different view of God, yet since
God is man's fully developed imaginative potential each represents a
way that man has articulated fully his place in the world and seen as
God. The Elohim religion rose to replace the established Moloch church,
but it rose from the Moloch church, Moloch being the implanted Urizen
which had to be overthrown. The Jesus church replaced Jehovah's church,
and so on. To clarify the point, we might divide the Jesus phase into
Catholicism and its Orc-child, Protestantism, but notice that Blake did
not do this, since Luther was simply a rebel within Christ's church and
not a prophet of a new religion.

The time frame of Europe, then, is the 1800 years from the birth of
Jesus to Blake's present time. Blake, as well as other intellectuals of
his day, hoped that another cycle was completing itself in the late 18th century. The French Revolution and the American Revolution before it gave many the hope that a new age was dawning, an age in which the people would govern and no longer be bound by entrenched governments, especially aristocracies. Passages like the end of America indicate the extent to which Blake pursued this desire for a new age. In his headier moments, such as plate three of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake seems to equate his prophetic impact with that of Jesus. In Europe we shall begin to see how energetic optimism for a new age had to be channeled into a different form after the horrible failure of the French Revolution. Europe shows us the initial stages of Blake's transition away from the rebel Orc as a hero, and toward a more affirmative preoccupation with a creator—Los, the blacksmith who is a poet-prophet.

But neither Los, nor Orc, nor Urizen is the central character in Europe. Enitharmon, Los' female partner or emanation, is the central character, and after the announcement of the birth of Orc we are immediately pitted into the night of Enitharmon's pleasure. Enitharmon sees "her sons and daughters rise around" to meet in her "crystal house" (ll. 5-6). The festive atmosphere is increased as Los and Enitharmon both give speeches which try to arouse blissful energy. Los tells his sons to "strike the elemental strings! / Awake the thunders of the deep . . . Bind all the nourishing sweets of earth / To give us bliss" (ll. 13-14, 19-20). Enitharmon concentrates on Orc, who is her first born in this poem, as she tells him to "arise . . . from thy deep den" (l. 24). Her purpose is to see Orc "in the hour of bliss" (l. 28). As Orc
rises, Enitharmon descends "into his red light," and at this point

Enitharmon's speech takes a crucial turn, as she begins to seek

power with these musically pleasing interrogatives: "Who shall I
call? Who shall I send? / That woman, lovely woman, may have dominion"
(ll. 34-35). She now calls up Rintrah, one of her sons, much as she

had called Orc before. Rintrah is associated with power; he is the

"lion" who "his golden mane shakes" and whose "eyes rejoice because of

strength" (ll. 53-54). Enitharmon calls upon him in her desire for

power. But as her call to him reaches a high fervor, she goes to sleep.

In Enitharmon's dream (ll. 55 to 150) we take a step back from
the action in the crystal house, and get a segment of the mythic history

of the world which we have been following through Africa and America.
This is the story, we must remember, of how Urizen's influence--man's
inescapable tendency to formulate fixed viewpoints based on what he
already knows--spreads through humanity and incites Urizen's contrary,
Orc, the rebellious spirit. As usual, Blake does not offer us the
leniency of chronology during Enitharmon's dream--what dream does? It
begins with Albion's Angel, "smitten with his own plagues," fleeing,
presumably from the continent to England (l. 63). In England, the coun-
cil house of the Angels of Albion falls down upon them, but the "fiery
king" (Albion's Angel) and his followers rise from the ruins to seek
the "ancient temple serpent formed" (l. 72). They find this temple,
which by its characteristics is shown to be a Druid temple, and we get

a short creation sequence which helps show why religions like the Druids

come about (ll. 80-90). Albion's Angel (now called the "Ancient
Guardian") stands upon the Stone of Night, the temple's pulpit stone (l. 102). He sees Urizen on the Atlantic with "his brazen book / That kings and priests had copied on earth / Expanded from north to south" (ll. 104-106). We see images of how this Urizenie takeover has affected England, as grey, obfuscating mist rolls around the "churches, palaces, towers" of England, and the "youth of England" are "hid in gloom;"

The Stone of Night now overshadows all of London. But just as the Urizenie takeover seems complete, the cycle turns. The flames of Orc start to rise, and the Guardian of the Secret Codes (an agent of Urizen; anything secretive is pejorative and usually Urizenic in Blake) flees the flames and drags "his torments to the wilderness" (l. 126). The tension between "the clouds of Urizen" and the "flames of Orc" increases—the brake held harder as the engine is revved—and there are "howlings and hissings, shrieks and groans, and voices of despair" (ll. 138-140). It seems that something must give way. Among this all Enitharmon laughs in her sleep to see female dominion, her particular realm of the Urizenic takeover, fully established in England, with "Thou shalt not" stamped over the doors (l. 134). To end it all, the "red-limbed" Albion's Angel seizes the trumpet of revelation which would bring down the world, but in three blasts it doesn't work! (l. 145). It finally takes England's Newton to blow the blast, and the "angelic hosts of the sky" fall to their graves "yellow as leaves of autumn" (l. 148). Enitharmon awakens.

Eighteen hundred years have passed, the period from Jesus' birth to Blake's time. As if nothing at all had happened, Enitharmon again
calls her sons and daughters "to the sports of night / Within her crystal house" (ll. 155-56). But this time she calls up a series of sons and daughters who are given softer, more sensual and aesthetic characteristics than the warlike sons she called before. She also calls Oothoon and Theotormon, who we know from The Visions of the Daughters of Albion, and asks them to be happier (ll. 182-185).

Finally, she calls Orc again, to "give our mountains joy of thy red light" (l. 190). Morning breaks, and Orc's energy suddenly spreads prolifically, appearing in the vineyards of France (l. 200). Orcan violence finally breaks loose in a poem which has been full of Urizenic repression, as "furious terrors" fly around, chariots rage with bloody wheels, lions lash their tails, and "tigers couch upon the prey and suck the ruddy tide" (ll. 202-205). Enitharmon "groans and cries in anguish and dismay," and at the poem's end Los rises to call "all his sons to the strife of blood" (l. 209).

As might be expected, the Orc-Urizen strife continues into Asia: "The kings of Asia heard / The howl rise up from Europe" (ll. 1-2). The kings are startled at the "thick-flaming, thought-creating fires of Orc" (l. 6), and create some thoughts of their own on how to dull, and thus control, the populace:

Shall not the king call for famine from the heath,  
Nor the priest for pestilence from the fen?  
To restrain, to dismay, to thin  
The inhabitants of mountain and plain  
(ll. 9-12).

Ideas such as these continue for thirty of the poem's lines, as the
kings articulate ways to maintain their Urizenic establishments, to "turn man from his path," his desires (l. 23). As the kings' speech (ll. 9-32) makes evident, Blake saw kings and priests as men who often profited from, and thus propagated, systems of power. The implementation of these Urizenic measures has "killed" man at this point, by taking away his imaginative capabilities and desires: "For Adam, a mouldering skeleton, / Lay bleached on the Garden of Eden; / And Noah as white as snow / On the mountains of Ararat" (ll. 44-47).

The Orc-cycle is still working, though, as it always will, and the energy of desire begins to reassert itself against the kings' restraint. Orc's heat melts Urizen's "books of brass, iron, and gold" (l. 39). Life begins to come back as "forth from the dead dust rattling . . . the shivering clay breathes / And all flesh naked stands" (ll. 55-58). Man and woman are born anew, stripped of the external garments of Urizen's laws, and left with their naked selves to rely upon. The end of Asia shows us an integral relationship between life-denying forces and life-affirming forces, as joyous life seems to spring from the grave itself:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The grave shrieks with delight and shakes} \\
\text{Her hollow womb, and clasps the solid stem;} \\
\text{Her bosom swells with wild desire,} \\
\text{And mild and blood and glandous wine} \\
\text{In rivers rush and shout and dance} \\
\text{On mountain, dale and plain.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[\text{Urizen wept. \quad (ll. 59-64)}\]

Why does Urizen weep? Probably because an adversary who he cannot counter is finally rising in Blake's work. A careful look at Asia will show a subtle shift in Blake's attitude toward the Orc cycle. Orc is
still the serpent of fiery flame who can melt Urizen's books with his heat, but the powers of Urizen's adversary seem to have expanded into other realms as well. When, for example, did the agent of the raging consumption which occurs at the ends of America and Europe ever become "thought-creating"? And in the very end of the poem, quoted above, a joyous and affirmative agent of desire seems to be countering Urizen, not the destructive rebel we are accustomed to.

This is artistic documentation of Blake's realization that Orc simply would not work as a focal point for his expanding vision. Orc and Urizen are contraries which always exist in the human consciousness, and the material world, perceived by the five senses and fixed by the rational mind, will always be polarized accordingly. We either adhere to material circumstances or we reject them, becoming either Urizen's advocate or Orc's, but either choice still locks us into the "vegetative" cycle, the natural world in which these circumstances occur. Orc represents only a rebellion against circumstances, and not a reforming or creation of new circumstances. The violence with which Orc explodes at the end of America and Europe shows that Orcean energy goes hand in hand with Urizenic energy; they are opposite extremes of a great and senseless cycle which cannot be stopped by anyone limited to the circumstances of the material world. The "real" world will only frustrate the sensitive and imaginative man, unless he directs his attention to the imaginative forms of reality which unfold independent of time and space. Asia shows Blake stretching the characteristics of Orc because the poet was beginning to need an affirmative hero who could create a
new reality—a prophet and not a rebel. This is why Los rises at the end of Europe, and this is why Urizen weeps at the end of Asia, as an enemy much more deadly to him than the simple rebel begins to surface.
NOTES

1 Africa and Asia go together to form The Song of Los, but I have separated them here to show the chronological sequence which Blake intended.

2 Frye points out that this is an important key to understanding Blake, Fearful Symmetry, p. 41. The Book of Urizen gives the most vivid rendition of this, as Los, with much "trembling and howling and dismay," creates Urizen, who is already bound by chains and by his own painful physical self, at birth.

3 This image has more resonance if one knows the description of Orc's chain in The Book of Urizen: "A tightening girdle grew / Around his bosom. In sobbings / He burst 'the girdle in twain; / But still another girdle / Oppressed his bosom . . . / These falling down on the rock / Into an iron chain in each other link by link locked" (11. 379-390).

4 Frye, pp. 201-202, Fearful Symmetry, has an excellent discussion on "the connection far deeper than sound between revolution and revelation." This connection is never more apparent than at the end of America, when the Orcean energy has apparently led us to the brink of apocalypse. Or is it only the first step toward apocalypse--annihilation of the natural world--that Orc has produced here?

5 Fearful Symmetry, p. 226.
2. Europe in Time and Space

It may seem paradoxical that to better understand the myth which Blake spins we should learn some hard historical fact, but writing about Blake is full of paradoxes. It is true that Blake was concerned primarily with what one critic calls the "mythic ordering principle"--the archetypal patterns of the freed imagination. Blake was primarily concerned with these patterns because he saw them as initial causes, the "spiritual causes" of natural events. But it is also true that natural events are the only tangible representation of these underlying causes. The underlying patterns of history can be identified only because historical specifics occur (especially because they recur). Thus learning the historical specifics in Blake is like learning part of his alphabet, identifying the building blocks that he will use to address forms far beyond, and far more comprehensive than, the basic representational units. As a practical aid, historical specifics in Blake's work will often serve as a real-world cross-reference to concretize an archetype which the poet is exposing.

There is also a less theoretical, and more important, reason for the significance of the historical context in Blake's work. Blake lived in a world darkened by famine, tyranny, beheadings, and a budding industrial complex which was already ruthless and dirty. The poet was deeply moved to help. We can never forget this aspect of Blake's work. He saw himself as a prophet for his people, and I would venture to say that the primary reason he wrote was "the desire of raising other men into the perception of the infinite" (The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, ll. 60-61). Blake's letters show that he always desperately hoped for
readers who would enter into his visions of spiritual causes, and awaken within themselves sensibilities which might help change some of the oppressive conditions of the natural world. In Europe there are allusions to current political events, and many of Blake's images in the illuminations to the poem come from the political cartoons of 1792-93. Both these facts suggest Blake's desire for popular appeal and immediate impact. This desire for wide acceptance, which the poet never got, is evident to the end of Blake's canon, as the beginnings of each chapter of Jerusalem show.

In Blake's earlier prophetic writings, written in a very dynamic historical period, the poet's artistic dependence on social events was especially strong. Without a doubt, the American and French Revolutions had helped Blake to identify the Orc-Urizen conflict in man, not intellectual subjects that they were, and they helped him to write about it as well. In works such as The French Revolution, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, America, and Europe many real-world events or situations--revolution, or slavery, for example--form the starting point for the art, because at that time, before the purely mythic forms had solidified in the poet's mind, these titanic historical events were the window through which Blake looked.

In these early works Blake struck a balance between historical accuracy and imaginative truth, rendering historical fact but giving it more universal significance with the prophetic power of his imagination. Even in this early period we can see the balance tipping from "historical" myth to "pure" myth, to borrow adjectives from W.H.
The French Revolution is placed very securely in time and space, taking place mainly in the King of France's chambers during the early stages of the revolution. Its characters are real people whose descriptions are nonetheless given very imaginative twists. America was written at further remove from the actual historical events, and in it we see characters such as Orc and Albion's Angel, imaginative creations. Still, the American Revolution and the energy surrounding it form the starting point for the poem. Europe is in many ways very topical, yet the mythic stories have become so developed that real-world events in the poem are simply distillations in time and space of the imaginative truths which are its central focus. We should not, then, overemphasize the importance of historical facts in Europe, or in any of Blake's works. Blake was not writing history; he was writing prophetic poetry, and he tended further and further away from real-world facts as he became a better poet. Nevertheless, a discussion of the historical context of a work such as Europe can only add comprehension to this enigmatic poem.

It is Urizen, not the divine child Orc, who seems in control through the greater part of Europe, and this probably reflects the political mood in England at the time Blake wrote the poem. The government of England had been stunned by the loss of the American Colonies, a fact which is probably symbolized by the collapse of the council house upon Albion's Angels (Europe, 11. 66-67). When the French Revolution began, an attitude of conservative reaction spread through England,
especially among those in power, as the government, led by George III and warlike prime minister William Pitt, clenched its Urizenic claws in hopes of avoiding its own demise. One week after the French Convention guillotined Louis XVI, the British Parliament declared war on the new government of France. Armies were mobilized, opposition to the government was dangerous, and an attitude of reactionary accusation against any revolutionary thought ran through England. I have already mentioned how Blake and other intellectuals of his day saw immense possibility in the French Revolution. It is easy to see, then, how the government's Urizenic strengthening must have run against the grain of Blake, for whom any kind of thought-shutting was tantamount to murdering babies.

It is highly likely that George III and Pitt are represented pictorially in plates 11 and 5. The king sits on a gothic throne of power with bat-like wings spread. Two angels who have serpentine bottoms to their gowns cross scepters in front of him, and the tips of the scepters are the fleur-de-lis used in English caricature prints of the day as a French royalist symbol. Pitt is shown with skin of scaly armour, the same two angels behind him giving the warrior looks of worship and admiration. He holds a crusader's sword with a crossed handle, the cross helping us make a connection between accusatory Christianity and England's contemporary government—both are rigid and righteous Urizenic systems aimed at restraining desire.

Social repression, poverty, and violence—the costs, as Blake saw it, of these warlike leader's policies to their people—are evident
throughout Europe. It is interesting that these conditions are rendered especially in the illuminated designs. Blake wanted to give us a cross-reference to the text so that we could make a certain connection between the desire-restraint conflict, dealt with explicitly in the textual story of Orc, Enitharmon, Urizen, and Albion's Angel, and the political and domestic situation depicted in the illuminations. This is also further evidence of his desire for popular appeal, as the first and most noticeable thing about many pages of the poem is an image suggesting current domestic strife.

Plates six and seven give us a very profound imagistic commentary on the state of affairs brought about by this repressive thinking in England. Plate six shows two women weeping over a dead child, with a huge black kettle boiling in a dense space behind them. A gloss to this design by George Cumberland, a friend of Blake's, solidifies the suggestions of cannibalism, in a quote taken from Dryden's "Indian Emperor": "Famine so fierce that what's denied man's use / Even deadly plants and herbs of poisonous juice / Will hunger eat--and to prolong our breath / We greedily devour our certain death." Plate seven is a marvelous piece of intuitive symbolism by Blake. Cumberland inscribes it with the title "Plague," and the scene suggests the great plague which devastated London in 1665, an event which was "emblematic of a collapsing order," David Erdman tells us. The scene shows a darkly dressed bellman (the bell calls the death cart) walking past the door of a sealed and marked house. Beside him, a man and woman slump weakly, and behind him a woman raises her hands to heaven. The inscription on
the door says "Lord have mercy on us" over a cross. The four characters outside the door have green-hued skin—they too will die soon, regardless of the fact that the government has tried to mark off the limits of plague. The inscription on the door and the woman pleading to the Lord for help are very ironic commentaries on the situation. No help will come from the sky, and no governmental inscriptions or barriers will stop the spreading sickness. Notice that neither plate is necessarily an accurate representation of the situation in England at the time. There was no plague in 1792, and probably not many instances of cannibalism. The images on the plate simply suggest the direction England was heading under its Urizenic leaders, and, more importantly, the dark mood that the country's current policies brought about among its people.

Besides social repression and war, another aspect of Urizen's takeover in Europe is what Blake calls "female dominion." Female power is something which haunts Blake's entire canon, focusing finally in the figure of Vala, "the alluring female," who appears in the major prophecies. Much of the reason for this probably lies in Blake's own experience—the poet's marital problems are mentioned often by critics. In Europe, however, the particular emphasis on female will may have a basis in the political situation as well. Enitharmon, with her luxury-loving attitudes and her desire for tyrannical dominion, strongly suggests the Queen of France, Marie Antoinette, a figure whose authoritarian ignorance would have incensed Blake. David Erdman also has pointed out that King George's wife Queen Charlotte had assumed charge...
of the royal household after the king's insanity in 1788, and that "she was subsequently believed to control the flow of patronage and rule the Empire through Pitt." Thus not only the Queen of France but also the Queen of England would have been the target of Blake's tyrade against "female dominion," both being objects of the poet's general disgust with repressive authoritarian rule. Blake probably meant to suggest these two queens in the pair of angels who appear, along with Pitt and King George III, on plates 5 and 11.

The Urizenic mood permeates Europe until the very end, when the Orcean energy finally spills out in a bloody eruption:

The sun glowed fiery red!
The furious terrors flew around
On golden chariots raging, with red wheels dropping with blood;
The lions lash their wrathful tails;
The tigers couch upon the prey and such the ruddy tide;
And Enitharmon groans and cries in anguish and dismay.

(11. 201-206)

The violent and unintelligent nature of this surge of power suggests the weakness, not the strength, of Orc as an agent of apocalypse. This uncomplimentary view of Orcean energy may very well be influenced by the failure of the French Revolution. Just as the American and French Revolutions helped Blake discern the Orc-Urizen conflict and the immense possibilities in rejecting material systems, so the failure of the French Revolution probably taught another lesson to Blake: that simple rebellion in the material world would not be enough. As a new power system set itself up in France, armed with a guillotine, and began killing innocent people, Blake must have realized that the real world,
at least his real world, would never match the visionary possibilities
which he himself knew to exist. Blake abandoned Orc as an apocalyptic
hero, and adopted Los, a hero who could lead us to agonizing mental
revolution in the winepresses of Luvah, and even out the other side.
NOTES


2. Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p. 4, speaks of Blake's buoyant hope of being understood in his own time, which is evident in his letters.

3. David Erdman, Prophet vs. Empire, p. 202, has done some very good research to show that Blake derived many of his images in Europe from the cartoons of James Gilray, one of the most prominent political cartoonists of his day.


5. Erdman, Prophet vs. Empire, p. 211.


9. S. Foster Damon provides the glosses for each plate in his William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), p. 350. Erdman, in Prophet vs. Empire, p. 220, comments that either George Cumberland understood Europe very well, or he was coached by Blake himself when he added his glosses. The glosses were added to a single copy which now appears in the British Museum, and they are "mostly in the form of quotations from Blake's household volume, Bysshe's anthology," Erdman tells us.


11. W.H. Stevenson, for example, in commentary on The Four Zoas, mentions that "Enitharmon may be derived from Catherine," Blake's wife, and that "Blake appears to have worked into the narrative of Los and his counterpart Enitharmon some reflections derived from his married life." Blake: The Complete Poems, 289. Emily Hamblen, in her book On the Minor Prophecies of William Blake (New York: Haskell House, 1968), goes so far as to pronounce Blake's marriage to Catherine a mistake. (Noted by S. Foster Damon in the introduction to this book, p. x.)

12. Erdman, Prophet vs. Empire, p. 221.
3. The Structure of the Other Side

One difficulty students of Blake may have is in discerning the structural unity in his works, and following the sometimes abrupt transitions between various parts of a work. The third chapter of Jerusalem, for example, begins with an argumentative exposition against "natural religion." Then comes a poem, in quatrains, which denounces western culture's glorification of war. As the chapter proper begins, Los is weeping over the fallen Albion. At line eight we get an elaboration of how the children of Los appear to the fourfold eye. At line 15, Los is building Golgonooza, his city of art. Soon after we get an exposition on the "Divine Vision" in every man. At line 15 of the next plate Albion's spectre rises over him and announces "I am God." In less than four plates Blake has employed narrative, expository, descriptive, and dramatic modes in his writing, shifting scenes very rapidly and without transitions. In Book One of Milton, to give another example, Milton operates in four different realms at once, and Blake switches between these realms freely, depicting the great poet in wildly varying situations: walking in heaven, lying sick under the care of the Daughters of Beulah, and coming through Blake's shoe. Examples like this may, of course, be found throughout Blake's canon, so many, in fact, that these various and sharp transitions might be called Blake's most characteristic structural element.

To begin to understand Blake's structural principles it must first be mentioned again that Blake is not beholden to any continuity through time and space. We should be used to this in our great artists. Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound," for example, is a series of dramatic
interchanges which strikes an imaginative reality independent of time and space. The problem Blake gives readers, as I mentioned in the introduction to this paper, is that he shows a nearly complete aversion, through all his major works, to traditional narrative continuity, seeing such continuity as part of the ordered world of experience which would, if he allowed it, smother his artistic intentions.

But what is Blake beholden to when it comes to arranging the structure of his works? Blake's task, as I have said, was to put as much as possible of his complete experience into conscious form, and this, for a poet who concentrated so much on what we now call the psychological experiences of himself and others, meant accounting for not just that which was already known (Urizen can do that), but also for the unknown elements of human experience—the subconscious or non-conscious or whatever we may call the entire realm which is outside the grasp of the conscious mind. Blake worked to give meaning to this chaotic realm, to put it into imaginative forms recognizable by the conscious mind. C.G. Jung would have admired Blake's artistic intentions. Jung, in his essay "Answer to Job," says that for man to know himself

consciousness must confront the unconscious the non-conscious and a balance between the opposites must be found. As this is not possible through logic, one is dependent on symbols which make the irrational union of opposites possible. They are produced spontaneously by the unconscious and are amplified by the conscious mind. . . . The encounter between conscious and unconscious has to ensure that the light which shines in the darkness is not only comprehended by the darkness, but comprehends it. The filius solis et luna is the symbol of the union of opposites as well as the catalyst of their union.
This is good commentary on the nature of Blake's work—that Blake used symbolic imagery to unite the known with the unknown, or less understood, realms of human experience should be evident to anyone who has concentrated on even one plate of his work. Jung goes on to offer a theoretical correlative for something which I have often felt, reading Blake, when he postulates that

there is in the unconscious an archetype of wholeness, which manifests itself spontaneously in dreams, etc., and a tendency, independent of the conscious will, to relate other archetypes to this center. Consequently, it does not seem improbable that the archetype of wholeness occupies such a central position which approximates it to the God-image.

For Blake, it was the imagination that occupied this central position, and that could be used as a means to bring about the encounter between the conscious and non-conscious, to fill out the "archetype of wholeness" that Jung describes. I have often sensed in Blake's poetry the attempt to establish psychic equilibrium according to a unity beyond man's rational cognizance. Rather than a connection of cause and effect, or narrative or spatial continuity between subsequent parts of a work, the parts of Blake's works are related according to their relationship to the "wholeness," the unified image of the self, which the imagination, advocate of both the conscious and the non-conscious aspects of mental experience, is trying to assemble. Dreams and day-dreams serve a similar function, providing an unrestricted (or much less restricted) realm for the mind in which imbalances may be addressed, and experiences assimilated into the pattern of the total self of we consciously know only a part. Blake tried to bring this unrestricted
realm, the free play of the innocent imagination, into conscious form (into experience), sacrificing as little as possible of the original unbounded desires of the whole mind. This helps explain the great resemblance in transition and structure between Blake's art and dreams.

Over the course of his writing career Blake always tended toward completion, wholeness. He finished the *Songs of Innocence* with the *Songs of Experience*. His minor prophecies can be seen as one body of literature which explores the archetype imaged in the frontispiece to *Europe*, Urizen dividing the heavens with his compass. Each minor prophecy helps fill out the entire archetypal conflict by treating one or two of its aspects. The *Book of Urizen*, for example, is concerned with Blake's version of creation-fall, and how man lives because of this fall, evident in Urizen's lawmaking and his wrapping the world in the "Net of Religion" (plate 25). With *The Four Zoas* and thereafter Blake finally found his epic voice, which allowed him to treat all the aspects of human consciousness, or as much as he cared to see of it (Blake didn't use toothbrushes in his poems), within one work. *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem* address the totality of human experience, as each gives a complete mythic story of man, showing the interrelationship of all the significant dynamics— all the "spiritual causes"—within the human psyche. For Blake, the broad outline of this total human experience was the same as the Bible's outline: creation, fall, struggle, and redemption.³ We find that each of Blake's epic poems renders these archetypal phases of experience, and explores the relationship of each phase to a central archetype, the unified man. Blake had to abandon the
Orc-cycle as a comprehensive myth because it did not offer this unification. The early prophecies lack redemption, offering instead only the destructiveness of Orc. This probably explains the observations of one critic who notes, rightly I think, an aura of discontent and a certain unfinished nature to Blake's early prophetic writings. Blake had taken upon himself a great task—to create a complete and accurate mythic cosmos—and during his early prophetic writing he simply lacked the epic machinery to bring this entire cosmos about, even though some of its giant forms were already starting to loom before him.

One valuable aid I have found in understanding the structure of Blake's works is one of the poet's paintings entitled "The Last Judgment." Kathleen Raine calls this painting "the nearest Blake came to a visual depiction of his spiritual cosmos." The painting, of which I have seen only a black and white reproduction, shows a central outline which resembles a human skull. At the center of the cerebellum sits Christ on his throne of judgement, with trumpeters and angelic hosts radiating from him. Below the throne are the "labors of the resurrection," as Blake himself described it, with an underworld inhabited by a seven-headed figure at the very bottom of the painting, and above that trumpeters and worshippers arising amidst cloud and flames toward the throne. To the left of Christ human figures fall away toward the underworld, some wrapped in serpents, and to the right lighter figures rise toward the throne. The figures, of which there are well over a hundred in different contortions and conditions, either rising or falling, occupy various spaces which are outlined by cloud, rock, or
sinewy flames. Some of these spaces go back very far, as distant palaces, steeples, and people may be seen in them.

The various spaces and the figures occupying them are flowing, one into another, sucked by an unearthly wind in a pattern organized around the central Christ figure in such a way that an absolute unity of the conditions which the figures represent is suggested. Blake has revealed here his vision of the whole human psyche, in which the potentialities for becoming a falling demon, a trumpeting angel, part of an angry mob, a host in well-lit heaven, or a sufferer in schizophrenic hell coexist, linked and balanced in a flowing pattern which begins and ends at Christ's throne in the center of the skull.

The aid, for me, comes in this assertion of unity over the various psychic conditions depicted. In any of his prophetic works Blake might treat these states one after another with very little transition or explanation (For a good example of Blake shifting between various psychic states, if you don't know what I mean, read the first three plates of The Four Zoas.) We struggle for a unifying concept, but no concept will unify this phantasmagoria of emotion and insight. Only an imaginative apprehension will make us quit trying to organize, as we enter into the flow of Blake's work, so to speak, rather than taking an abstract view of it. Only by becoming involved with the characters and situations in Blake's art can we begin to sense the unity, the whole mind at work behind the various structural shifts. By reading the characters sympathetically, one begins to see how the actions and emotions and psychic states of all Blake's characters are interrelated
and, taken together, add up to a unified vision of the constituents and dynamics of all significant human experience as seen by Blake. "A Vision of the Last Judgement" suggests this to me, with its various metamorphosing figures and spaces flowing around a form which is divine, and human.

You may be wondering, as I presently am, how this general discussion applies to our little poem Europe. Europe, first of all, offers an interesting case study in how Blake structures his works to reveal the roots of human (his own) experience. Harold Bloom calls Europe Blake's most experimental poem of middle length, with its "conscious speed and glancing movement." This is because the poet was showing signs of leaving behind the narrower and more topical subject matter of his early prophetic writings, and beginning to employ structural techniques which he later brought to matriculation in his epic works.

Thematically the poem shows characteristics of both the minor prophecies and major prophecies, since it treats, without resolution, only isolated segments of the Orc-Urizen conflict—the takeover of the female will, and England's social repression—yet treats them in such a way that a nearly complete mythic context for these isolated manifestations is provided, in Enitharmon's dream. Structurally this tendency toward wholeness, the bigger story, is reflected in the diverse ways in which the poem gets its message across. Blake's vision is starting to break into its profuse variety, for there is a Preface, Praeludium, and Prophecy to the work, containing four different imaginative stories. There are
illuminated plates to consider as well--this is one of Blake's most illustrated works. All these parts fit together to give us a complete story of female dominion, much commentary on social repression, an exploration of the relationship between the two, and a complete mythic context for it all, from creation to apocalypse.

Further, *Europe* offers a very good example of the Jungian meeting of the conscious and the non-conscious, such a good example, in fact, that it seems likely that Blake was aware while writing this poem, and in his own ways addressing, this process of assimilating the non-conscious which he was undertaking. The theme of inversion is evident throughout the poem, as if Blake tries to tell us that he is turning things inside out, unhinging the normal rational consciousness to give us the rest of the picture, the other side. Just as Jung speaks of the *filius solis et lunae* as "the symbol of the union of opposites as well as the catalyst of their union," so Blake lets us know early in the prophecy that Los, who is usually a sun god (his name may be derived from *sol*), is "possessor of the moon" in this poem (l. 7). The poem occurs at night, "the night of Enitharmon's pleasure," and the birth of Orc with which the prophecy begins occurs in the deep of winter. Blake is obviously preparing us for an excursion away from the normal daylight consciousness, into the darker and dreamier realms inhabited by the rest of the mind.

Related to this are the many grotesque, inverted, or otherwise horrible images presented in the poem's illuminated designs. Plate One shows a stabbing about to happen, as the assailant waits in a cave.
Plate two depicts a bald figure strangling two others, seemingly suspended in dark air, while a third flees. Plate three shows a strong-winged angel horizontal in the air, with her head down and hair hanging as if in shame. Her gown forms a serpent-like tail between her legs.

I have already mentioned, in chapter two, the nature of plates five, six, seven, and eleven. In all these plates Blake is releasing chthonic images from the subconscious, nightmarish images which are usually repressed and denied by the awake, rational mind, but nonetheless represent experiences and attitudes from the dark side of the psyche which should be assimilated into man's complete view of himself.

The subconscious, then, shall be released in this poem, and in fact the poem becomes a testing ground for the Blakean techniques which later, in the epic poems, allow the release more completely. We should not be surprised that, in two of the twelve extant copies of the poem, *Europe* begins with a preface that features an encounter between the author and a fairy sitting on a "streaked tulip" (l. 7, preface). This is an uncommon motif in Blake's writings, though fairies were also on his mind when he wrote *The Song of Los*, with the print entitled "The King and Queen of Fairies" showing two tiny observers under the stars between Africa and Asia. Normally we could characterize Blake's work as strictly third person (parts of *Milton* and the beginnings of each chapter of *Jerusalem* are exceptions). It is very uncharacteristic for the poet to use a first person protagonist who actually speaks with one of his creations, which is what happens in *Europe*'s preface. This, placed as it is at the beginning of the work, prepares us for the confronta-
tion between the conscious mind, represented by the first person protagonist, and the non-conscious mind, reachable by the imagination, which the fairy represents. When the fairy tells the author "I will write a book on leaves of flowers," we should be ready for something from our imagination's side.

With the Praeludium of the poem we are propelled into third person myth concerning Orc. More specifically, this is a continuation of the story of the horrific courtship between Orc and the nameless shadowy female. The affair began in America, where Orc raped the nameless female, and of course the occurrence of the segment in Europe helps tie the two works together as part of the same myth. More importantly, the Praeludium helps set the tone for the work to follow. If we had jumped directly from the preface, which seems rather light-hearted and gay, into the Prophecy portion of Europe, we might have made the mistake of thinking that the night of Enitharmon's pleasure would be a genuine good time. But with the placement of the nameless shadowy female's lament of the conditions of generative life like an overture at the beginning of the work, no such mistake should be made. The nameless female clearly sets forth, before we go any further, the pain felt by humans who are inverted and trapped in the Orc-cycle.

Though Orc is still a character, and the Orc-cycle still an essential theme, we find ourselves in a mythological story whose specifics are very different when the Prophecy proper begins. This dreamlike shift is characteristic of all Blake's works. Superficially the Praeludium and Prophecy seem very different, but essentially they are
about the same thing: the pitfalls of life in the Orc-cycle. Both create the same general emotion in regard to generative life—frustration and fear. Notice that Enitharmon, in the Prophecy, ends up groaning and crying "in anguish and dismay," much like her predecessor in the Praeludium. Los, in the end of the poem, puts on the "snaky thunders" of the nameless shadowy female (ll. 206-207). Thus a somewhat parallel relationship between the Praeludium and Prophecy is established, as we see the dynamics of the first finally surface in the latter, showing us that the mythic context set forth in the Praeludium has been operative the whole time, a shadow world alongside the other.

In a sense, the Praeludium forms a background—the myth behind the myth—for the Prophecy, which is much more elaborate in its specifics and much more topical. As we saw in chapter two, Blake probably intended that Europe have a direct social impact, a current readership at publication. By putting the Praeludium before his Prophecy, Blake was trying in part to ensure that his readers would understand the timeless nature of his work as well. The Praeludium gives us a mythic story which is not specifically connected to the time and setting of the "night of Enitharmon's pleasure," but which nonetheless forms essential background to help us see the relevance of all the occurrences in this night. Both parts go together to give the poem's themes their full development.

Blake helps us make the transition from Praeludium to Prophecy by giving birth to Orc at the beginning of the latter. Orc is given bodily form in Enitharmon's night, as he "descended through the orient gates of the eternal day" (l. 3). With the word "descended" we cannot
help but think of Ore as coming from a more spiritual realm into bodily form. Within the context of Europe, the Prophecy portion is more bodily because it is more specifically grounded in time and space than the Praeludium. In the same way that Milton can travel four realms at once, Orc occupies different realms in the same work, so that the different mythic contexts which characterize his predicament may be shown.

After the birth of Orc we immediately, with no more transition than the word "then," plunge into Enitharmon's night, which forms the present time in Europe's narrative. This night is made up mainly of a series of calls that the woman makes to her children. Her first call is to Orc; Enitharmon says to the demon that she would like to see him, "now thou art bound" (l. 27). Keeping in mind the context of the nameless shadowy female's lament, we should realize that this is the same as saying "now thou art born," since Orc, the archetypal representative of the "vigorous progeny of fires," has been "stamped" with "solid form"--his physical body (l. 23, Praeludium). Enitharmon's subsequent calls to her children are the reverberations, running through the poem like water-ripples, of her original call to the primal Orc. She wants all her progeny to rise and give their energy into her service. The call to Orc sets forth the archetypal situation; the subsequent calls to Rintrah, Palamabron, Ethinthus, etc. relate more specifically to the temporal and spatial context of Enitharmon's night. Blake's use of Orc as a backdrop becomes evident when Enitharmon calls her next son: "Arise, O Rintrah, eldest born, second to none but Orc" (l. 43, my italics). How can Rintrah be "eldest born" when Orc is "first born of Enitharmon"?
(1. 25) It will seem schizophrenic unless we are able to visualize one mythic context within another. Orc is everyone's eldest born because he is the primal archetype of bound energy. Rintrah is a manifestation of this Orcean dynamic who belongs more specifically in Enitharmon's family. He is the "eldest born" within that narrower context. The placement of the call to Orc before the long series of subsequent calls helps point out that the Orcean energy is an underlying archetype which runs through the entire situation.

As Enitharmon goes on calling her children, both before and after her dream, Orc does nothing active again until the end of the poem, when "morning oped the eastern gate" and his violence is unleashed. Thus the Orcean energy is like a seed planted in the beginning of the Prophecy, coaxed into maturity by Enitharmon's luxury-loving attitudes and her irresponsible pleas for aid, to finally surface and explode with full vigor in the end of the poem.

With Enitharmon's dream we get a look inside the seed, seeing more mythic background of the Orc-Urizen conflict. This is a segment from still another strain of the myth, the third Orc-myth that we have seen in this poem. Again, the specifics of this story are different from the other two, but the essential dynamic is that of the Orc-Urizen conflict, repression versus revolution. This portion of myth involves the same characters as the Prophecy portion of America--Albion's Angel (Urizen's British representative) and Orc. It deals with the spread of tyranny into England, and the end brought about by Newton's trump of doom. Thus the placement of the dream in the center of Enitharmon's night gives a
surrounding social context to the night itself. We begin to see the activities in the "crystal house" as a commentary upon the festive preoccupations of many of London's citizens, those who have benefited from the entrenched rule of the Empire.

The beginning of the dream itself is an interesting and helpful study in Blakean structure and time reference. It is in the dream's present time that the council house falls on the heads of Albion's Angels (ll. 66-67). But when the king begins to seek, and find, his "ancient temple, serpent-formed," Blake is giving us, simply by describing the nature of the ancient temple, some historical background which helps explain why the council house fell down. We see that this was, in ancient times, a temple of nature worshippers. Suddenly a connection has been made between Albion's Angels, so lately under the (symbolized) roof of Parliament, and the Druidic religion, which was the only ancient religion eighteenth century scholars knew to have existed in England. At the transitional word "when" we take a step further back to a creation sequence (one of Blake's most compelling and succinct creation passages, I think) which gives background as to why natural religions and tyrannical rulers occur (ll. 80-93). Thus Blake has shifted—even smoothly for him, since he actually maintains a narrative continuity in this passage—from symbolized historical fact, to socio-historic context and finally to the archetype enveloping it all: creation-fall. Often in his works Blake does the same kind of thing, lifting subsequent curtains behind the stage to show causes behind causes, without the benefit of narrative continuity. Passages such as this, then, may give
us easy initial acces to the techniques which Blake later employed fully and without hesitation in his major works.

The cosmic context provided by Enitharmon's dream is completed as Newton blows the trump of doom. Creation has led to revelation, the end. An Orc-cycle has been completed in the dream, with all the accompanying pestilence and obfuscation usually found when Urizen takes over (see ll. 107-142). The dream may be seen as an omen to Enitharmon. Remember that Orc was born at the beginning of the Prophecy. Midway through the Prophecy, the dream provides an adumbration that Orc's potentiality will be realized—that an apocalypse, the cycle's end, is yet to come.

Besides the various parts of the poem's text, we should also consider the general placement of the illuminated designs as an important part of the structural makeup. In Europe the plates are absolutely inseperable from the text, since in most cases (the preface which exists in two of twelve copies is the only exception) the poetry is written across the illuminated plate, and is often intertwined with the design.

The first thing to realize about the illuminations (and this is a general rule throughout Blake's illuminated works) is that they do not necessarily correspond in a strict way to the text which they accompany. In Europe this is especially true of the Praeludium, and less true in the Prophecy portion of the work. On the Praeludium's first plate, the design shows an assailant waiting with dagger in a cave, while a travelling pilgrim comes around the corner unawares. The text, however, gives us the lament of the nameless shadowy female. On the next page, the
lament continues, while the design shows a strangling scene—one grotesque figure strangling two others while a third flees.

The relationship between text and design in the Praeludium underscores the structural effect Blake intended with this part of his work. Rather than developing a specific narrative, the Praeludium sets forth general conditions and an emotional tone which underly the entire work. Consequently, the Praeludium's illuminations do not relate in a direct way to any mythic story, since no story is being told, but instead show images which imply a general context of danger, and a mood of horror. This is not to say that cognitive sense cannot be made of the plates, once Europe as a whole is understood. Plate one in particular renders many intellectual meanings: the ambushers profile is that of Edmund Burke, a pro-empire member of Parliament; the cave he sits in suggests Plato's; and the traveler is equipped much like Bunyan's Christian. But still the cognitive sense does not relate in any externally obvious way to the lament of the nameless shadowy female. It is simply too early in the work for Blake to give us clear connections between its different components. This work will carry a broad range of meanings, like any of Blake's prophetic writings, and in the beginning the poet can only give us diffuse rays of his vision, rays which we will focus more and more as the work is understood better and the unity underlying its various components becomes clearer. In the meantime, the Praeludium's images, like the shadowy female's lament, set the emotional tone for the work, so that we may go forward in the proper state of mind.
Clinging to the same reasoning, we should expect the designs in the Prophecy portion of the poem to relate more directly to the text, and in general this is true. In some plates the relationship is very clear. Plate four, for example, gives a visual depiction of Enitharmon calling Orc to rise. Plate eleven shows Albion's Angel upon the Stone of Night. The poem's last plate shows Los carrying woman and child away from the flames of Orc. In other plates, though, Blake makes us work for the connection with strong subjective participation. My favorite example of this is plate five, which shows two angels backing up the warrior Rintrah—one with arms crossed over her breasts and one showing a gesture of prayer. Rintrah, whose skin looks like scaled armor, clasps a sword in his left hand and looks ahead with an expression of fear. The text is concerned with Enitharmon's desire and means for establishing female dominion: "Go tell the human race that woman's love is sin" (l. 37). Upon consideration, we find that the repressive thinking described in the text will lead to the warlike stance taken by Rintrah in the illumination. The forbiddance of physical joy leaves a dissatisfaction in man that eventually finds its outlet in self-destructive war (think of Helen sitting on the wall at Troy). This is why Rintrah looks ahead with fear and confusion. He is being pushed forward, as it were, by the angels with their looks of holy condescension.

Some plates have no text, providing only imagistic commentary to add to the poem's wholeness. I have already mentioned the frontpiece, the "Ancients of Days" which provides a unifying image not only for this
poem but also for the entire Orc-cycle myth. Perhaps Blake included it at the beginning of Europe because it was in this poem that he began trying to incorporate the whole Orc-cycle, from creation to apocalypse, into one work. Plates six and seven, which provide the morose social commentary I mentioned in chapter two, also contain no text. They are placed at Europe's center to provide a powerful social cross-reference on the darkness and horror of lives locked in the Orc-cycle.
NOTES


2 Jung, p. 469.


4 Gallant, p. 40.


8 Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, p. 158, points out that the preface only exists in two of twelve copies of Europe.


10 Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, p. 159, discusses the intellectual meanings evident in plate one.
4. A Close Reading of Europe

It feels like heresy for me to say that I will give a "reading" of one of Blake's works. In my introduction I said that "purely speaking" you cannot talk about Blake's meaning in any sense abstracted from the form of his poetry, and of course I still believe this to be true. Yet a close commentary on any work must necessarily abstract a discursive meaning from the text at various points along the way, especially for an audience of readers who may be relatively new to the poet. It is a simple fact in the world of experience that some poetry must be talked about with abstractions and comparisons so that its full poetical meaning may eventually become clear to its readers. In other words, we are not "purely speaking," engaging in literary criticism. We are getting work done in the world of experience. I only hope that what I am doing here helps Los, who himself is said to be "striving with systems to deliver individuals from those systems" (Jerusalem, 11, 5). Ultimately, the meaning of the work exists only in the reader's relationship to the words and designs on the page. Since Blake requires so much of the reader's imagination, the "meaning" of the work will be different for every reader. Thus I am not trying, with this chapter, to elucidate a master explanation for Europe--much of what follows will be highly subjective. I am trying to make this poem, and Blake's work in general, more readable, to make the reader more buoyant in the swirls of emotion and thought that this great poet stirs up.
Europe's Preface occurs in only two of twelve existing copies of the poem, yet it is still well worth discussing because it sets out, in a non-mythological mode, some important characteristics of Blake's art, and introduces some of Europe's important themes, giving another perspective on many of the occurrences in the Praeludium and Prophecy of the work. The Preface begins with a fairy who is sitting on a "streaked tulip" singing about man's "windows," his five senses:

Five windows light the caverned man: through one he breathes the air; Through one, hears music of the spheres; through one the eternal vine
Flourishes, that he may receive the grapes; through one, can look
And see small portions of the eternal world that ever growth;
Through one, himself pass out what time he please--but he will not;
For stolen joys are sweet, and bread eaten in secret pleasant.

(ll. 1-6)

These are references to the nose, ears, mouth, eyes, and skin, respectively, but the descriptions, like any of Blake's descriptions, are not all that simple. As a general introduction, we see that man is both "caverned" and lit; two realms are available to him, the material and the eternal. The descriptions of the senses at first seem to emphasize the eternal possibilities more than the limited material side. Man "breathes the air," which suggests inspiration, and he "hears music of the spheres." His mouth, with its transcendent sense of taste, connects him to "the eternal vine . . . that he may receive the grapes." The ambivalence of the first line becomes evident again, however, when the eyes are mentioned. Man can only see "small portions of the eternal world." The caverned nature of man comes to the forefront regarding
skin. Man is able to pass outside himself with his skin, his sensual nature, but chooses not to, instead relishing in his own sexual prohibitions, since under a system of prohibitions he can sequester away "stolen joys." The dual nature of man suggested in line one paves the way for this adherence to both desire and restraint. The exact nature of this schism--man's love of forbidden fruit--and its relationship to the human ability to inhabit both material and eternal realms are characteristically bold and brilliant Blakean insights into human psychology.

We find that the fairy's song is narrated by a first person protagonist. This is the poet himself, as the end of the Preface will show. The poet describes this song as "mocking" (l. 7). Why would the fairy be mocking? Precisely because he has identified this ironic schism in man--man's self-imposed limitations make a mockery of his full potential. That the fairy sings in this tone helps show which is the most important part of his song. Only the description of man's propensity for "stolen joys" is good material for mockery. Indeed, this "stolen joys" passage sets forth one of Europe's most important themes--sexual injunction, which Enitharmon will call for in her attempt to establish dominion. It is interesting, also, that this passage spreads the blame for repressive injunctions over all mankind, and not just to women. The fairy is mocking all of us, for this is a truth that applies to women and men. Enitharmon and her followers may initiate "Thou shalt not" attitudes, but their suitors help propagate these attitudes too, because they take erotic pleasure in breaking the imposed moral restric-
tions. Thus the Preface adds perspective to the poem to follow, which clearly indicts women with its emphasis on Enitharmon.

The protagonist, apparently out for a nature walk, "started from the trees" and caught a fairy in his hat "as boys knock down a butterfly" (ll. 8-9). Never underestimate Blake's subtlety; the poet is, indeed, by the act of writing, catching flitting fairies under his hat. The fairy may be said to represent the poet's fantasical side—the side he will need to write his prophecies. When the poet asks "How know you this, . . . small sir? Where did you learn this song?" he is, to pursue the allegory, prying inquisitively into the truths of the song which his imagination has given him (l. 10). If the fairy represents the poet's imaginative side, he is of course in the poet's possession (l. 11). When the fairy says "command me, for I must obey," the poet asks him a ponderous metaphysical question, just the kind of question which Blake is fond of exploring with his poetry: "tell me what is the material world, and is it dead?" (ll. 12-13). The fairy's answer, though, is much different in tone:

He laughing answered: 'I will write a book on leaves of flowers, If you will feed me on love-thoughts, and give me now and then A cup of sparkling poetic fancies. So when I am tipsy, I'll sing to you to this soft lute and show you all alive The world, when every particle of dust breathes forth its joy' (ll. 14-19)

In no other passage that I know does Blake—who is usually so different—seem so like other Romantic poets. The "love-thoughts" and "sparkling poetic fancies" (an early reference to the "sparkling wine of Los," l.
20, Prophecy) remind me of Keats. With this fairy found in the woods, who will "write a book on leaves of flowers," the poet verges on placing his inspiration outside his mind, in the world of nature. Indeed, the fairy seems to promise that the natural world can come alive, "when every particle of dust breathes forth its joy." We should notice, though, that the fairy will require human energy—"love-thoughts" and "poetic fancies"—to bring about this transcendent state. The fairy will also use human devices to render this joy, since he will play a "soft lute," and write a book, albeit on "leaves of flowers."²

Any doubts as to the poet's ascendancy over nature are quelled in the next few lines. The poet takes the fairy home firmly implanted in his own "warm bosom"—indicating the actual source of inspiration in the human. (l. 19). The poet plucks "wild flowers," which hover around his head "like a cloud of incense," while his fairy laughs aloud "to see them whimper because they were plucked" (ll. 20-22). Nature is being used, even abused, for human purposes, but the poet's inspiriting agent takes an unconciliatory, almost cruel attitude toward the process. Human art and inspiration subsume the beauty of the natural world, which will, after all, regenerate after the harvest.

In the poet's parlour, the fairy sits upon the table and dictates Europe. With an unfocused glance this might seem much like a classical muse, perhaps a Romantic poet's version of the spirit of inspiration. In fact, the absurdity of the fairy sitting on the poet's table and dictating a poem shows that Blake is poking gentle fun at the whole notion of inspirational agents outside the human. We must always be on the
lookout for satire and parody in Blake's work—these are qualities of his writing which are often employed but nearly as often overlooked or underemphasized by his readers. In this passage Blake has made enough connections to show that the real inspiration is truly under the poet's hat, and the final scene, with the fairy sitting on the table dictating, gives the whole Preface an afterglow of light parody. Blake is nothing like Keats after all.

The Praeludium is a general lament, by the nameless shadowy female, of the conditions of life in the generative world. The nameless shadowy female first appears in the Praeludium to America. She is the daughter of Urthona, who has imprisoned Orc (and who later becomes Los; that Urthona imprisons Orc makes sense if we remember that Urizen's laws are given "by the hands of the children of Los, Africa, l. 9"). In America it is said of the shadowy female that "never from her iron tongue could voice or sound arise, / But dumb till that dread day when Orc assayed his fierce embrace" (ll. 9-10). Here we begin to get the notion that the nameless shadowy female is an unformed realm waiting for definition, impregnation—hence her name. W.H. Stevenson aptly calls her the "'prima materia' of the alchemists—matter in chaos, the world-mother of stars and all nature; dark, moist, cloudy, female, prolific." She represents, in short, the dumb and uncontrollable procreative aspect of nature.

I also see in the nameless shadowy female the closest Blake ever came to an "emanation" for Orc. In Blake's later mythic poems all the titanic male figures--Los, Urizen, Tharmas, Luvah, and, incorporating
all of these, Albion—have "emanations," female counterparts, resembling Jung's anima, which the male characters must embrace and recognize in order to complete themselves and become fully realized human beings. Orc comes a little early for this in Blake's myth, as the concept of the emanation gets its full development in The Four Zoas and thereafter, when Orc becomes a minor character. However, it is evident that the idea of male-female complementarity was taking form in Blake's mind during this early writing. Los and Enitharmon form a couple during this period, and The Book of Urizen is followed by The Book of Ahania, the latter being Urizen's emanation. Complementarity is evident also in the union of Orc and the nameless shadowy female. They fit together with both contrasting and similar elements to form a whole, a male and female response to the conditions of the natural world. The union is cursed from the beginning, of course, since Orc and the shadowy female are also brother and sister, and since neither has the capabilities to escape the generative world—he knows only destruction and she is much too vague and passive. The nameless shadowy female alludes to this painful, inbred, inescapable condition when she says: "Thy fire and my frost / Mingle in howling pains, in furrows by thy lightnings rent" (ll. 35-36, America's Praeludium). Orc's destructive violence offsets the shadowy female's passive reproductive nature, yet the destructive rebel ironically impregnates her, and in the Praeludium to Europe she erupts in speech. We will see that she laments against the same thing that Orc wars against—the generative natural world. Blake would probably see the two ways in which these
characters confront the natural world—one a passive lament, the other active war—as indicative of the different responses that a male and female would have to the world which limits them.

As the Praeludium of Europe begins, then, the nameless shadowy female rises "from out the breast of Orc," suggesting the emanative relationship I have just been discussing, even with some reverberations of Eve coming out of Adam. She has "snaky hair brandishing in the winds of Enitharmon," who is her mother (l. 2). The "snaky hair" brings to mind the monstrous Medusa—remember that this character is the female companion of the "horrent demon" Orc. One critic also notes a suggestion of the vagina head in this description, which makes very good sense taken in the context of the shadowy female's predicament, and the subject of her lament.5

The shadowy female's entire lament is addressed to "mother Enitharmon," who is the poem's archetypal female. Apparently the shadowy female has been bearing children since the Praeludium to America, for she asks: "wilt thou bring forth other sons / To cause my name to vanish, that my place may not be found? / For I am faint with travail, / Like the dark cloud disburdened in the day of dismal thunder" (ll. 4-7). Here I read "wilt thou?" as "must you?" "must this go on?" The shadowy female is tired of the "travail" of giving birth. She blames her vague nature—the loss of "name" and "place"—on her childbearing. This has always brought to my mind the patriarchal systems under which the child-carrier, the mother, gives her name away, thus giving up her right to pass her name to her offspring. This could easily be seen as
a loss of the woman's "place" in society. It seems very possible that with the nameless shadowy female Blake is, in part, illustrating the deplorable nature of woman's role in society, as ill-educated, "nameless," jobless child-bearers. The "dark cloud disburdened" is a nice, characteristically Blakean touch which reminds us, however, that we should not limit our understanding to any single view. Blake will use the nameless shadowy female to address a wide range of conditions of life in the natural world.

Next we see another example of the theme of inversion which, as I said in chapter three, runs throughout the poem: "My roots are brandished in the heavens, my fruits in earth beneath" (l. 8). Typically we would place the roots in the earth and the fruits up above, yet the upsidedown situation given here is actually a good description of our natural condition, in which we draw, with our roots, from the ideal (innocent) energy associated with the celestial realms--the stars, "heaven"--but must bear fruit (get work done, try and find joy) in the limiting world of experience where full realization is stunted. The titanic energy within us must "surge, foam, and labour into [real] life" where it will be consumed anyway, since, as material form, it will be subject to the "consumed and consuming" dynamics of the Urizen-Orc conflict (ll 9-10). The shadowy female asks "why shouldst thou, accursed mother, bring me into life?" (l. 10) Why should she have to trod along on this senseless hamster wheel, with so much more possibility so evidently within her somewhere?

In the next four lines (Blake separates the lament into quatrains)
the shadowy female tells us how she has tried to escape her curse, and
to what avail: "I wrap my turban of thick clouds around my labouring
head, / And fold the sheety waters as a mantle round my limbs / Yet
the red sun and moon / And all the overflowing stars rain down prolific
pains" (ll. 12-15). She has covered her body, using the only things
available to her, the elements of the natural world, in an attempt to
escape proliferation with modesty. Yet still there is a sun, and moon,
and stars—the natural cycle remains intact and keeps on wheeling. This
passage also carries added connotations of a more intellectual creati­
vity. Anyone who has looked at the setting sun, the moon, the stars,
and desired freedom from their limiting little body should understand
why it is the "head" that is "labouring" in this passage. Remember,
our roots are in the sky; it is the vast perfection suggested by stars
whose loss we feel when we try to bring forth fruits on the earth. The
shadowy female unwillingly looks up to heaven, unwillingly counts the
stars, because her inability to make the leap causes too much pain
(ll. 16). She calls the starry universe around her an "immortal shrine,"
but she, trapped in herself, occupies a vague and unformed realm within
this shrine—the "fathomless abyss" (l. 17). Nevertheless, compelled
by the procreative urge, she seizes the "burning power" of the stars and
brings forth desolate and violent creatures—"howling terrors" and "all
devouring fiery kings"—to roam on the "dark and desolate mountains" of
the natural world (ll. 18-20).

The shadowy female then renews her plea to Enitharmon by showing
her deplorable situation in a slightly different way: "Stamp not with
solid form this vigorous progeny of fires!" (l. 23). Exclamation point indeed, for this is a weighty line, and it will repay the time taken to understand it. This line and the few which follow address none other than the process of the infinite energy of innocence being put into material form in the world of experience. The shadowy female is saying "don't reduce this burning energy, which overflows into me when I look at stars, by channeling it into mundane form." On one level, within the physical context of the poem, she is arguing against having to give birth (give her own flaming energy) to children whom Enitharmon then corrupts within her crystal house. Thus she continues: "I bring forth from my teeming bosom myriads of flames, / And thou dost stamp them with a signet; then they roam abroad / And leave me void as death (ll. 24-26)." But on a more universal level, Blake is describing the corruption involved in all conscious activity, when innocent energy from our "teeming bosom" comes into the world of experience and is stamped with the "signet" of material form. This is when the distinction between subject and object is made, and the correspondence between ourselves and our own thoughts, our creations, denied, as our energies "roam abroad" in material form. This is why the shadowy female is left "void as death." To look at her once-teeming fires as an objectified thing outside herself has depleted her. She is "drowned" alternately in "shady woe and visionary joy," as is anyone who is conscious of inspiring fires within herself, yet must watch this inspiration roam away.

The last quatrain of the shadowy female's lament emphasizes the
universal nature of what she has been saying. She asks: "who shall bind the infinite with an eternal band / To compass it with swaddling bands? And who shall cherish it / With milk and honey?" (ll. 28-29) The answer to the first question is "nobody," for this cannot properly be done. Urizen tries to bind the infinite with his compass, which means that we all try with our Urizenic faculties, but we are left holding only a reduced representation of infinity. We may be better able to "cherish" the infinite with symbolic values such as milk and honey, yet even this falls short of infinity. Infinity remains aloof from all this activity, as the shadowy female tells us "I see it smile" (l. 31). Her response to this vision of benign infinity is to "roll inward" where, she says, "my voice is past" (l. 31). "Inward" is a good place to be in Blake; inward is where we see with the visionary eye. Thus the nameless shadowy female is, in a way, preparing us for the visionary experience of the Prophecy to follow. At the same time, she herself will be unable to render this experience, for she will be beyond her own voice. Thus "she ceased, and rolled her shady clouds / Into the secret place" (ll. 32-33). The shadowy female has become secretive, withdrawn into her own visions. But Blake, who wants to communicate what he sees, will continue, and show us in the Prophecy portion a vision of what happens when infinite possibility is channeled into material form under the corrupting care of Enitharmon, even giving us some broad mythic history behind this corruption.

The Prophecy, as I have mentioned, begins with lines that echo the beginning of Milton's nativity ode. The echo of Jesus' birth suggests
that something infinite is coming down from its "eternal day" into bodily form. Just as the birth in Milton's poem begins a "reign of peace," so war ceases when Blake's child, Orc, is born. We will see much tension and buildup in this poem, but no overt war until the very end, when Orc's energy breaks loose. This will be a "peaceful night" of revelry and sport among characters who, freed of corporeal war, fail to use their energies in the intellectual war which might maintain peace and help civilization progress, choosing irresponsible luxury instead. Politically, we may read this as commentary on the motives for England's protective attitudes regarding its Empire. The Empire brought riches and luxury for many of London's citizens, and the Urizenic muscle-flexing evident in the poem, especially in the illuminated images, is the means by which these luxurious crystal houses can be maintained.

Concentration on sexual frivolity and ritualized codes of love is one characteristic of the sportive, aristocratic attitudes embodied in the crystal house. This aspect of Enitharmon's night is introduced in the illuminated designs of plates three and four, which show various couples, all small figures, flitting around together. Some have serpentine tails (as does the larger figure of the angel on plate three, who is clutching her head in a manner which brings Marie Antoinette to mind) and one couple, on plate four, is locked together in a dance which seems excruciatingly rigid and formal, their loins absurdly spaced apart.

Enitharmon is the central focus, in Europe, for Blake's textual commentary on sexuality. By concentrating on her we will see, as Blake
saw it, the fallacy in worshipping the female as a sexual object, and thus lending oneself to the "female will." Enitharmon in this poem is, as Harold Bloom puts it, "the remote and mocking virgin, to be worshipped throughout European history as a beauty who must be approached through a courtly love ritual." As such, she will become the poem's major advocate of sexual injunctions; she is also the administrator and central figure in the festive irresponsibilities of her "night of pleasure." To follow Enitharmon's sexual injunctions and participate in her night of pleasure would be to succumb to the female will, and thus cease doing the work of Eternity (the work of the imagination). Blake says, "There is no such thing in Eternity as a female will," From Blake's point of view, the assertion of female will was something very threatening to imaginative work, something which had to be identified and battled against. Much of the work he did in writing *Europe* went toward making this identification.

This is a real-world corruption which Orc—the fiery progeny who still suggests infinite possibility, a fresh start—is born into. After Orc's birth is noted, the scene switches and we see Enitharmon's "sons and daughters rise around / Like pearly clouds" and "meet together in the crystal house" (ll. 5-6). Los, who plays a minor role in this poem until the end, bedazzled under the female will, gives a speech which describes the present situation in terms of the balance of titanic forces: "Again the night is come / That strong Urthona takes his rest, / And Urizen unloosed from chains / Glows like a meteor in the distant north" (ll. 9-12). In Blake's later myth, Urthona is Los in Eternity,
the archetype of Los, while Los is the "vehicular form" who works in
the real world. We may safely assume, since Los also rests this peace­
ful night, and Urthona is described as "strong," not an easy adjective
to earn in Blake's work, that Urthona bears a similar relationship to
Los here—Urthona is the archetypal creator. But now no creative
advancement is going on, for Urthona is resting. We must remember that
this is night, when the active consciousness sleeps. Meanwhile, Urizen
is "unloosed from chains," also a characteristic of sleep. All of this
suggests that things are up for grabs, in an inverted, chaotic state
"controlled" by Enitharmon's will. Psychically speaking, we are at the
point just after a solid mind-set--the old shell of awareness, Urizen's
set of chains--has been discarded in lieu of new information and inspir­
ation. Consciousness has been broken apart, in a sense, and the disr
junct structure of the poem helps suggest this. This is the psychic
state at the poem's beginning, and we can now watch how various forces
maneuver to address this chaotic and unformed situation. Initially,
Urthona is resting (probably because it is a night of sport, nor art,
under the female control); Urizen has left one solidified system behind
(his chains) and presumably moves toward another; meanwhile Orc waits in
the wings, the meteor-glow that goes hand-in-hand with Urizen. As yet
there is no system or form for Orc to fight against--all is unformed.
We shall see how reason and the imagination move to assemble this chaot­
ic void, and give Orc something to sink his teeth into.

Los continues his speech, obviously in the service of Enitharmon,
as he exhorts his sons to take part in this celebratory night:
Stretch forth your hands and strike the elemental strings!
Awake the thunders of the deep,
The shrill winds awake—
Till all the sons of Urizen look out and envy Los!
Seize all the spirits of life and bind
Their warbling joys to our loud strings.
Bind all the nourishing sweets of earth
To give us bliss, that we may drink the sparkling wine of Los;
And let us laugh at war,
Despising toil and care,
Because the days and nights of joy in lucky hours renew.

(11. 13-23)

The irresponsibility of laughing at war, and "despising toil and care" should alarm us, and cue us to the maligned nature of Los' speech.
Rather than relying on ceaseless work in the city of art, Golgonooza, to forge a liveable, uplifted world, as he does in the later prophecies, Los here relies on sheer luck to bring back "days and nights of joy."
His approach is wrong—this joy will be unearned. Los wants the participation in this celebration to be universal and profound, as only his sons could make it, by striking "the elemental strings," awakening the "thunders of the deep" and the "shrill winds." But he wants this for prideful, self-conscious reasons: so that Urizen's sons "look out and envy Los." In a somewhat Urizenic manner, Los wants to "seize" and "bind" the "spirits of life" and the "nourishing sweets of earth," all for the purpose of having bliss that night, and drinking sparkling wine.
Rather than working to restore the whole man, a selfless task which is Los' proper calling (i.e., the primary function of the acting consciousness) Los is sidetracked in this night of Enitharmon's pleasure into working toward self-aggrandizing bliss.

After Los' speech comes a textual division accented by a bent wheat
stalk with a grasshopper on it, scrolled vines, and moths and butterflies. David Erdman points out that these "swarming humblest creatures" usually indicate, in Blake's work, that a last judgement is coming, and "the old order passeth." At this point, as we have seen, we are just beyond the old order, in a night of relaxed frivolity whose participants still reap the riches of the old order. Ore, suggesting the possibility for a new age, has been born into this time (though now he is already grown). Enitharmon makes the first move toward apocalypse by beginning the corruption of Orc. She calls him up to practice and exhibit her power over him:

Arise, O Orc, from thy deep den,
First-born of Enitharmon rise!
And we will crown thy head with garlands of the ruddy vine;
For now thou art bound;
And I may see thee in the hour of bliss, my eldest born
(11. 24-28).

In the most general sense Orc is bound because he has been born into material form in the generative world, suggested by the "garlands of the ruddy vine" which Enitharmon would crown him with. Within the specifics of this poem, material binding takes the form of coming under Enitharmon's cruel and bemused power. Enitharmon's queenly frivolities are the swaddling bands with which she would bind the infinite possibilities of this new child.

The illustration at the bottom of plate four emphasizes the sexual aspect of Enitharmon's corruption. She is shown as a beautiful, well-formed woman in her prime. Her legs rest on clouds over Orc's head as she lifts off his sheet with an intent, almost demonic look. Enitharmon
wears the "snaky hair" which we saw to have sexual connotations with the nameless shadowy female. The boy, who looks to be in adolescence, lies on his stomach with his head in his arms. The means by which the corrupting woman draws men into her dominion is evident in the outstretched body of Enitharmon. The scene takes on added psychological resonance when we remember that Orc is Enitharmon's "first-born."

Orc's response to this corrupting temptation is already evident in the illustration, as flames rise from his head. The text makes his anger clear: "The horrent demon rose, surrounded with red stars of fire, / Whirling about in furious circles round the immortal fiend" (ll. 29-30). We should expect this response from Orc by now; Orc is, after all, a rebellious spirit, and this is the rhetorical reason why Blake planted him as the "secret child" in this poem. The crystal house of Enitharmon needs to be exploded.

Now comes an important transition. Enitharmon has called up Orc, and seen his anger. Now she "down descended into his red light," indicating that, in some way, she has come under his influence (l. 31). She has been confronted with Orc's "red light"—a rebellious response to her corrupting care. Let us watch now to see how this affects Enitharmon's actions.

First Enitharmon emphatically announces that this is her night: "Now comes the night of Enitharmon's joy!" But, we must ask, is she secure in knowledge? For next she begins to seek means to solidify her power:
Who shall I call? Who shall I send?
That woman, lovely woman, may have dominion?
Arise, O Rintrah, thee I call, and Palamabron, thee.
Go, tell the human race that woman's love is sin,
That an eternal life awaits the worms of sixty winters
In an allegorical abode where existence hath never come.
Forbid all joy, and from her childhood shall the little female
Spread nets in every secret path. (ll. 34-41)

What a night of joy! This is Enitharmon's bid to spread joylessness,
and the robbing of joy is always a heinous evil in Blake. She wants
to enforce sexual injunctions on the human race, promising an "allegori­
cal abode"—Christian heaven—to those who make it through sixty years
of abstinence. This restraint would elevate her and give her leverage,
making her as a desired but untouchable goddess among men. Enitharmon
knows that this notion of "eternal life" is false, that "existence hath
never come" to anyone, really, in this promised heaven. But this is
a device for her; she needs it for power.

Notice that the nets Enitharmon spreads are Urizenic. In response
to the Orcean energy which has confronted Enitharmon, she calls upon
Urizenic devices—codified injunctions—and also upon two Urizenic char­
acters, Rintrah and Palamabron. Rintrah, who, we saw in chapter two,
suggests on a political level William Pitt, Britain's warlike prime min­
ister at the time, is the hesitant warrior grasping a cross-handled
sword on plate five. The text tells us that Rintrah has "hid" his
bride, which is characteristic of someone who is Urizenically closed
or otherwise imbalanced (l. 47). Palamabron, who on the political level
may suggest Parliament, is a "horned priest" accompanied by Elynittria,
the "silver-bowed queen," a chastity figure reminiscent of Diana (ll.
Thus Enitharmon uses two Urizenic henchmen, a priest and a war-maker, to establish and monitor her judgemental attitudes. Both are also children of Enitharmon--brothers of Orc who have already been corrupted. The natural binding of Orc, the primal child, set in motion these subsequent corruptions. Rintrah and Palamabron are called to rise much like Orc was called, but since they do not react with anger, and become instead advocates of Enitharmon's power system, they rise against Orc as a reactionary buildup to his revolutionary energy. The innocent energy born with the child, originally represented by Orc, gets perverted into Urizenic (and later, frivolous) forms, as shown by Rintrah and Palamabron, as well as the "innumerable race / thick as the summer stars," presumably an army, which accompanies Rintrah (ll. 51-52). This is why plates six and seven, full page illuminations which show the dire social situations possible under a strong Urizenic government, are placed after Enitharmon's first "Arise" in "Arise / Arise O Rintrah" (ll. 42-43). Enitharmon is calling for help to build the kind of power system which would bring these somber results. But Orc's red light has been lit against this corruption, his energy having entered the framework of the poem in antithetical form--Enitharmon's reactionary buildup of strength behind the "lion" Rintrah, Palamabron the priest, and Rintrah's army. One wheel turns another the opposite direction, but all are turning toward apocalypse.

The buildup seems to tire Enitharmon--her eyelids become weary (l. 42). This indicates that she has no real strength, that her strength bears an inverse relationship to that of her advocates. As
Enitharmon's dream is, in a sense, an intrusion of conscience upon her corrupted activities, for it shows the grim reality of the whole Urizenic process in which she has decided to take part. Her crystal house is an insulated fantasy world, a "nightly song" of celebration from which she can issue injunctions based on lies, but in the dream her subconscious takes over attempting to enlighten this ignorant bliss with the truth in its imaginative forms, dire as it is. Perhaps this inversion—the dream representing actuality, the waking consciousness artificiality—is why Blake chooses to call this a "female dream." Under the inverted control of the female will, this type of dream will naturally occur.

The dream gives a context to occurrences in the crystal house, showing the mythic history behind the Urizenic takeover in England, of which Enitharmon's bid for dominion is one element. And with its time period of 1800 years, and the apocalypse at the end, the dream helps establish the profound connection between Orc and Jesus, which adds an even more universal context to the story of Enitharmon's night. When Orc, who is Jesus, who is man's fully realized imaginative potential, is born, in the beginning of this poem, into Enitharmon's crystal house, the stage is set for some kind of revolution. Or has Blake's vision matured to the point that we shall see revelation instead of revolution? At any rate, the dream offers the whole history of the 1800
years of corruption against which this upheaval will occur.

The dream begins with "shadows of men in fleeting bands upon the winds" that "divide the heavens of Europe" (ll. 60-61). Here I have always seen waves of unruly invaders crossing Europe, line after line of armies extending (then defending) their empires and kingdoms. If this is so, these lines are a concise summary of a very long period of time, for the next line brings us to the American Revolution, which we know because it is an echo from Blake's America: "Albion's Angel, smitten with his own plagues, fled with his bands" (l. 62). (Albion's Angel is the Urizenic guardian of the British Empire's interests). This echoes the turning point in America, when the plagues which Albion's Angel had sown over America recoil back upon him (ll. 177-78). The curse of the plagues, in cloud form (suggesting Urizen's mysterious obfuscation), now "bears hard on Albion's shore / Filled with immortal demons of futurity" (ll. 63-64). Oppression has recoiled back upon England, along with all its possible demons and demonic situations. Under the weight of this cloud, the "council house" collapses upon Albion's Angel, which is probably a symbolic reference to the weak and chaotic nature of Britain's government after the loss of the American Colonies (ll. 65-67).  

Few characters in Blake's works die, or if they do it is usually not for long. Albion's Angels are no exception here. After an hour, they rise "as the stars rise from the salt lake," which suggests something unnatural at best. Indeed, the Angels rise "in pain," "in troubled mists," and "thoughts perturbed" (ll. 68-71). At a low point
after the collapse of the council house, Albion's Angel and his followers will delve into their roots for inspiration and guidance, seeking the "ancient temple serpent-formed" (l. 72). This is a Druid temple, as we see by the description of "oak-surrounded pillars," "massy stones" and "venerable porches" (ll. 76-77). W.H. Stevenson identifies the serpent temple specifically as a temple at Avebury, Wilts, which, according to some distorted evidence by William Stukely, an 18th century archeologist, formed along with some neighboring stones a serpent that spread over the area. Blake enlarges upon this, telling us that the temple "stretches out its shady length along the island white" (l. 73).

The Druids and their temple give us a good example of how Blake's imagination could take hold of a common belief and give it universal applications within his mythic framework. The Druids were the only known ancient religion to Blake's Britain. They had worshipped in oak groves, and the oak and mistletoe were sacred to them, it was said. It was reported that they engaged in human sacrifices, and that they maintained a restricted caste of secretive priests. All of this abhorred Blake. He used the Druids to epitomize "natural religion," which is inspirational (revealed) religion reduced to a dogmatic outline. As Peter Fischer puts it, in his essay "Blake and the Druids," "Druidism, according to Blake, gradually degenerated into man's first attempt to let theory take the place of reality, and theorizing, the place of realizing, so that the fallen condition became more comfortable and apparently more secure." Druidism showed all the archetypal char-
acteristics of natural religion—an elevated priesthood which controlled religious dogma, worship of natural objects, and a view so limited to the material world that the ultimate sacrifice was a physical sacrifice of others, rather than of self.

The stones of this temple are "of colors twelve," and "placed in the order of the stars" (ll. 79-80). This indicates a zodiacal philosophy based on the fixed arrangement of the natural world, and thus the stones "give light in the opaque," showing the enlightenment offered by the natural world (l. 79). Suddenly we get an abbreviated creation passage which shows why the natural world is a dark place for man:

When the five senses whelmed
In deluge o'er the earth-born man, then turned the fluxile eyes
Into two stationary orbs, concentrating all things;
The ever-varying spiral ascents to the heavens of heavens
Were bended downward, and the nostrils' golden gates shut,
Turned outward, barred and petrified against the infinite.
Thought changed the infinite to a serpent, that which pitieth
To a devouring flame, and man fled from its face and hid
In forests of night. Then all the eternal forests were divided
Into earths, rolling in circles of space, that like an ocean rushed
And overwhelmed all except this infinite wall of flesh.
(ll. 80-90)

Infinity is too much for man's senses, as we see how the eyes, ears, and nose respectively close themselves off to infinity because they are unable to transmit it. The mental process paralleling this is when "thought changed the infinite to a serpent," which may be the most important line on the page, as emphasized by Blake's choice of a coiling, fiery-headed serpent as the illumination which dominates the plate. It is the intervention of thought itself which causes this
perverse reduction—man might experience infinity transcendentally, but he cannot approach it with abstract thought or abstract systems. Any attempt to do so is dangerous simply because it makes man concentrate on limited systems rather than infinite possibility. The man who depends on abstract thought to communicate his sense of infinity to himself or others will soon fear anything which won't assimilate into his systematic view, casting it down and calling it sinful, serpentine. And those who gain control in the hierarchy offered by these systems—priests and kings, for example—will also fear the energy of original inspiration as a threat to their power, and brand it "sin" or "sedition," changing the infinite to a serpent to protect themselves.

At the same time that man is separated from his sense of infinity by the bars of thought, he loses his ability to unselfconsciously pity other human beings, and "that which pitieth"—the sources of humanistic empathy—becomes a "devouring flame." The fragmented man of reason who cannot feel the wholeness, the brotherhood, the negation of self which the imaginative experience of infinity brings, and who relies entirely on abstract thought to understand his place in the world, will probably find himself, sooner or later, in secret form or not, an advocate of aggression, hate, and judgement—the outward forms of the frustration he feels from this loss of Eternity. This was the case with the degenerated religion of the Druids, Blake thought.

Thus overloaded with infinity, and the ugly forms of its loss, man obscures himself in "forests of night," and divides the "eternal forests" into "earths" and "circles of space"—rational man charts and
divides the skies (and his lands, and his mind, and everything he sees) in hopes of grasping what the night sky suggests. But the rolling circles of space still overwhelm him (just as the stars overflowed the nameless shadowy female in the Praeludium), because rational forms won't hold infinity. Man cannot think the connection between himself and those circles in space—not even by plotting their motion, so he contracts to within his own "finite wall of flesh," self-conscious, limited by limited senses, a body dissociated from an "objective" world. Reduced to this dependence on the physical self, man shuts up infinity in the "finite revolutions" of fixed symbolism and dogma, sets up a chain of being in which man is an angel and God a "tyrant crowned," and sets whirling a mechanical gyroscope, "heaven a mighty circle turning," which he hopes will block his view of what he can't know (ll. 91-93).

We now return to the story of Albion's Angel, who has arrived at the "southern porch" of this serpent temple, in a "vale obscure," "planted thick with trees of blackest leaf" (ll. 94-96). The images of obscurity and darkness suggest the realm of Urizen, and, indeed, in the directional symbolism which Blake often employs Urizen's direction is south, while the realm of the imagination, where Los lives, is north. This southern porch encloses the "Stone of Night," which is the pulpit-stone of authority. The stone's description emphasizes the inverted and crusted-over condition of man's potential:

Oblique it stood, o'erhung
With purple flowers and berries red, image of that sweet south,
Once open to the heavens and elevated on the human neck,
Now overgrown with hair and covered with a stony roof.
Downward 'tis sunk, beneath the attractive north that round the feet,
A raging whirlpool, draws the dizzy enquirer to his grave.

(11. 96-101)

"Once" (which means that we can imagine this condition but it is not occurring now) man was upright, his intellect open to the heavens, but now a matting of hair and stone (the skull) separates him from celestial visions. The Stone of Night is the image of that skull, now sunk downward "beneath the attractive north," which to me somehow suggests the starry skies again, since north is the direction of imaginative potential, and we are always "beneath" the skies here on earth. The "attractive north" is "round the feet" just as the nameless shadowy female's roots were "brandished in the heavens." This northern realm, like the starry realm, "draws the dizzy enquirer to his grave"—being too much for the rational man's inverted mind to assimilate, it makes him stop trying, and accept the limited, mundane forms he already knows, which is to accept death.

But this is all very serious. I also sense some subtle tongue in cheek in this passage, poking fun at what I have just done. It won't quite work to logically assimilate all the directions and conceptions that Blake has put together in this passage. The Stone itself is "oblique" yet the north and south alignment that Blake gives us suggests straightness, though inversion. When we try to sort through the directional adjectives—"elevated," "downward," "beneath"—we do get dizzy. Oblique indeed! Blake did not want us to be able to line all these facts up logically. By doing so, we are going the wrong way, drawing
ourselves down into the tightening coils of reason's whirlpool rather than expanding outward on the spiral of imagination. We should flush this approach, and simply realize that in this passage Blake meant, more than anything, to point out the inversion of man's situation—the mind sunk into the material earth—and to attach images of danger and dumbness to this inversion, with the "purple flowers and berries red," which are deadly nightshade, and the "stony roof" over our brain.

The next five lines have an illuminated plate all to themselves (pl. 11), which gives them emphasis as the culmination of Albion's Angel's journey to his roots:

Albion's Angel rose upon the Stone of Night.
He saw Urizen on the Atlantic;
And his brazen book
That kings and priests had copied on earth
Expanded from north to south.  
(ll. 102-106)

Urizen's "brazen book" holds all the systematic viewpoints which kings and priests manipulate for power. The illumination on the plate gives a striking image of authority, showing a gothic figure who could be either pope or king, holding a book open on his lap, and elevated over two angels who cross scepters in front of him, emphasizing their submission to his Urizenic laws. This focal passage and design signify, on the level of historical allegory, the paranoid control maintained by reactionary forces after the American and French Revolutions rocked England. The "council house" collapses on Albion's Angels after the American Revolution, but instead of reforming the Angels continue in their plague-smitten ways, trying to counter a revolution against
authority with even more authority. This is signified in the dream by the fact that they search for their Druidic roots after the collapse. Albion's Angel risen on the Stone of Night shows that Urizenic control has been fully reestablished.

After this we see what Urizen's power has done to England. Temporally, the dream catches up to Enitharmon's night (l. 106). We can tell that some kind of crescendo has been reached, and that the fall of authority promised by the birth of Orc will soon come, by the small creatures which swarm plate 12. Enitharmon still sleeps, but her dream, after having given her some background going all the way back to creation, now begins to address the present circumstances in her country, showing that these bleak circumstances are a continuation of dynamics as old as the human race. Urizen "unclasped his book," opening it to give out his laws, "feeding his soul with pity" at the same time (l. 110). This pity is pejorative, the pity of those who, like some of the philanthropists in Blake's day, are smug in the knowledge that they occupy a position over others. "Grey mist," "gloom," and "clouds" roll over London, indicating Urizen's mystery shrouds, while the only fires mentioned are "pale," showing that Orc's revolutionary energy is now at a low ebb, though present (ll. 105-111).

Like the nameless shadowy female, the "youth of England hid in gloom curse the pained heavens" (ll. 111). The angel is a chthonic vision which appears imaginatively to the youth, out of the gloom of their "deadly night" (just as it has appeared to Blake out of the gloom), a vision "perceived by those senses that are closed from thought--/
Bleak, dark, abrupt it stands and overshadows London city" (ll. 114-115). The youth begin to envision more comprehensively the predicament they are in: "They saw his bony feet on the rock, the flesh consumed in flames; / They saw the serpent temple lifted above, shadowing the island white; / They heard the voice of Albion's Angel howling in flames of Orc, / Seeking the trump of the last doom" (ll. 116-119). Important things have begun to happen here. Amidst the darkness of their situation, the youth of England begin to see Albion's Angel and the Druid background behind him. At the same time, we first get indications that the revolutionary energy is coming back, because the angel's flesh is now "consumed in flames." These are "flames of Orc," and they are why the Angel, who had seemed in such full control, now is howling. Revolutionary energy cannot be smothered forever, and now the trump of the last doom becomes a possibility as Orc gains fire.

David Erdman makes a well supported argument that the next episode, in which the "Guardian of the secret codes" is driven out of his "ancient mansion" by Orc's flames (ll. 121-126), is based on a political incident of the time. Lord Thurlow, who was Lord Chancellor and Keeper of the Seal and Guardian of the King's Conscience, had long been a formidable opponent of Prime Minister Pitt. When Thurlow ridiculed one of Pitt's legislative acts as the work of a "mere reptile of a minister," Pitt took advantage of the reactionary attitudes of the time, asking for, and getting, the dismissal of the Chancellor. The reference to "Great George Street" and the "Park gate" (St. James Park) solidify the suggestion of the incident (ll. 125-126). Here Blake's desire for
current readership and impact is evident. The poet was using a very recent political occurrence in his poem, since Thurlow was dismissed on June 15, 1792. However, as in all cases of Blake's use of factual occurrences, we should expect to see the poet giving the incident more universal applications as well, and indeed the incident fits perfectly into the flow of the mythic story which Blake has been telling. We can view the "Guardian of the secret codes" as Albion's Angel, who has been the central figure in the dream so far. Making sure we don't take him too literally, Blake makes it Orc's flames that drive the Guardian out, which would not quite be right if this were a strict allegorical passage, since Pitt was by no means an advocate of Orc. Blake ultimately uses the episode to generalize: "Thus was the howl through Europe" (l. 127).

We have seen that Orc's flames are rising again, which might lead us to expect violent destruction next, a material consummation such as in the end of America, or even the end of this poem. But the apocalypse in Enitharmon's dream is different. Orc and the Urizenic forces seem to reach a stalemate, both sides present and powerful, neither side quelled: "For Orc rejoiced to hear the howling shadows; / But Palamabron shot his lightnings trenching down his wide back, / And Rintrah hung with all his legions in the nether deep" (ll. 128-130). The Urizenic laws which had seemed on the brink of being devoured in flames just earlier (since Albion's Angel's flesh was being "consumed in flames," and the Guardian of the secret codes had to forsake his mansion, ll. 116-121) now appear to survive, as strong as ever:
Enitharmon laughed in her sleep to see (Oh, woman's triumph!)
Every house a den, every man bound; the shadows are filled
With spectres, and the windows wove over with curses of iron.
Over the doors Thou shalt not, and over the chimneys Fear is
written.
With bands of iron round their necks fastened into the walls
The citizens, in leaden gyves the inhabitants of suburbs
Walk heavy; soft and bent are the bones of villagers.
(ll. 131-137)

The two particular kinds of Urizenic lawmaking dealt with in Europe,
sexual injunctions and authoritarian oppression, are still alive and well. Orc has not brought these structures down, as he and Urizen now seem to coexist, though not peacefully: "Between the clouds of Urizen the flames of Orc roll heavy / Around the limbs of Albion's Guardian, his flesh consuming. / Howlings and hissings, shrieks and groans, and voices of despair / Arise around him in the cloudy / Heavens of Albion" (ll. 138-142). Albion's Angel, "in horror and torment," seizes the trump of doom to bring this nightmare, including himself, to an end, "but he could not blow the iron tube!" (ll. 143-144). Three times he tries, but finally it takes Newton, "a mighty spirit from the land of Albion," to blow the "enormous blast" (ll. 146-147).

That Newton, not Albion's Angel, blows the trumpet in this poem is a very crucial fact, a necessary stroke on Blake's part to make the poem whole. Newton, to Blake, was perhaps the arch-rationalist who, with his mathematical laws and scientific approach, tried to place man entirely within the world of matter. Northrop Frye describes Newton's threat to Blake very well:

Newton's conception of the material world proves to the Selfhood
that the universe is a vast collection of particles held together automatically by an unconscious power, that intelligence and imagination are accidental sports from this, that force and cunning are more in keeping with the state of nature—and so on to bullying and mass murder. To the imagination the dead cohesion and solidity of the Newtonian universe makes it look more than ever like the stone rolled against the tomb of a sleeping Man-God. 27

Blake knew, of course, that a view such as Newton's, based as it was on the material world, was simply inadequate vision, limited and dangerous because of its presumption to truth. A viewpoint locked in the material world would ultimately find expression only in some phase of the ORO-cycle—either in establishment of a system or revolt against a system. When Newton blows the trump of doom in Enitharmon's dream, it is the culmination of an entire cycle which began when man's senses first shut out infinity (at creation, in other words), continued through the development of the Druid religion, and included the establishment of tyrannies and love-codes. Newton's scientific approach was, to Blake, the ultimate expression of systematic, material thinking of which all the developments just mentioned are phases. When Newton blows the trumpet, then, it is a consolidation of error—a recognition of the root form of what has been wrong, so that it can be cast off (because "one error not removed will destroy a human soul," Jerusalem, 41, 11). Materialistic thinking has always been around, but Newton brought it to its fullest expression, formulating it clearly so that the error it represented could be identified and removed. Thus Newton is the "mighty spirit" who serves a great purpose in Blake's cosmology, showing us the "spiritual cause" of all the Urizenic perversions that we have seen in
the dream, and in Enitharmon's night.

Albion's Angel could not blow the trump of doom because he is merely a participant in the Orc-cycle. Anyone limited to material circumstances cannot put an end to the suffering. Newton's blowing the blast, on the other hand, represents a realization made from beyond the Orc-cycle, a perspective drawn from outside material circumstances. Eternity if fourfold in Blake, and the number four represents completion. The fact that Newton blows the fourth blast shows that a realization has been made on the level of Eternity. Instead of the various "natural causes" which occupy the energies of Orc and Albion's Angel, Blake sees through things to the cause behind it all, and thus sees that Newton must blow the blast. Blake has been doing the work of Eternity.

Notice the difference, then, between the apocalypses brought about by Newton and Orc. Orc's apocalypse in America violently consumes the "five gates of the senses." Newton's final blast ends things on a quieter, more profound level, as "Yellow as leaves of autumn, the myriads of angelic hosts / Fell through the wintry skies seeking their graves, / Rattling their hollow bones in howling and lamentation" (ll. 148-150). Like the autumn leaves, material thinking propagated by Albion's Angels has reached the limit of its form, and now must fall (ironically, the leaves are drawn down by gravity). This apocalypse represents an intellectual realization, not a corporeal campaign like Orc's. By comparison, the world view consolidated in Newton falls apart much more softly, naturally, though not without pain.
Enitharmon awakens, not knowing that she had slept (l. 151). Now "eighteen hundred years were fled / As if they had not been" (l. 152). But they have been, and the dream has described the conditions which have plagued those years. Enitharmon had shown herself, before the dream, to be an ally of Urizen, building up power behind Rintrah. Her dream, if remembered, would have given Enitharmon a more complete view of the results of this kind of tyrannical buildup, and shown her more clearly the present circumstances in her country, which had come about because of this militaristic protectiveness. But Enitharmon is too caught up in her night of sportive materialism to remember the truth offered by her dream.

She again begins calling her sons and daughters "to the sports of night," echoing the call she had made 1800 years ago, before the dream. But now the sons and daughters that Enitharmon calls are very different in their characteristics. Before the dream, she was confronted with Orc's anger and had to call Rintrah and Palamabron to provide restraint against the demon's power. Now it seems as if her dominion has been fully established; her life is luxurious and without care. The sons and daughters she calls are like crystal themselves, given glittering descriptions which are "shifting and many-hued," as one critic puts it, indicating the vagueness which Blake abhorred. Few of the characters now called are very important outside this passage—mainly they are names. They float in dreamy and restful states of sensual passivity.

What has happened here? For one thing, Enitharmon now has established enough power, enough security, so that her lifestyle can take the
form she desires. Now she can corrupt her children with her own shallow dilletantism, her non-productive, ornamental values. Hence this is another consolidation of error, as the irresponsible lives that Enitharmon would have everyone lead take a clear form before our eyes. This is a real-world form that Orc can see, something to fight against. The power which was raised to counter Orc before the dream is directly responsible for the passive, absolutely un-Orcean lifestyle now exhibited. Enitharmon's blithe assertion of her lifestyle at this point in the poem shows that she will ignore all that has happened--Orc's anger before the dream, the subconscious ramifications of the dream itself--pushing everything away stubbornly in favor of her finery, again reminiscent of Marie Antoinette. Orc will make an appearance soon.

Butterflies, centipedes, small birds, snails, snakes, and spiders are out more profusely than ever as Enitharmon begins the calls to her children, which go together on one plate (pl. 14). First she calls Ethinthus, "queen of waters," and tells her to neglect the darker aspects of life: "though the earth-worm call-- / Let him call in vain, / Till the night of holy shadows / And human solitude is past" (ll. 158-161). Though Enitharmon doesn't consciously remember her dream, its night crawlers seem to be haunting her vaguely. Her approach is to ignore the worms, and rely instead on the return of the "lucky hours" which Los mentioned in the night's beginning.

Enitharmon has become a grandmother, as we see in her continuing address to Ethinthus: "My daughter, how do I rejoice! For thy children
flock around / Like the gay fishes on the wave, when the cold moon
drinks the dew. / Ethinthus, thou are sweet as comforts to my fainting
soul, / For now thy waters warble round the feet of Enitharmon" (ll.
163-166). The tone here is, for me, slightly satirical, as Blake points
out the silly, ungrounded nature of Enitharmon's false aesthetics.
"Sweet as comforts"? "Thy waters warble"? These are the vague poetics
of those give to bright and beautiful passivity.

Manathu-Vorcyon, whose name itself sounds satirical, is Enitharmon's
next daughter called. Her "golden wings" remind us of the angels in the
poem's illuminations, and feminine beguilement is suggested by the
"flames of soft delusion" (l. 169). This suggestion is followed up
with the "luring bird of Eden, Leutha, silent love" (l. 170). Leutha
is passive but treacherous, described as the "soft soul of flowers . . .
sweet smiling pestilence" (l. 172). Leutha also has daughters, who also
lead crystal lives, revolving "like sweet perfumes ascending" (l. 175).

Enitharmon calls her first son since Rintrah--Antamon, "prince of
the pearly dew" (l. 176). A vague suggestion of trouble is evident
when Enitharmon asks "why wilt thou leave thy mother?" but we get
nothing more of this (l. 177). Antamon seems so satisfied that he is
quenched, "floating upon the bosomed air / With lineaments of gratified
desire" (ll. 179-180).

Oothoon and Theotormon are the first children Enitharmon calls
who do not seem happy in the crystal house, signalling a shift in mood--
soon Orc will rise. Enitharmon asks Oothoon: "Why wilt thou give up
woman's secrecy, my melancholy child," possibly referring to the
speeches Oothoon gave in *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. She tells her that "between two moments bliss is ripe" (l. 184). Blake later developed this idea and made it an important part of his cosmic view, describing the possibility for transcendent regeneration outside time. But here Enitharmon is perverting the idea for her own purposes, asking Oothoon to be unnaturally happy. Theotormon, meanwhile, is "robbed of joy," Enitharmon says, and "his salt tears flow / Down the steps of my crystal house" (ll. 185-186). This brings to mind the crystalline expectations regarding love which Theotormon has of Oothoon in the earlier poem.

Enitharmon now must sense Orc's presence, for she calls two figures to placate him—"Sotha and Thiralatha, secret dwellers of dreamful caves" (ll. 187). Say "Sotha and Thiralatha" out loud to hear how well their secretiveness will work against Orc. Dull warriors indeed—Enitharmon's vagueness is showing again. Enitharmon asks them to "arise and please the horrent fiend with your melodious songs," but, interestingly, she then asks Sotha and Thiralatha themselves to "still all your thunders golden hooved and bind your horses black," indicating more trouble among her children—anger is rising in other forms besides Orc (l. 189). Revolution seems to be brewing in the ranks.

Now Enitharmon addresses Orc directly; he is clearly a threat. She asks him to "smile upon my children. / Smile, son of my afflictions; / Arise, O Orc, and give our mountains joy of thy red light" (ll. 190-
Notice that Enitharmon begins her second call to Orc in an appeasing tone, asking him to smile. But in the next line she seems to goad him, mentioning his "afflictions," and in the next seems to become obsessed with him, asking for the "joy" of his "red light," which she knows must be violence and anger. Enitharmon apparently is in a self-destructive mood. Perhaps she is bored with her house of pleasure and now needs a war to watch. Or perhaps she simply doesn't understand what her own son Orc can do.

Again, as in the dream, the forces in the poem seem to reach a balance against each other. Orc does not erupt yet, though he is clearly present, and Enitharmon's children "were forth at sport beneath the solemn moon, / Waking the stars of Urizen with their immortal songs" (ll. 193-194). Here I sense Orc in the "stars" of Urizen, much as he was the meteor glow associated with Urizen earlier in the poem. This is still the passive world of Enitharmon's night, and Orc won't be able to disturb things under these inverted circumstances. Thus nature (read Enitharmon) keeps on feeling "through all her pores the enormous revelry" (l. 195).

But morning comes, signifying the end of the inverted control of the female will--now we will see action. The light of day also represents that an important realization has been made. Orc (like the rest of us) has seen enough of Enitharmon's crystal house, and now its passive influence must be thrown off. It sounds like a call to battle as "everyone fled to his station" (l. 197). Enitharmon weeps, knowing that her dominion has ended. Orc has rejected her seductive attempts
to placate him all night long, and now that the day has come the anger which had been steadily and silently growing within him is transferred into the real world. Orc "shot from the heights of Enitharmon / And in the vineyards of red France appeared the light of his fury" (ll. 199-200). A political connection is made here, of course, showing that Orc's anger is like the anger of the French people, who had been oppressed with force while viewing the insulated, pointless luxury of the aristocracy for years.

The violent energy that now breaks out is indeed revolutionary in magnitude:

The sun glowed fiery red!
The furious terrors flew around
On golden chariots raging, with red wheels dropping with blood;
The lions lash their wrathful tails;
The tigers couch upon the prey and suck the ruddy tide;
And Enitharmon groans and cries in anguish and dismay.
(ll. 201-206)

This violence, in fact, goes far beyond the "vineyards of red France." This passage shows a pure, archetypal violence, manifest in lions, tigers, "furious terrors," and the sun itself. It is the kind of violence which must break out for Orc to overcome the bondage of material circumstances. But notice that no solution is offered, no possibility for advancement is shown, not even the qualified optimism suggested by the consumption of the "five gates" at the end of America. This is simply a vision of violence, in stasis, going nowhere. In America, Blake ended his prophecy with consuming violence, but in Europe the violence consumes nothing specific. Like the French Revolu-
tion in its worst moments, it just consumes, without vision or control.

We have seen the coexistence of the powers of Urizen and Orc throughout this poem, both sides locked in a terrible struggle, neither side taking over completely. The directionless violence at the end of Europe again shows this parity. Orc cannot put an end to militaristic tyrannies, or the crystal houses they protect; if he does conquer them he will only have to conquer again, rising up repeatedly against the implanted system which was once his own fresh start. In Blake's later prophecies, the coexistence of polar opposites is an important part of his view, and this is what we now see with Urizen and Orc. Orc cannot end this poem, just as Albion's Angel could not blow the trump of doom. To address the world problems which the poem has shown, it will take a more comprehensive eye than Orc's. It will take a view which identifies and assimilates the realities underlying the material world—a view which can perceive how Newton's thought ends the world, how passivity and complacency breed war. So Los rises, already assimilating, clad in the "snaky thunders" which adorned the nameless shadowy female and Enitharmon (l. 207). Los will engage in a more profound conflict, and already his cry shakes "all nature to the utmost pole" (l. 208). Los calls "all his sons to the strife of blood," the fundamental strife which the active consciousness should engage in. It is morning, and Los, the maker of new forms, will go to work. Read on and see.
NOTES

1 W.H. Stevenson points out that this is an echo of Proverbs 9, 17: "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant," The Complete Poems, p. 225.

2 S. Foster Damon, p. 342, William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols, notes a possible connection here to the prophecies of the Cumean Sybil, which were said to be written on leaves of trees in the Aenid, 6, 74. Damon falls just short of another nice connection when he points out that Blake's illuminated works "may more appropriately be said to have been written on petals." Why not call the illuminations themselves petals, and leave the textual parts of the plates as leaves? Then Blake might be subtly referring to his own artistic techniques through a third person, much as he refers to the acid-etching process he invented, speaking about the devil who writes with "corroding fires" in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, plate 7.

3 Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p. 193, points out that this aspect of Blake's work was not, by any means, a minor quality. Early in his writing career, Blake wrote a lively satire in skit form called An Island in the Moon. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell parodies Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg in many passages. The Book of Urizen is sometimes referred to as a satire on Genesis, but this tone is only evident to me in a few places, such as "Some said, 'it is Urizen'" (pl. 3).

4 Headnote to Europe, p. 223.

5 Gallant, p. 35.

6 Emily Hamblen, in one of her more earthly insights, points out that the nameless shadowy female here is "descending as low in the sensual realm as the Muhammaden movement." On the Minor Prophecies of William Blake, p. 236.

7 W.H. Stevenson also footnotes a probable reference to the branding of slaves, and sheep and cattle, with a "signet," still another example of how Blake can use real-world occurrences and give them a much wider range of reference, since the occurrences are outward manifestations of deep-lying archetypal patterns of behavior. P. 227.

8 Robert Hass, in his poem "Meditation at Lagunitas," has some lines which always come to my mind when I am reading this passage in Blake. He talks about "The idea, for example, that each particular erases / the luminous clarity of a general idea. That the clown- / faced woodpecker probing the dead sculpted trunk / of that black birch is, by his presence, some tragic falling off from a first world /
of undivided light. Or the other notion that, / because there is in
this world no one thing / to which the bramble of blackberry cor­
responds, / a word is elegy to what it signifies." Praise (New York:
The Ecco Press, 1974).

9 Blake wrote "who shall bind the infinite" beside a rough draft
of the print "Ancients of Days," which became the frontpiece to
Europe. Stevenson, p. 228.

10 "Trembling I sit day and night; my friends are astonished
at me. / Yet they forgive my wanderings, 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, 16-203).

11 The "female will" haunts Blake's canon to the end. In
Jerusalem, chapter two, Los brings to mind Europe's Enitharmon when
he asks: "O Albion, why wilt thou create a female will, / To hide
the most evident God in a hidden covert, even / In the shadows of a
woman and a secluded Holy Place, / That we may pry after him as after
a stolen treasure" (Jerusalem, 30, 31-34).

12 Blake's Apocalypse, p. 150.

13 "The Design of the Last Judgement," in The Complete Poetry and

14 The "crystal house" reference also helps characterize Enitharmon
in Europe, for it brings to mind Blake's notebook poem "The Crystal
Cabinet." In that poem a protagonist, who had been "dancing merrily"
in the wild, is locked by a maiden in a cabinet made of gold, pearl,
and crystal. Within, the cabinet opens into "a little lovely moonie
night" where a translucent maiden appears. When the protagonist tries
to "seize the inmost form" of the maiden, the cabinet bursts. There
is no "inmost form" in the realm of purely material sensuality, which
the cabinet represents. Enitharmon, like this maiden, would trap any
who follow her into the materialistic crystal house, which offers only
the illusion of eternity.

15 In The Illuminated Blake, p. 162.


17 Rintrah especially resembles Orc in many ways. Both Orc and
Rintrah are called to "Arise," and are referred to as first-born.
Both are characterized by strength and fury, and Rintrah is even
called "king of fire," which is usually Orc's element. Blake, I think,
wanted to insure that we saw Rintrah's rise as a direct answer to
exhibition of Orc's power--revolution and reaction will meet head-on.
18 This placement varies, however, in different copies of the poem. Here I am following the order used by David Erdman in Blake's Illuminated Works, the two textless plates occurring between lines 42 and 43 of the Prophecy. W.H. Stevenson uses an order which interchanges plates five and six, still leaving the latter plate of social commentary (pl. 7) between the two calls to "Arise."

19 W.H. Stevenson points out that "our world is a dream" to Enitharmon, p. 231.

20 Prophet vs. Empire, p. 211.
23 Bloom, p. 156.
25 David Erdman reminds us "the pope of British State Religion is George the Third," Prophet vs. Empire, p. 213.
26 Prophet vs. Empire, pp. 216-217.
27 Fearful Symmetry, p. 255.
28 Gallant, p. 34.
29 "And every moment has a couch of gold for soft repose / (A moment equals a pulsation of the artery); / And between every two moments stands a daughter of Beulah / To feed the sleepers on their couches with maternal care / . . . Every time less than a pulsation of the artery / Is equal in its period and value to six thousand years; / For in this period the poet's work is done, & all the great / Events of time start forth and are conceived in such a period" (Milton, pl. 28-29).
BIBLIOGRAPHY


