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Pierre Sahel

THE COUP D'ETAT OF SHAKESPEARE'S RICHARD III: POLITICS AND DRAMATICS

When we consider the seraphic Richmond's triumphs over the monstrous Richard III at the very end of Shakespeare's last Yorkist play¹ we can only subscribe to Bernard J. Paris's view that if *'Richard III* asks whether a human being can ... sin with impunity ... the answer is a resounding No'². When we consider Richard's progress towards the coup d'Etat that crowns him king, we can only perceive that his conquest of the throne is achieved in a complete moral vacuum. Neither scruples nor serious obstacles detain him: he first sets his brothers Clarence and Edward in deadly hate, (I. ii) gets rid of the one (I. iv), and, after the other's death (II. ii), eliminates the members of the queen's faction (II. iv). Shakespeare's artistic simplification of a presumably complex situation induces us to regard Richard not so much as a 'sinning' 'human being' as a character acting in a drama. The protagonist's histrionic talents have indeed been noticed³. It is the purpose of this paper to study the last stage of Richard's coup presented as it is by Shakespeare as a dramatic demonstration. Richard appears as the author of three playlets which I shall here call 'tableaux' so as to avoid confusion between Richard's theatre and Shakespeare's — between, that is, the various dramaturgical endeavours of Richard's devising and the customary divisions of Shakespeare's drama into 'scenes'.

The scenario of the first tableau is unfolded in the wings. Two actors are describing their own dramatic art and using, of course, a specifically theatrical terminology:

Richard Come, cousin, canst thou quake and change thy colour,
 Murder thy breath in middle of a word,
 And then again begin, and stop again,
 As if thou were distraught and mad with terror ?

Buckingham Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian,
 Speak, and look back, and pry on every side,
 Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,
 Intending deep suspicion, Ghastly looks
 Are at my service like enforced smiles,
 And both are ready in their offices
 At any time to grace my stratagems.

III, v, 1-11

They are costumed as for some show. Theirs are not princely garments but, according to the stage direction— 'the most obviously authorial direction in the play'⁴ - 'rotten armours, marvellous ill-favoured' i. e. often-worn trappings from a theatrical wardrobe. As they make ready to go on, they are naturally concerned with the audience, whose most important member has just been sent for:

Buckingham Is Catesby gone ? (12)

Richard He is, and see, he brings the Mayor along. (13)

The reason for the costumes becomes plain as the argument of the tableau is revealed. Richard and Buckingham pretend to have just overcome some rebellion or military danger, Buckingham starts addressing the Lord Mayor but also makes show of being so engrossed in warlike preoccupation that his sentences are always left unfinished and his breath is actually 'murdered in middle of a word':

Lord Mayor-(14)

Lord Mayor, the reason we have sent-(18)

Indeed an actor should be intent on performing his part and not on the audience: the play won't wait! The Lord Mayor, the V.I.P. in the audience, must moreover believe that the threat which causes so much concern and anxiety is still dangerously hovering:

Richard Look to the draw-bridge there! (15)

Buckingham Hark: a drum! (16)

Richard Catesby, o'erlook the walls! (17)

Richard Look back! Defend thee, here are enemies. (19)

Buckingham God and our innocence defend and guard us! (20)

Richard Be patient, they are friends. (21)

These are rapid exchanges on the stage: the draw-bridge and walls are references to the place where Richard, Buckingham

and the Lord Mayor are actually standing, but they are allusively treated as elements in the decor of Richard and Buckingham's tableau: the drum may not be heard: the 'enemies' are not more real than Buckingham's 'innocence' or Richard's 'patience'. The choicest moment in the playlet is now to come: Lovell and Ratcliffe, Buckingham and Richard's accomplices and (in the show) walking gentlemen, bring Hastings's head. Set as it is against the sham military background suggested by Buckingham and Richard, this *barbarous and bloody spectacle* will not appear as a testimony of Richard's ruthless ways to deal with his opponents but should, for the Mayor, be a proof that Hastings's rebellion found rebuke when it was deftly handled by the two virtuous dukes. Still the Mayor waxes sceptical. He may turn into a most reluctant and unconvinced spectator-upon-Richard's stage. In spite of Buckingham's insistence that Hastings had treacherously behaved (33 and 38), he asks: 'Had he done so?' (39) – a most dangerous question and a sign that perhaps he is not to be so easily led by the nose. This forces Richard to address him directly for the first time and to put on a show of anger:

What, think you we are Turks or infidels?
Or that we would, against the form of law,
Proceed thus rashly in the villain's death?

40–42

A more intricate dramatic technique is also made use of. Up to now, *direct* and crude performance had been staged, with the bustle of actors, for the benefit of the spectator. Now the Lord Mayor is given a brief *reported* scene:

My lord, we would have had you heard
The traitor speak, and timorously confess
The manner and the purpose of his treasons.

55–57

This confession is, of course, a complete fabrication. The real spectator, the spectator of *Richard III*, who saw Hastings's last moments and heard no confession of his in the scene immediately preceding Richard's first tableau (III, iv, 80-107), appreciates it as pure moonshine. The fourteen lines of the immediately following scene (III, vi), the scrivener's reflexion on the pseudo indictment against Hastings, are a Shakespearian coda to the reported passage in the Ricardian theatre. For the

moment, in III, v, drama comments upon drama, and the now convinced Mayor unwittingly defines the reported scene technique where description replaces direct dramatization:

But, my good lord, your Graces' words shall serve
As well as I had seen and heard him speak.

61—62

The once vacillating spectator now suspends all disbelief. The Lord Mayor holds

- 1) that Hastings was a traitor who deserved his death;
- 2) that Richard is the saviour of the state—providential man, in other words: that is the moral of it.

Before the end of the first tableau, we learn that he will go as far as to propagate the lesson Richard has so successfully driven home. He himself will repeat Richard's show for the benefit of a new and vaster audience:

I'll acquaint our duteous citizens
With all Your just proceedings in this cause.

64—65

Through him, the reported scene will be reported again.

The spectator - upon - Richard's stage has hardly left when the two actors meet in the wings again. Richard, let us note, is more than an actor. He proves a stage manager, even an author. He explains to Buckingham what follows in his scenario. The purpose of lines 71 to 104 of III, v is both with the preparation of the second tableau and the casting and rehearsal of the third tableau. These are Richard's directions: Buckingham must go to the Guildhall and address the Mayor and his main citizens (the vaster audience) in order

- 1) to discredit the dead king and his heirs: the cruelty and debauchery of king Edward must be brought out; he is to be shown as a sexual monster; hence his children should be regarded as illegitimate—the late king being probably a bastard himself;

- 2) to exalt Richard: Gloucester must emerge as the only proper claimant to the throne:

Infer the bastardy of Edward's children...
Moreover, urge his hateful luxury
And bestial appetite in change of lust...
Tell them, when that my mother went with child

Of that insatiate Edward, noble York
 My princely father then had wars in France,
 And by true computation of the time
 Found that the issue was not his—begot.

74—89

If the Guildhall audience go along with this, i.e. swallow both slander and magnification, the third tableau will follow: Richard takes care to instruct where (Baynard's castle, 96) and when ('towards three or four o'clock', 100) it should take place, and to describe the participants that will nearly serve as decor ('reverend fathers and well-learned bishops', 99—possibly Doctor Shaa and Friar Penker, whom Lovell and Ratcliffe had sent to fetch with all dispatch, 102-103).

Richard's second tableau is reported by Buckingham as soon as he is back from the Guildhall. He has dutifully spoken of Edward's lust and of his children's bastardy; he has embellished the rehearsed text when he portrayed Richard as a wise, pious, and courageous prince. *But* the spectators were cold and unresponsive ('dumb statues or breathing stones', III, vii, 25). This tableau therefore was almost a failure. Only Buckingham's paid applauders, his clique, could retrieve the situation:

Some followers of mine own,
 At lower end of the hall, hurl'd up their caps
 And some ten voices cried 'God save King Richard!'

34—36

It is now necessary for the two accomplices to avail themselves of every means to make the last part of their play a success. That is why, presumably during the interval between the second and third tableaux, they meet again in the wings.

From the wings, Richard and Buckingham glimpse at their future spectators ('The Mayor is here at hand', III, vii, 44); ('the Lord Mayor knocks', 54). The two decorative reverend fathers have already arrived; Richard will stand between them (47) with a prayer-book in his hand (46). The argument of the tableau will be Richard's reluctance to assume power. He will 'Play the maid's part, still answer nay, and take it (50)'. Buckingham will serve as the self-appointed spokesman of the citizens: at his insistent suit, Richard will in the end condescend to seize the crown.

During the first instants of the performance, the old and effective recipe of suspense is relied upon. Buckingham is craving admittance; the spectators have come to see Richard; Richard will not be seen. Through Catesby the audience are only afforded a reported description of the duke:

He is within, with two right reverend fathers,
Divinely bent to meditation:
And in no worldly suits would he be mov'd
To draw him from his holy exercise.

60—63

The contents of this new reported scene are as fictitious as those of the confession scene of Hastings. They imprint on the listeners' minds the picture of a pious and most unambitious prince. Then the dramatic technique, once more, becomes intricate and original. Catesby plays go-between, and through him a sort of dialogue develops between Buckingham and the still absent Richard—the dialogue, we know, has been carefully rehearsed. The result is an extraordinary technique—perhaps unique in Shakespeare: the superimposition of dramatized scene and reported scene. This here arouses intenser suspense and expectation.

The emblematic *vignette* of the Christian prince engrossed in his pious meditations and flanked by his two churchmen, at first prepared by Richard (a), then reported by Catesby (b), is commented upon by Buckingham (c):

When holy and devout religious men
Are at their beads, 'tis much to draw them hence,
So sweet is zealous contemplation.

91—93

It is at last dramatized (d): *Enter Richard aloft, between two bishops.*

Richard's long-delayed appearance is the climax of the third tableau. The Lord Mayor describes the scene ('See where his Grace stands, 'tween two clergymen!', 94); Buckingham points it out as a moral emblem ('Two props of virtue for a Christian Prince, / To stay him from the fall of vanity', 95-96), and insists on a 'naturalistic' detail ('a book of prayer in his hand', 97). The superimposition of dramatized scene and reported scene even leads to a scenic pleonasm, since Richard

is being watched by his spectators just as Buckingham describes him— a psychological bludgeoning with a view to propaganda.

As has been prearranged, Buckingham, as the self-styled spokesman of the citizens, offers the crown. As has been prearranged and already been explained once, the lesson of Richard's pure legitimacy and his nephews' bastardy is recited, while Richard plays the coy virgin and, for the moment, 'answers nay'. At length, as has been prearranged, the virgin 'takes it'. Buckingham pronounces 'Long live Richard, England's worthy King', and the citizens, the spectators-on-the stage, reply 'Amen' (239-240). *Plaudite cives*.

At the close of *Richard III* we may very well deem that the play's answer to the query whether a human being can sin with impunity is 'a resounding NO'. But does it ask the question? Readers and spectators may feel more inclined to smile or laugh at its amusing and farcical aspects than to fall in agreement with the righteousness of some of its *personae's* assertions. In the central scenes, Shakespeare's dramatic virtuosity induces us to make fun of the gullible spectators-on-Richard's stage. Distancing is introduced between *that* audience and the public of *Richard III* to whom is left the privilege of relishing the all but impossible successes of the protagonist's mixture of high politics and amateur dramatics. Richard's coup d' Etat provides a splendid parodical answer to the Renaissance scholars' academic investigations into the different forms of government. His regime indeed is the fanciful synthesis of aristocracy, since an aristocrat he is; monarchy, since a king he becomes; and democracy, since he is the only Shakespearian sovereign to reach power after a—definitely fake— popular election.

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- 1 All quotations are from *King Richard III*. ed. Antony Hammond, The Arden Shakespeare, London, 1981.
- 2 'Richard III: Shakespeare's First Great Mimetic Character'. *The Aligarh Journal of English Studies*, Vol VIII, No. 1, 1983, P. 57.
- 3 See, for example, Thomas F. Van Laan, *Role-Playing in Shakespeare* Toronto, 1978.
- 4 Antony Hammond, *op cit.*, p. 237 n.

Aligarh Muslim University

Roma Gill

THE CRAFT OF SHAKESPEARE'S ART

How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted o'er,
In states unborn and accents yet unknown?

Julius Caesar, III. i. 111-3

Since 1977 these words (spoken by Cassius after the murder of Caesar) have had a new resonance for me. I have been editing some of Shakespeare's plays for a new series—the Oxford School Shakespeare. Although I hope that my texts will bear strict bibliographical examination, the editions cannot be called 'scholarly', and they are not intended for the 'Learned person[s]... versed in language or literature'—which is the most common modern sense (*OED* 5) of the word 'scholar'. The reader that I envisage is more like the Schoolboy or school-girl' of *OED*. 1, or simply the 'Person who learns' (*OED* 3). He or she is typically an O Level candidate—not, necessarily, a teen-ager; not, probably, a native speaker of English; and not, certainly, a conscious inheritor of the same cultural traditions as Shakespeare. To supply this reader with the necessary explanatory notes and introductions to the different plays, I found myself looking at Shakespeare through fresh eyes—the eyes of a child: I was trying to ask the questions that a child might ask, and to give the sort of answers that a child, sceptical and undazzled by reputation, would find acceptable. Take, for instance, the chorus at the opening of Act II of *Romeo and Juliet* ('Now old desire doth on his death-bed lie, And young affection gapes to be his heir...'). Samuel Johnson could see no point in this, and he said so:

The use of this chorus is not easily discovered. It conduces nothing to the progress of the play, but relates what is already known, or what the next scenes will show; and relates it without adding improvement of any moral sentiment.

The editor of the New Arden edition of *Romeo and Juliet* quotes Dr Johnson's comment; and any editor might point out that the speech is in fact a sonnet. But I felt that my unsophisticated reader—whether in Delhi or Ibadan or in Sheffield, England—would not be satisfied with such a footnote, and would rather ask 'Well, what's it there for?'

There is, I think, a perfectly good answer—the academic (Dr Johnson) in his study cannot appreciate it, but to the actor in the theatre the purpose of this chorus is very obvious. Romeo leaves the ballroom after the moment of intense lyrical stasis in the sonnet with Juliet. The actor needs to re-arrange his emotions—and probably get round to the other side of the stage before appearing to leap over the Capulet orchard-wall to pay his homage to Juliet in the balcony scene. And for this he needs time. The second chorus allows him a breathing-space of fourteen lines. And it offers for our contemplation an aspect of Shakespeare that is too easily neglected, especially when our acquaintance with the plays comes either (like Dr Johnson's) through solitary and silent reading, or else through the medium of television.

As well as Shakespeare the poet, there is Shakespeare the craftsman—the playwright who seems to have understood better than any of his contemporaries the needs, demands and resources of the Elizabethan theatre. Records testify to his close involvement—as a shareholder in the Globe and as an actor with the King's Men. The plays themselves are evidence of his growing mastery of the craft. That second chorus in *Romeo and Juliet* is clumsy: I suspect he was working at high pressure with this play, and that from time to time he tampered with his own text—almost as though he could anticipate the endeavours of twentieth-century editors and took a delight in confusing them! Another awkwardness in *Romeo and Juliet* is the time-sequence: the entire action of the play takes less than five days—from early morning on Sunday until just before dawn on Thursday. Shakespeare's source, the narrative poem by Arthur Brooke, allows several months to elapse between the lovers' first meeting in the ballroom and their last embrace in the Capulet vault. Occasionally we become aware

that the play's compression is damaging to our suspension of disbelief: for instance, Friar John could not possibly have been quarantined for more than about half an hour. Sometimes it seems as though we are being asked to respond on the 'double time-scheme' that is such a notable feature in *Othello*.

For *Romeo and Juliet* a fairly simple explanation about the sequence of events could be given to my imaginary reader. *Julius Caesar* was another matter, because here the craftsmanship is so masterly that it needs to be indicated before it can be seen: *ars est celare artem*. To reveal the art one needs a copy of North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*, open at the 'Life of Julius Caesar' and (simultaneously) at the 'Life of Marcus Brutus': Shakespeare managed to hold both 'Lives' in his head, if not in his hand, at the same time. Since neither Plutarch nor his translator provides the appropriate dates, a chronological table is useful; and it is helpful to be aware of the physical conditions of the Globe Playhouse.

After the Cobbler's puns on 'all' and 'awl', 'sole, and 'soul' (which identify him as an honest *English* workman!), we are given the reason for the Roman festivities: 'we make holiday to see Caesar, and to rejoice in his Triumph'. The tribune Marullus can see no cause for celebration:

Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?
What tributaries follow him to Rome
To grace in captive bonds his chariot wheels?

These lines (l.i. 35-7) establish the occasion: we are to witness Caesar's formal triumphal entry into Rome after the Battle of Munda—which ended the Civil War with Pompey and his sons, leaving Caesar victorious and (potentially) tyrannical. The Battle of Munda was fought in the year 45 B. C., and so the Triumph—and the first lines of the play—must start from here.

Very soon, however, we are given a precise date, when Marullus reminds Flavius that 'it is the feast of Lupercal'. The two tribunes leave the stage, and a slight change of scene is marked when Caesar enters in solemn procession. But this is *not* the ceremony that we have been expecting: it is not the conqueror's formal entry into Rome after the Battle of Munda.

Shakespeare has manipulated the time-scheme so that the celebration of the feast of Lupercal has been superimposed upon the Triumph. The play's first scene has only 78 lines; but the end is weeks— even months— away from the beginning.

The feast of Lupercus (a pastoral deity who cared for the fertility of flocks and herds) was held on 15 February; on that day, according to Plutarch,

there are divers noblemen's sons, young men— and some of them magistrates themselves that govern them— which run naked through the city, striking in sport them they meet in their way with leather thongs... And many noblewomen and gentlewomen also go of purpose to stand in their way, and do put forth their hands to be stricken... persuading themselves that, being with child, they shall have good delivery, and also, being barren, that it will make them to conceive with child.

The first scene of the play begins on some unspecified public holiday and ends precisely on 14 February— that is, on the eve of the feast of Lupercal. Scene two opens with the Lupercalia and ends— when?

It is a long scene— more than three hundred lines. The race is run (off-stage, of course) and won by Mark Antony who offers the victor's laurel crown to Caesar, 'Which he did thrice refuse'. Whilst this is taking place Cassius reveals his mean-spirited hatred of Caesar and begins to work on Brutus, recognizing that the senator's honourable mettle may be wrought from that it is dispos'd'. After casual promises to meet both Casca and Brutus 'tomorrow', Cassius speaks the threatening couplet that closes the scene:

And after this, let Caesar seat him sure;
For we will shake him, or worse days endure.

For a moment there is an empty stage; but Folio prints a stage-direction calling for '*Thunder and lightning*'.

MS for the Folio printers seems to have been unusually clean, and T.S. Dorsch, in the Arden edition (1955), suggests a careful scribal copy of the foul papers, used at some time as prompt-book. Some of the directions could be called 'literary', whereas others are more business-like— indicating a mixture of instructions, issuing from both the author and the prompter.

The thunder and lightning here are not merely atmospheric; they are functional. Casca returns to the stage, meeting Cicero

whose question to him is 'brought you Caesar home?' Time has passed— time for Casca to have escorted Caesar to his house after the Lupercalian festivities, and to have 'walk'd about the streets' to witness the 'prodigies' which 'so conjunctly meet'. Naturally our attention is concentrated on the omens— and we have all learned to say the right commonplaces about microcosm/macrocosm correspondences, recognizing that for many Elizabethans, as for Casca, the prodigies

are portentous things
Unto the climate that they point upon.

When Cicero asks 'Comes Caesar to the Capitol tomorrow?' and Casca gives an affirmative answer, we are so distracted by the storm that we scarcely notice how the days have slipped past! But look carefully, and you will see that whilst the evening is that of the feast of Lupercal held on 15 February, the 'tomorrow' is the Ides of March: exactly one *month* later.

But even this is too simple, for the discussion that follows (between Casca and Cassius) takes place at no such specific time: it seems to wander between February and March— and indeed could have been started at any time after the Battle of Munda. The storm confuses the calendar. Cassius has only just begun to plan the assault on Brutus's conscience and he gives tactical instructions to the conspirators:

Good Cinna, take this paper,
And look you lay it in the praetor's chair
Where Brutus may but find it; and throw this
In at his window: set this up with wax
Upon old Brutus' statue...

I. iii. 142ff.

Such things are done— or, rather they have *been* done. In the next scene Lucius, 'Searching the window for a flint', discovers 'This paper, thus seal'd up'. When Brutus reads the exhortation, he finds that it is familiar:

'Brutus, thou sleep'st: awake!
Such instigations have been often dropp'd
Where I have took them up...

II. i. 48ff.

A multiple time-scheme is now fully in operation.
At the end of Act 1 scene iii Cassius left the satge ramarking

it is after midnight, and ere day
 We will awake him [Brutus] and be sure of him.

The scene that follows is (in modern editions) Act II scene i, whose early lines (2-3) make us conscious of time by their very vagueness: Brutus 'cannot, by the progress of the stars, Give guess how near to day'. His meditation on Caesar must, I think, be read in much the same way that we read the first soliloquy in *Dr Faustus*: the thought-processes that find formulation here are no spur-of-the-moment notions, but the deliberations of weeks and months (in the case of *Dr Faustus*— of years). We are brought back to a precise time and date with the return of Lucius, who is immediately dismissed by his master:

Get you to bed again, it is not day.
 Is not tomorrow, boy, the ides of March?

From this point the action slows down— although the phrase 'slows down' perhaps gives the wrong impression. Time now passes not from month to month, but (with an ever-increasing sense of urgency) from hour to hour. There is a knocking at the gate (almost as ominous as the knocking in *Macbeth*); the conspirators begin their attack on Brutus, who is quickly won to join their rebellion; further support is canvassed, and the assassination is planned. By the time 'The clock hath stricken three' at line 191, all arrangements have been made, and the second half of the scene is mere anticipation— marking time! Portia's comments on 'the raw cold morning' and the 'rheumy and unpurged air' speak not only the concern of a devoted wife: they serve for stage-lighting, increasing in strength as the day— which is undoubtedly now the Ides of March— dawns. We are conscious of the passage of *hours*.

The technique is familiar to cinema-goers— in fact it is a film cliché for the creation of suspense. An action is plotted, and the time is fixed; then the camera cuts across from scenes of activity to focus on the clock, with its hands moving inexorably towards the deadline.

With deadly punctuality Brutus calls on Caesar, and at Caesar's house in Act II scene ii we learn that 'tis stricken eight'. The crowds are assembling on the road to the Capitol:

they are represented for us in the person of the Soothsayer, Artemidorus, who answers Portia's request for the correct time: it is 'About the ninth hour'.

There is no further need to juggle with time scales: for the murder of Caesar and the subsequent conflicts Shakespeare needed only to follow Plutarch, and select relevant details. Of course he compresses the historian's report— but there are only three or four years to account for (which is little in comparison with the twenty-seven years of chronicle history which Marlowe had to accommodate within the three hours' traffic of the stage in *Edward II*). There is, however, one telescoping act in *Julius Caesar* which deserves special comment here.

Nothing new (surely?) can be said about the contrasting orations made by Brutus and Antony in Act III Scene 2, or about the fickleness of the many-headed Roman mob. Shakespeare pinpoints every change in the public's attitude— from 'This Caesar was a tyrant' at line 71 to 'O royal Caesar' at line 245— with greater sensitivity than a modern demographer studying election results. When the citizens, fired with resolution, leave the forum (to set fire to the city) Antony is alone with Caesar's body. He briefly contemplates his achievement;

Now let it work: mischief thou art afoot,
Take thou what course thou wilt.

As if in answer to a prayer, a 'Servant' enters at the half-line, and Antony completes the pentameter with a question: How now, fellow? The answer is anachronistic: 'Sir, Octavius is already come to Rome'. Already? The assassination of Julius Caesar took place in 44 B.C.; it was another year— 43 B.C.— before Octavius Caesar joined forces with Antony.

But the moment is not melodramatic: the completion of the formal line suggests a fine inevitability— and, moreover, it has been beautifully anticipated. This is the same servant who, in the previous scene, had told Antony that Octavius 'lies tonight within seven leagues of Rome' (line 286). His entrance then brought him into the silence which must have followed Antony's private lamentation over Caesar's body, ending with its prophecy of chaos to come:

And Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge,
 With Ate by his side come hot from hell,
 Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
 Cry 'Havoc!', and let slip the dogs of war...

III. I. 270ff.

The movement of the speech is very characteristic of Shakespeare—the build-up to a climax, and then the gentle downwards curve as the poet comes back to land with the last two brooding lines:

That this foul deed shall smell above the earth
 With carrion men, groaning for burial.

The change of direction comes *here*—the second movement of the play opens with the surprise entry of a servant, the change to colloquial (but rhythmically still fairly regular) speech, and the concentration on practical matters—Rome is not yet ready for Octavius: the temperature must be tested, and the servant shall bear witness:

Hie hence and tell him so. Yet, stay awhile;
 Thou shalt not back till I have borne this corpse
 Into the market-place.

The last half-line of the scene, however, is that which shows the overwhelmingly *practical* reason why the new movement, the play's upward swing, occurs at this moment: 'Lend me your hand'.

Without the servant, Antony would be alone on the stage with Caesar's body, which must be moved. One actor, of course, can move a body by himself—but how is it to be done? In *King John*, Arthur is a child, and can be carried ('Go, bear him in thine arms... How easy dost thou take all England up'); and Hamlet need show no respect for Polonius: 'I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room'. But Caesar is now—as perhaps never before in the play—'the foremost man of all this world' (IV. iii. 22). And Shakespeare is the great craftsman of the theatre who is capable of altering history to suit the Elizabethan stage.

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MARCUS BRUTUS: THE DIVIDED SELF

The basic conflict in *Julius Caesar*, round which the entire pattern of the play is structured, derives from and in a way is rooted in the opposed political passions and conceptions of the power-nexus. These are reflected, at one extreme, in the alleged despotism of Julius Caesar (his ambition, says Cassius, before the murder, 'shall be glanced at', and after the event, 'ambition's debt is paid') and his close alliance with Mark Antony who bears him 'an ingrafted love' and, on the other, in the secret manoeuvrings of Cassius, Casca, Trebonius and Metellus Cimber—the band of conspirators by whom Brutus is also roped in and is asked to lead the conspiracy—whose whole endeavour is directed towards thwarting Caesar's further growth into illimitable power. The play is enveloped in what may tentatively be distinguished as an outer and an inner mystery and the tangled skein of personal and impersonal motivations render it both puzzling and fascinating. The military power is at present concentrated into the hands of Julius Caesar who, after registering a convincing victory over Pompey and his sons in Spain, returns to Rome with 'glories', triumphs' and 'spoils' and is about to be established as King by being offered the crown, on the occasion of the feast of Lupercal, in the Capitol. The plebeians, flawed with the taint of 'ingratitude' for forgetting Pompey so soon and for applauding the inflated egotism of Caesar, are reprimanded and instigated by the tribunes to rise in revolt against his suzerainty. Further, Flavius asks Marullus to 'disrobe the images, If you do find them deck'd with ceremonies'¹ (I,i,64-65), for (and the image of the falcon is very much implicit here):

These growing feathers pluck'd from Caesar's wing
Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,
Who else would soar above the view of men
And keep us all in servile fearfulness.

I,i, 72 – 75

Later we are told that both Flavius and Marullus were 'put to silence' for 'pulling scarfs off Caesar's images.' We are imperceptibly led to believe that things have already reached such an impasse that quick and decisive action is called for: the immediate pretext for it is provided by Caesar's blatant and categorical refusal to accept the petition for Cimber's repeal of banishment. Caesar's meteoric and unimpeded ascent to supremacy and the resultant turmoil in the body-politic is imaged in the fearful portents visible both in the phenomenal world and in the world of man:

heaven hath infus'd them with these spirits
To make them instruments of fear and warning
Unto some monstrous state...
A man no mightier than thyself, or me,
In personal action, yet prodigious grown,
And fearful, as these strange eruptions are.

I, iii, 69—78

These may be regarded as the major disorder symbols. The thrasonical Caesar, dubbed as a man of 'feeble temper' by Cassius who yet 'bestrides the narrow world like a Colossus', insists all along on his royalism, creating his own heroic image which is in consonance with the Renaissance notion of the priority of the soul over the body and is juxtaposed with counter, mock-heroic images, and these posturings of his look rather ludicrous. Cassius, the sinister arch-conspirator is, therefore, moved to plan the strategy for undermining his entrenched power and authority with a ruthless hand. Simultaneously the dormant seeds of ambition in Brutus have to be activated and his inchoate political idealism is the proper organ to be played upon. And Cassius, as a psychologist of penetrating perception, knows his job of sounding out and giving the requisite twist to Brutus's hitherto hidden and imperfectly known impulses.

Initially Brutus looks startlingly naive, idealistic and hence gullible, calm, detached and meditative, fond of solitude, one whose eye-lids, unlike those of his *own* Lucius, more often than not remain unvisited by the 'honey-heavy dew of slumber' and is given to reading late at night as it is twice underlined thus: 'Look, Lucius, here's the book I sought for so; / I put it in

the pocket of my gown (IV, iii, 251-52) and; 'Let me see, let me see; is not the leaf turned down/Where I left reading?' (IV, iii, 272-73). His proneness to meditation is brought out in such stray remarks as

Why, farewell, Portia. We must die Messala.
With meditating that she must die once,
I have the patience to endure it now. IV, iii, 189-91

And while Brutus despondingly purports at committing suicide Dardarius refers to the poignancy of this contemplated act to Clitus thus: 'Look, he meditates' (V. v. 12). He is habitually lost in self-communings, is secretive and tight-lipped even in the matter of exchanging confidences with Portia as is borne out in her touchingly affectionate remonstrance with him thus:

Am I Yourself
But, as it were, in sort or limitation,
To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,
And talk to you sometimes? Dwell I but in the suburbs
Of your good pleasure? II, i 282-86

It is perhaps of the nature of this specific relationship 'to be without communication':² it is not marked by reciprocity or genuine warmth of feeling on his part. Similarly, in the celebrated ugly wrangle with Cassius, when with the 'icy weight of his self-esteem' he bears him down by humiliating him he seems in fact to be externalizing his inner conflicts—his awareness of failure and his looking askance, obliquely, and in retrospect, at having been invited to join the conspiracy: 'You have done that you should be sorry for' (IV, iii, 65). This scene is in no way 'engineered as an experiment in psychological sadism' as is speculated by William R. Bowden.³ Brutus heavily comes down on Cassius' friend for accepting bribes, demands of Cassius extorted money for paying his own legions, insinuates at his having 'an itching palm' and resents his withholding from him the ill-got money when it was urgently needed by him. He thus lands himself in an exasperatingly contradictory position: approving bribery with connivance and demanding money wrung by underhand means while condemning both these on the theoretical plane—a kind of antithesis which is at the root

of all his tensions and ambivalences. Underlying the petulance displayed by him in this scene is the ambiguity of response to a situation which he would and would not like to put up with. This is also reflected in the taut, rasping, uneasy tones of both the combatants and the matter is patched up only by the ultimate giving in by Cassius to the posturing of invulnerability by Brutus. The latter also feels psychologically relieved of the pressure of pent-up feelings after having lived through this skirmish. But this is to anticipate.

Brutus is a divided being; like Cassius, too, he is inward-looking, torn between contrary emotions; 'with himself at war' he is mostly given to brooding over the exigencies of the situation he finds himself placed in and his self-grapplings are jealously guarded against any intrusion or prying into:

Vexed I am

Of late with passions of some difference,

Conceptions only proper to myself,

Which give some soil, perhaps, to my behaviours; I, ii, 38-41

Later, in an anxious moment of solicitude Portia comments to this effect 'No, my Brutus; / You have some sick offence within your mind; (II, i, 267-68). Bowden is therefore not justified in upholding that Brutus does not feel the strain of internal conflict⁴ and is incapable of being put on 'the rack of this tough world'. He is moved by the worthiest of motives and stoops at the same time to the most ignoble promptings. He professes love for Caesar in more than one context (there is no shred of evidence for any mutuality of response, though, except Cassius's and Antony's indirect references to it) and yet allows himself to be seduced by the machinations of Cassius who burns with envy for Caesar's 'getting the start of the majestic world'. Cassius finds it hard to stomach the fact that a man like Caesar, who is apparently no better, in physical dimensions and intellectual gifts, than Brutus or himself, should elevate his being to an Olympus-like stature and be accepted as such by 'underlings'— 'petty men who walk under his huge legs'. Caesar seems to be very discerning when he makes a forthright comment about Cassius thus:

Yet if my name were liable to fear,
I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius ...
He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men.

I, ii, 196-98

This hardly applies to Brutus. When in reply to Cassius's adroitly formulated query: 'Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?' Brutus replies, naively and unsuspectingly, 'No, Cassius; for the eye sees not itself/But by reflection, by some other things; (I, ii, 51-52) Cassius makes the first tentative and exploratory gesture of entangling him in the insidious web of his guile thus:

And it is very much lamented, Brutus,
That you have no such mirrors as will turn
Your hidden worthiness into your eye,
That you might see your shadow.

I, ii, 54-57

The saliency and centrality of this passage has not been adequately noticed by the critics. The 'eye-mirror' metaphor recalls Ulysses's address to Achilles to the effect that one cannot gain knowledge of one's self except through others. The accent here falls on the 'hidden' worthiness' of which Brutus stands in need of being made aware, but the 'shadow; as Goddard puts it, will only be a 'shadow on the wall.'⁵ Cassius proceeds warily and reduces his own role to that of a mere glass in which Brutus may catch a glimpse of himself:

And since you know you cannot see yourself
So well as by reflection, I, your glass,
Will modestly discover to yourself
That of yourself which you yet know not of.

I, ii, 66-69

Cassius's real intention by the use of this device is to wrench Brutus's mind away to his own purposes but, ironically enough, the image to be projected by the distorting mirror of Cassius's mind will in the nature of things be only a grotesque one. He had already hinted at the fact that it would be very much worth while if, as speculated by many others— 'many of the best respect in Rome'— the noble Brutus were sensitive to the milieu by which they were environed. Exploiting the image of

the 'eye' and groping through the dark labyrinths of Cassius's opaque meanings Brutus unburdens himself to the following effect:

If it be aught toward the general good,
Set honour in one eye, and death i'th'other,
And I will look on both indifferently;
For let the gods so speed me as I love
The name of honour more than I fear death

I, ii, 84-88

Toying with the specious philosophical commonplace, 'the general good' (Blake stigmatises it as 'the cry of the scoundrel and the hypocrite') the alternatives distinctly posed by him are 'honour' (the recurrent *motif* of Brutus's utterances throughout the play) and 'death', and the forthright and explicit declaration of intentions (with a touch of ingenuousness, though) amounts to the resolve that he would rather embrace the latter than abandon the former in case a choice were forced on him. This effusion lacks the bumptiousness (also the frothiness that goes along with it) and the Marlovian ring of a Hotspur in an identical context and is, on the contrary, marked with a candid simplicity as well as an ultimacy of will.

Brutus is offered 'the fruit of deceit/Ruddy and sweet to eat' (cf. Blake's *The Human Abstract*) only gradually and through subtle insinuations. The absorbing passion for 'the general good' is the ostensible reason given by him for consenting to ally himself with the clique of conspirators— 'the choice and master spirits of this age'— as dubbed by Antony who later, in a gesture of ironic inversion, calls them 'gentlemen all' and 'all honourable men': monosyllabic expressions which are charged with blistering contempt. The whole political machinery, resting on monarchism, is in a ramshackle way and has got to be put back on its rails. Neither Cassius nor Casca is precisely aware of the existence of any constitutional tangle except that they are vowed to tyrannicide and the conspirators are leagued together to achieve some kind of vague, Utopian freedom for the common man. Though contemporary Rome is not the focus of attention here as in *Coriolanus* or *Antony and Cleopatra* yet the state has fallen into decrepitude, if not corruption, and it is symptomatic of its unwholesomeness that despots like Caesar—

ogres of monstrous and unmitigated oppression— prosper in it by controlling its affairs and the plebeians are of necessity cowed down into submission:

What trash is Rome,
What rubbish, and what offal, when it serves
For the base matter to illuminate
So vile a thing as Caesar!

I, iii, 108-14

Brutus therefore, logically enough, calls for the necessary purge: 'A piece of work that will make sick men whole' (II, i, 327). In this particular context it is cryptically pointed out by Cassius that it is not so much Caesar as his own confederates, allowing themselves to be bullied, who in reality suffer from the 'falling-sickness':

No, Caesar hath it not; but you, and I,
And honest Casca we, have the falling-sickness.

I, ii, 252-53

Little by little Brutus is so manipulated as to become convinced that it is imperative to have Caesar dislodged from paramountcy because monarchy always tends to degenerate into tyranny. Exposed to the resplendent phenomenon of the dawn which Decius and Cinna merely observe as such, Casca reacts to it in his own peculiar fashion. Shrewd and pragmatic as he is and having an owl's vigilant eye on practical affairs he treats the sunrise as an emblem of the new day they wish to bring to Rome:

You shall confess that you are both deceiv'd,
Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises,
Which is a great way growing on the south,
Weighing the youthful season of the year.
Some two months hence, up higher toward the north
He first presents his fire; and the high east
Stands, as the Capitol, directly here.

II, i, 105-111

However inconsequential the talk they are engaged in and however fantastic the fact that Casca seems to locate the east towards the point of his sword, this utterance has its relevance because he is convinced that the conspirators will prove to be the liberators of their country. It may be added that the breaking of the dawn runs as a recurrent *motif* in the play in more than one context.

Cassius's portrayal is offered with a view to projecting him as a foil to Brutus: the former seems to be gifted with an uncanny insight into the latter's hidden and unsuspected motivations. Always playing safe and with a cunning politician's artifice at his command he succeeds in persuading Brutus to give the lead to the conspirators: he feels sure of putting his finger on his dupe's weak spot and of the laurels he himself has so far got:

Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet I see
Thy honourable mettle may be wrought
From that it is dispos'd: therefore 'tis meet
That noble minds keep ever with their likes;

I, ii, 305-308

He entertains no doubt of Brutus's nobility of mind but is no less convinced of his naivety and integrity of soul and of the fact that this nobility may easily be deflected from its rightful channel of expression and geared to his own designs and objectives. Does it also imply some sort of shrewd scepticism that his inherent virtues are most likely to be tarnished by promixity to Cassius himself? Brutus gives the impression of yielding to the temptation offered him by Cassius and other confederates rather too soon and in a naive and unself-conscious way. One is inevitably struck by the 'hugger-mugger', the murkiness and the precipitancy enshrouding the whole affair. The truth of the matter, however, is that once the seductive overture has been accepted the whole situation is subjected by him to a close and minute analysis and with a degree of near squeamishness. The famous orchard soliloquy begins with a kind of horrible finality: 'It must be by his death' and though the whole design of it may have the look of a set of rationalizations yet he does seem to be engaged in a sober inquiry, trying to reach some kind of certitude. His integrity is unquestionable and there always yawns a hiatus between a decision taken and the implementation of it in actuality. His mental stock-taking, in no way to be equated with fumbling, is evident from these lines:

I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general. He would be crown'd:
How that might change his nature, there's the question...
Crown him? that;-
And then, I grant, we put a sting in him,

That at his will he may do danger with,
The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins
Remorse from power; and, to speak truth of Caesar,
I have not known when his affections sway'd
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof,
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;

II, i, 11-23

Once again Brutus puts personal malice at a discount and he reiterates his passionate involvement in 'the general good'. It is the fear of the hypothetical change in Caesar's political behaviour likely to ensue from his being crowned and not any recognizable vices possessed by him at the moment which is the bugbear for him. It is the infinite gap between what he is and what he might become—the potential danger so to say—which is fraught with frightening possibilities. The lure of future power may put poison in the vessels of his mind and this may make him deviate from the path of moderation and make him lose his sense of poise. Back of this agonized critical assessment, riddled with uncertainties, lies the one fundamental piece of political wisdom: 'the abuse of greatness' ensues when it 'disjoins remorse from power', that is, when power is exercised without being tempered with and to the total exclusion of humaneness. And though he frankly admits that Caesar's judgment has never yielded to the sway of passions yet the apprehension persists that he may be corrupted by absolute power and the present show of suavity and apparent self-abnegation ('lowliness' as he terms it) may prove only a pretense of the 'climber-upward' who more often than not is 'consumed in confidence' and is power-crazy. He caps it all by saying:

what he is, augmented,
Would run to these and these extremities;
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg,
Which, hatch'd, would, as his kind, grow mischievous,
And kill him in the shell.

II, i, 30-34

Brutus's mind is not the kind of intricate, ratiocinative instrument for the exploration of experience as Hamlet's is but it certainly registers the impact of an internal conflict. He is perturbed by what even a little access to Caesar's power and

privileges may lead to: he is already powerful and therefore dangerous, and he may grow even more menacing and prove a genuine threat to peace and stability. His ambition (for which the serpent's egg is a concrete and vivid metaphor) may, given the chance of enrooting and proliferating itself, ultimately grow disastrous and plunge the whole body-politic into chaos. The shift from a conceptual to a metaphorical mode of utterance is worth some attention but even more significant is the impulse towards aborting the potential danger: 'And kill him in the shell.'

Depending upon the possibility of attaining the acme of power, on Caesar's forcible elimination, and before the task is actually accomplished, Brutus is made to traverse the inferno of conflict, live through the bitter agony of suspense in the subsequent soliloquy thus:

Between the acting of a dreadful thing
 And the first motion, all the interim is
 Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:
 The genius and the mortal instruments
 Are then in council; and the state of man,
 Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
 The nature of an insurrection.

II, i, 63-69

The political idealist in Brutus— one who is given to playing one half-baked thought against another— is in disarray which would have left the plain blunt soldier unaffected: at the moment he is torn between the first stirrings of ambition and the prospect of consummation which attends it. For him it is a nightmarish experience, very much like a phantasma, in that he is faced with something which is horrible as well as unreal. The 'genius' is the intellect and 'the mortal instruments' are the means proposed for bringing about Caesar's murder—'which yet is but fantastical' and the unstable equilibrium between these is productive of the anarchy which is 'loosed' upon the microcosm— Macbeth's 'single state of man'. The conceit of the mind being in council is a familiar Renaissance icon; in such a situation the mind is far from being tidy or coherent or harmonized because the whole emotional and instinctual hierarchy has been thrown into 'perturbation' and rises in revulsion

against it. Brutus has almost accepted the dark and ominous fate which has descended upon him like an avalanche and he is caught into the see-saw of emotions. He has only to wait for the hour when, things getting clarified, he may proceed to accomplish his purpose and strike at the intended target.

Brutus is congenitally incapable of grasping the complexities of a political situation; also unlike Cassius he does not bear any grudge against Caesar. He stakes his all on some kind of idealism which is not sufficiently anchored in facts but wholly rests on unverified assumptions or postulates and mental cobwebs. He is pretty well convinced that personal animosity and hatred (which any way are not his primary motivations) may be disjointed from commitment to impersonal obligations. For the latter he claims a degree of purity and disinterestedness which can be conceded only by a Stoic theorist. Even when the plan for killing Caesar has been finalized (it was to follow his refusal to grant enfranchisement to Publius Cimber) and is about to be implemented in cold blood Brutus insists on making a fine-spun distinction between killing for malice ('enactment of a several bastardy' by each conspirator) and the achievement of a good visualized in purely abstract terms:

Let's be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.
We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar,
And in the spirit of men there is no blood.
O, that we then could come by Caesar's spirit,
And not dismember Caesar! But, alas,
Caesar must bleed for it...
Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;
Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,
Not hew him as a carcass fit for the hounds.

II, i, 166-74

Belief in a blood-free spirit reflects the falsity which clings to Brutus's value-system as a whole— a sham to cover up self-delusion, for spirit cannot be killed except by spilling blood, and not even after that as is conceded by Brutus in the very next breath. And looking upon shedding of blood as a sacrificial or sacramental ritual further confirms a kind of wool-gathering on his part. Ironically enough and as if to throw his fallacious logic into his teeth the bloodshed is effected and yet Caesar's spirit continues to range wide, clamouring to be

avenged and appeased, in the later half of the play and ultimately comes to haunt Brutus disconcertingly both at Sardis and Phillipi. Brutus is not very much unnerved by it in the first instance but at long last perceives the ineluctable fact that Caesar's ghost is a presentiment of the livingness of his spirit and Brutus is to be vanquished by it. Not ethical finesse but a sort of verbal trifling is betrayed in distinguishing between carving him as 'a dish fit for the gods' and hewing him as 'a carcass fit for the hounds'. Brutus's dilemma stems from the fact that this kind of dissociation between the personal and the impersonal implied and insisted on here is not in consonance with the facts of experience. Human actions and their psychological stimuli never exist in perfect isolation: they are, on the contrary, intermeshed and human behaviour represents, therefore, a strange amalgam of contrary impulses. After the murder of Julius Caesar has been effected, Brutus, feeling somewhat accountable to Antony, indulges in this rather unsure posture of self-defence:

Our hearts you see not; they are pitiful;
 And pity to the general wrong of Rome—
 As fire drives out fire, so pity pity—
 Hath done this deed on Caesar.

III, i, 169-72.

Here Caesar is again looked upon as the source of evil and injury to Rome and hence his violent and forcible elimination is justified on the plea that the opposition in the world may effectively be countered by the world's own weapons. Further, while talking to the enraged horde of plebeians he tries to exonerate himself of his crime thus: 'If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer: Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more, (III, ii, 20-23). Here he seems to be faced with the difficult moral choice between two different kinds of loyalties— both equally valid and equally compelling. Still later, while engaged in the crucial quarrel scene, in a bout of recrimination and counter recrimination— the tempers being ruffled on both sides— he harks back to the same *motif* thus:

Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake?
 What villain touch'd his body, that did stab,
 And not for justice?

IV, iii, 19-21

All this, however, stands invalidated, strangely enough, by what Brutus says, after the callous stabbing of Caesar has resulted in the major catastrophe of the play, *apropos* of his proposing to the conspirators that they join in the ghastly, ritualistic action thus:

Stoop, Romans, stoop,
And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood
Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords:
Then walk we forth, even to the market-place,
And waving our red weapons ov'r our heads,
Let's all cry, 'Peace, Freedom, and Liberty!' III. i, 105-110

'Let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood' sounds like a bizarre confirmation of Calphurnia's anticipatory dream. Here Brutus not only reinforces the sacrificial *motif* but also adds the jingoistic cry of libertarian sentiment thus: 'Peace, Freedom, and Liberty' which makes an instantaneous hysterical impact on mob emotion. But Antony, moved by irrepressible anger, exposes, with serpent speed of irony and by repetition of image and symbol, the sacrificial ritualism of Brutus for the imposture that it is in an exceptionally virulent outburst thus:

Villains! You did not so when your vile daggers
Hack'd one another in the sides of Caesar:
You show'd your teeth like apes, and fawn'd like hounds,
And bow'd like bondmen, kissing Caesar's feet;
Whilst damned Casca, like a cur, behind
Struck Caesar on the neck. V. i. 39-44

It was pointed out earlier that Cassius is set up as a foil to Brutus: the former is a much more shrewd judge of men and the odd and tricky situations created by political life around us. Brutus swears by and invokes some sort of vague political and ethical idealism to whose intricacies he is, however, pathetically blind and this prevents him from being pragmatic and thus he keeps on falling into one pitfall after another. He was patently wrong in trusting the 'gamesome' Antony and sparing his life while Caesar's assassination had been decided upon, on the untenable ground that as a mere limb of Caesar's body he could do little harm to the cause of the conspirators. That debonair trickster who, unlike himself, 'loves much company' will, according to

Brutus's own misjudgment, laugh at the whole bloody business and stage it to the relish and amusement of the theatre-goers. Owing to studied miscalculation he permits Antony to take away Caesar's dead body to the market-place and deliver the funeral oration there, little suspecting how tremendously could he use his power of artful persuasion (and this brings their conspiracy to utter ruin), ride along the crest of popular upsurge, convert every single point made with meticulous care by Brutus earlier to their disadvantage and roundly put him in the wrong. It is impossible, therefore, to give him credit for 'political shrewdness and practical wisdom' as Ernest Schanzer is inclined to do.⁶

Having full mastery over theatrical rhetoric and being both audacious and circumspect Antony uses his forensic training as an instrument for bringing the truth of Caesar's murder to the light of day⁷ and thus succeeds in turning the credulous, naive and bewildered Roman populace into a frenzied and viperous hydra-headed monster. Not a wassailor like Antony, Brutus is determined to be 'calm, resolute and contained', believes in making Euclidean propositions with mathematical precision and accuracy, speaks lucidly and from the centre of conscious rectitude. Antony, on the contrary, makes the warp and woof of his oratorical fabric out of simple, malleable emotions, is neither fanatical nor partisan but is certainly warm-hearted, alert and keen-eyed and in spite of his disclaimer: 'For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth, / Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech / To stir men's blood; (III, ii, 223-25) has an undoubted edge over Brutus in the matter of public declamation. He is a master of polemics and every single word of his harangue is measured to the volatile temperament of his listeners whom he can afford to mesmerize even with the resonance of his voice. A born opportunist and a perfect demagogue he exploits to the maximum every nuance of feeling within his access and exposes every loophole in the situation at the funeral and thus turns the corner against his opponents. Brutus's preoccupation with the abstraction 'honour' is used by Antony as a lethal weapon which is made to recoil upon him, bringing discredit to him in the eyes of the plebeians and the charge of 'ambition'

levelled against Caesar is not only rebutted with dexterity, but replaced with its polar opposite— 'magnanimity'— as the dominant trait of his personality. Brutus makes another tactical error of surrendering the mountainous vantage-point and deciding, against the better judgment of Cassius, to meet the enemy on their own ground at Phillipi. His attenuated logic, masquerading as a trick of facile rhetoric, offers a sharp contrast to the bouncing energy, the aliveness and the rhythmical patterning of Antony's oration:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
is bound in shallows and in miseries.

IV, iii, 217-20

While Antony gives the impression of being a seasoned orator, the urbane, soft-voiced but humourless Brutus seems to have only a thin streak of histrionic talents, creates only a debilitating effect and establishes a comparatively weaker rapport with the audience. The last tragic one in a series of blunders was to give a false and early alarm and anticipate defeat at the hands of his opponents though the chances of success on either side till that moment were evenly balanced.

Some grain of truth lurks in the resounding tribute paid to Brutus by his formidable rival Antony when the latter, in a spontaneous effusion, comes out unreservedly thus:

All the conspirators save only he
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar;
He only, in a general honest thought
And common good to all, made one of them.

V. v. 69-72

Here it is conceded that Brutus supported the rebels not 'in envy of great Caesar' but because the impulse for 'a general honest thought' and 'common good to all' weighed preponderately with him. In other words, his inherent and personal nobility was embarrassingly surrounded by envy and malice on all sides. Earlier, in a gesture of self-justification, he had told the plebeians: 'If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer: Not that I loved Caesar less but that I loved Rome more'(III,ii, 20-23). Brutus's self-division

thus seems to derive ostensibly from the fact that in him love for Caesar, however one-sided an affair (it looks like a fluid contact, more in the nature of friendship and less energetic than love) may have coexisted with his fervently avowed dedication to Rome, however ill-defined and flexible that motivation be. He thus lives in a dichotomous world, poised delicately over difficult options. It is this ambivalence which constitutes the inner mystery of the play whereas the outer mystery is tantamount to the talismanic Ides of March notion, the conflicting constructions put on Culphurnia's fantastic dream, on the eve of the investiture ceremony, by Decius and her own self and the whole phenomenon of supernature in which the play is steeped. Taking a rigorously moralistic stance Dante consigns Brutus, though, along with Judas the Iscariot and Cassius, to the lowest ring of the circle in Hell (Canto XXXIV) for the great betrayal of Caesar, for having him mercilessly butchered by the conspirators, adding the final stroke himself. More ponderable, however, than ambivalence or conflict is the overwhelming sense of desolation and *ennui* which for Brutus clings to the very basis of existence and is so pervasive in the play. We get an early intimation of it in the colloquy between Brutus and Casca:

Bru. That we shall die, we know; 'tis but the time
And drawing days out, that men stand upon.

Casca. Why, he that cuts off twenty years of life
Cuts off so many years of fearing death.

III i, 99-102.

and in 'For Cassius is aweary of the world' and its shadow begins to lengthen as we proceed further. Not only do the conspirators grow steadily conscious of torpor and of resigned defeat, of the rootedness of the Caesar idea and of the insubstantiality of their dreams but also of the incomprehension of the human dilemma—the sense of the earth becoming a 'sterile promontory' as Hamlet felt it in the dryness of his soul. Brutus, being of a speculative cast of mind and having had a larger share of inner integrity, the film of illusion and fake optimism falls off his eyes more quickly, effecting a greater subdual of spirits than is the case with any one of his confederates—the coterie of arch-villains. He cannot get away from the consciousness of an abysmal dwindling of life within himself, of the curtailment

of the sources of energy that feed life in its varied manifestations. He finds it difficult to disentangle the heterogeneity of emotions by which he is impelled simultaneously, to make sense of the welter of discordant impulses and is obsessed by the painful realization that what he had struggled for and allowed himself to suffer as an idealist (or an accomplice in the sordid machinations of the conspirators?) had been brought to utter nothingness. His frustration springs from the sense of futility: the revolution planned by the conspirators against imperialism has resulted only in unleashing the forces of chaos and oppression. 'He realizes at last that he has brought down on Rome in hundred-fold measure the very spirit to exorcize which he sold his soul to the conspiracy'.⁸ Both the heaven and the earth are therefore swamped for him in a kind of *ennui* and his soul 'transpires at every pore' with its sickening and depressing odour. He has all along been bolstered by the tenuous concept of 'the general good' and has, paradoxically, a more pronounced and distinct feeling of what Eliot in *Burnt Norton* terms as 'desiccation of the world of sense' or of desolation and emptiness emanating from what he has brought on himself as well as caused to others bound to him by intricate and devious channels of sympathy: to Portia, Cassius, Casca and above all to Caesar. Not so much the sense of the engima of life as the sense of futility following the failure of the revolution is what pervades his entire being. He is even more sensitive than Cassius because he cannot escape the consciousness of isolation from 'the organic, generative power of the kinetic.'

O, that a man might know
The end of this day's business ere it come!
But it sufficeth that the day will end,
And then the end is known,

V, i, 123-26

He speaks with a real feel of *angst* and withering sense of the impending doom thus: 'Night hangs upon mine eyes; my bones would rest,/That have but labour'd to attain this hour' (V. v, 41-42). He thus remains poised over the void in Existenz till

such time as he 'makes his quietus' with a 'bare bodkin.'

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G. E. Bentley

FROM 'LONDON' TO JERUSALEM: THE CITY IN WILLIAM BLAKE'S POETRY

I give you the end of a golden string:
Only wind it into a ball,
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate,
Built in Jerusalem's wall. [*Jerusalem*, pl. 77]¹

Everyone knows that William Blake was a Romantic poet, and everyone knows that the Romantics were Nature poets who rejoiced in village and field, whose hearts leapt up when they beheld a rainbow in the sky, but who could not abide the stink and bustle of cities.

This was not, of course, the attitude of previous generations. About 1500, William Dunbar wrote:

London, thou art the flower of cities all I
Gemme of all joy, Jasper of jocunditie. [*'London'*]

and Dr Johnson assured James Boswell,

When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.²

But most of the Romantic poets thought of the city, or at least of London, as a confinement of the free spirit, rather as the body is to the soul, but an unnecessary confinement. Keats puts it cautiously in a sonnet:

To one who has been long in city pent,
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven...

Wordsworth could see beauty in the features of London only at dawn, as he wrote in his sonnet 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802':

Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
 The river glideth at his own sweet will:
 Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
 And all that mighty heart is lying still.

Lord Byron wrote that

High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
 Of human cities torture... to me
 [Childe Harold, III (1816), 1xxii]

And, as might be expected Shelley puts the sentiment in its most extreme form:

Hell is a city much like London—
 A populous and a smoky city...
 [Peter Bell the Third, (1819), III (Hell) 11. 147-8]

William Blake, the visionary, transmutes this social and psychological dismay into religious and apocalyptic terms in his great lyric:

And did those feet in ancient time
 Walk upon England's mountains green:
 And was the holy Lamb of God
 On England's pleasant pastures seen!
 And did the Countenance Divine
 Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
 And was Jerusalem builded here,
 Among these dark Satanic Mills?
 [Milton, pl. 2]

Everyone knows that Blake lived at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and hated its mechanization of the arts of life; these 'dark Satanic Mills' must be industrial London with its soot and stink and din.

But the facts are not so simple as these— with Blake, the facts rarely are very simple. It is true that Blake's early poems are often set in a pastoral landscape, as in the frontispiece to *Songs of Innocence* of 1789 [plate 1], with shepherds and sheep and a divine child on a cloud:

Piping down the valleys wild
 Piping songs of pleasant glee
 On a cloud I saw a child,
 And he laughing said to me:

'Pipe a song about a Lamb:
So I piped with merry cheer.
'Piper, pipe that song again;
So I piped: he wept to hear.

[*'Introduction' to Songs of Innocence*]

The *Songs of Innocence* are set not in the wilderness but in the village, with children beneath flowering trees learning from a book on the knees of an adult, and the poems and designs often speak of the holiness of man in nature and show beasts and blossoms protecting and fostering man, as in 'Infant Joy'. But the divinity lies in man, not in nature, for, as Blake wrote, 'Where man is not nature is barren' (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, pl. 10). When man and nature are in harmony, it is because man has made it so, as in the lovely plate from Blake's Prophecy called *America* [Plate 2]. The scene depicted in the design is not realistic—no bird like that gorgeous bird of paradise in the sunrise was ever native to England—what we see is rather the vision of one of the warring spirits of the poem, in this of Orc, the spirit of rebellion. Everything that we see for Blake, and in Blake's designs, is vision.

Blake disagreed with most of the other Romantic poets about the city and the field. So far as we know, his heart never yearned for a dear gazelle or for a violet by a mossy stone, and when he did speak of Nature it was usually in disrespectful terms—of the 'goddess nature' which he belittled by comparison with divine Imagination: 'Nature Teaches nothing of Spiritual Life but only of Natural Life' (Marginalia to Boyd's Dante, P. 149). He wrote in a letter of London as 'a City of Assassinations', and he showed it as a city of Plagues (Plate 3), with victims dropping faster than the buriers can bury them. But he also spoke admiringly of London as 'a City of Elegance'. And two of Blake's greatest poems are the short lyric called 'London' from his *Songs of Experience* and his epic, prophetic poem called *Jerusalem*.

For Blake, the city was a symbol not only of cynical despair but of the greatest hope of man. For Blake, the city was not merely a crowd of habitations of men; it was itself a human being. The city is also a man such as London or a woman such

as Jerusalem.

Blake's contemporaries were not unnaturally bewildered by this. They were prepared to hear London praised or blamed as a city; it was a late eighteenth century commonplace that London is the source and focus of moral evil and political wickedness. And then as now, London, Paris, and Jerusalem were often treated as the symbols of their nations. But a city is a city. Blake's contemporary Crabb Robison reported that Robert

Southey had been with Blake & admired both his designs & his poetic talents; At the same time that he held him for a decided madman. Blake, he says... showed S[outhey] a perfectly mad poem called Jerusalem—Oxford Street [London] is in Jerusalem.

But Southey had got it wrong; Oxford Street, London, is not in Jerusalem in the Holy Land; Jerusalem the woman is in Oxford Street, London. And most twentieth century critics of Blake would say that the poem called *Jerusalem* is a sign, not of Blake's madness but of his surpassing sanity.

Blake certainly began his poetic life conventionally enough by treating cities in general and London in particular as sinks of iniquity, the spawning ground for sin, the seat of empire and corruption. In a fragment of about 1777 he writes, 'alas in Cities wheres the man whose face is not a mask unto his heart, ('then she bore Pale desire' p. 5), and in *Poetical Sketches*, his first volume of poetry of 1783, he says: 'Clamour brawls along the streets, and destruction hovers in the city's smoak' ('Contemplation'). In a letter of 14 September 1800 he spoke of 'the terrible disart of London'. This attitude persists even in some of his mature Prophetic poetry. In *The Four Zoas* is a passage in which

The Cities send to one another saying 'My Sons are Mad
With wine of cruelty. Let us plat a Scourge O Sister City [.]'
Children are nourished for the Slaughter; once the Child was fed
With Milk; but wherefore now are Children fed with blood [?]

[*The Four Zoas*, p. 14, 11. 19-22]

In his lyric called 'London' from *Songs of Experience* (Plate 4) the city is identified in the title, but the verses themselves merely allude to it in a catalogue of infamy:

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every black'ning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls,

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear,
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse [.]

The streets are chartered in the sense of curbed, kept from freedom, a sense given currency by Tom Paine who pointed out that a charter or patent does not give one man a right to do something—rather, it prevents all others from doing it, from trapping in northern Canada or trading in Calcutta. In an earlier version of the poem, the 'mind-forg'd manacles' had been 'german manacles' (*Notebook*, p. 109), alluding to the Hessian troops used to prevent riots in England when English troops could not be trusted to fire on their countrymen—as they had demonstrated during the No Popery Riots of June 1780 in which Blake took part. Church and palace share the blame for the 'hapless Soldier' and the hopeless Chimney Sweeper, and the harlot is identified with the very institution of marriage. It is a savage indictment of contemporary London—or it is until we recognize that all those crimes lie in the eye of the beholder. The wanderer 'thro' each charter'd street' has 'mark[ed] in every face I meet Marks of weakness, marks of woe', but we should wonder whether he has not put the marks there himself. In the context of the entire work, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, the desolation and the woe are in the mind of the beholder. These are mental 'plagues'; we are bound by 'mind-forg'd manacles'. And if the

manacles are only in the mind, they may be removed by an act of mind. We may live here in chains in the cursed city of London, but if we but knew it we might be free in the blessed city of Jerusalem. The doors of the prison are open; we need only walk through them in imagination. We need but to throw off our mental shackles. As he wrote in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*:

The fire, the fire is falling!

Look up! Look up! O citizen of London enlarge thy countenance...(plate 25)

Notice that the design which Blake etched and coloured for 'London' adds an element not present in the verse. That venerable old man led by a child must be a citizen of London, and we should be tempted to understand that he is either the speaker of the poem who 'wander[s] thro' each charter'd street' or perhaps one of those hapless citizens whom the speaker meets, bearing on his countenance 'Marks of weakness, marks of woe'. But we are certainly encouraged to read the design literally, as if it were an illustration of the poem, however oblique.

But Blake's attitude towards London and towards cities was not always so negative and so simple. Except for one three-year period, he lived all his long life in London, at a number of addresses in Soho and the West End. And he was both proud and despairing of his city. In 1800, thinking of the time when he himself had a printshop, he wrote:

It is very Extraordinary that London in so few years from a city of Meer Necessaries or at I [e] ast a commerce of the lowest order of luxuries should have becoma a City of Elegance in some degree... There are now I believe as many Booksellers as there are Butchers & as many Printshops as of any other trade [.] We remember when a Printshop was a rare bird in London, & I myself remember When I thought my pursuits of Art a kind of Criminal dissipation & neglect of the main chance... [2 July 1800]

His own neighbourhood of Golden Square, where he was born, however, was subsiding picturesquely in the social world. Dickens in *Dombey and Son* thus described Golden Square where Blake was born:

Although few members of the graver professions live about Golden Square, it is not exactly in anybody's way to or from anywhere. It is one of the squares that have been; a quarter of the town that has gone down in the world, and taken to letting lodgings. Many of its first and second floors are let furnished to single gentlemen, and it takes boarders besides. It is a great resort of foreigners. The dark-complexioned men who wear large rings, and heavy watch-guards, and bushy whiskers ... all live in Golden Square, or within a street of it. Two or three violins and a wind instrument from the Opera band reside within its precincts. Its boarding-houses are musical, and the notes of pianos and harps float in the evening time round the head of the mournful statue, the guardian genius of a little wilderness of shrubs, in the center of the square. On a summer's night, windows are thrown open, and groups of swarthy moustachio'd men are seen by the passerby lounging at the casements, and smoking fearfully. Sounds of gruff voices practicing vocal music invade the evening's silence, and the fumes of choice tobacco scent the air. There, snuff and cigars, and German pipes and flutes, and violins, and violoncellos, divide the supremacy between them. It is the region of song and smoke. Street bands are in their mettle in Golden Square; and itinerant glee-singers wuaver involuntarily as they raise their voices within its boundaries⁴.

Dickens's London and Blake's rarely seem to have much in common, but they do in the passage in a letter which Blake wrote in 1804:

Engravers, Painters, Statuaries, Printers, Poets we are not in a field of battle but in a City of Assassinations. 28 May 1804

Blake lived almost all his long life in London in a series of flats which became smaller as he grew older, but he always transformed his surroundings in vision.

'There was a strange expansion,' says one of his friends, 'and sensation of FREEDOM in those two rooms very seldom felt elsewhere⁵.'

Though his lodging was narrow, Blake's thoughts were elsewhere.

'I live in a hole here,' he would say, 'but God has a beautiful mansion for me elsewhere⁶'.

And his wife remarked to a visitor:

I have very little of Mr. Blake's company; he is always in Paradise⁷.

Indeed, Blake's father may have been born in a street in Rotherhiche, across the river from London, called Paradise

Street, and I think from time to time of writing a biography of Blake called *The Man from Paradise*.

It was the city of the mind which absorbed Blake's interest. When he was a child,

One day a traveller was telling bright wonders of some foreign city. 'Do you call *that* splendid?' broke in young Blake; 'I should call a city splendid in which the houses were of gold, the pavement of silver, the gates ornamented with precious stones⁸.'

Already he was immersed in the Book of Revelation, which says that 'the street of the city [of Jerusalem] was pure gold' (Revelation xxi, 19). And these are the terms in which, many years later, he described the holy city of Jerusalem.

But Blake's cities are far more than cities. As he remarked in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*,

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses ...
And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it
under its mental deity. *Marriage, pl. 11*

Therefore Blake studied the genius of London and of Jerusalem until they became for him, as it were, 'mental deities', or to change the metaphor, they became two of the three chief suburbs of the City of God.

This is most evident in his treatment of London, which is at once a city and a man and mankind. In his last great epic there is a passage about:

... London blind & age-bent begging thro' the Streets
Of Babylon, led by a child; his tears run down his beard[.]
Jerusalem pl. 84, 11. 11-12

And the illustration for this passage (plate 5) not only shows very literally a bent old man led through the streets by a child—it shows almost exactly the same scene we saw in the poem from *Songs of Experience* called 'London'—with the addition that now we know that he is a 'beggar'. London is the spirit of man in captivity—captivity to an idea, slave to himself. The city for Blake is not a place but an idea, an imaginative fact whose character for good or evil, for beauty or terror, we each make for ourselves. For Blake, the only reality is human, and

the city is one fact, perhaps the greatest feature, of the imagination. As he wrote in *Jerusalem*,

Rivers Mountains Cities Villages,
All are Human & when you enter into their Bosoms you walk
In Heavens & Earths; as in your own Bosom you bear your Heaven
And Earth, & all you behold; tho it appears Without it is Within
In your Imagination... *Jerusalem*, pl. 71, 11. 15-19

The real eighteenth century city of London, with its bustling commerce from round the world, became a symbol of all mankind:

London coverd the whole Earth, England encompassd the Nations
And all the Nations of the Earth were seen in the Cities of
Albion [.] *Jerusalem*, pl. 79, 11. 22-23

And at the millenium of imagination,

In the Exchanges of London every nation walkd
And London walkd in every Nation mutual in love & harmony [.]
Jerusalem, pl. 24, 11. 42-43

London the man himself explores the realms of his imaginative reality:

I behold London; a Human awful wonder of God!
He says: ...
My Streets are my Ideas of Imagination.
Awake Albion, awake! let us awake up together.
My Houses are Thoughts: my Inhabitants: Affections,
The children of my thoughts walking within my blood-vessels...
... Cities
Are Men, fathers of multitudes, and Rivers & Mountains
Are also Men; every thing is Human, mighty! sublime!
In every bosom a Universe expands...
Jerusalem, pl. 38, 11. 29-34, 46-49

A yet more powerful image for Blake is Jerusalem, who is primarily a woman rather than a city. Blake was for a time a member of the New Jerusalem Church of Emanuel Swedenborg, and the concept of the return of Jerusalem so absorbed him that he called his last and greatest Prophecy *Jerusalem*. At the apocalypse of his earlier epic *The Four Zoas*,

Jerusalem

...now descendeth out of heaven [.] a city yet a Woman [.]
The Four Zoas, p. 122, 11. 17-18

This is clearly derived from the Book of Revelation, where Blake read:

I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Revelation xxi, 1

In Blake's poem, *Jerusalem*, she is regularly depicted as a beautiful, nude woman (plate 6). This is not merely a conventional way of representing a city, for she has the sexual characteristics of a woman, and at the climax of the epic called *Jerusalem* she is shown in a sexual embrace with Albion, the imagination of humanity (plate 7). But she is far more than a woman, and is depicted through many metaphors. There is a 'portion ... [of] Jerusalem in every individual Man' (*Jerusalem*, pl. 44, 11. 37-38), and each man and each nation perceives her according to his own genius; as Blake wrote, for instance, 'JERUSALEM IS NAMED LIBERTY AMONG THE SONS OF ALBION' (*Jerusalem*, pl. 26, repeated on pl. 54, 1. 5). On the titlepage of the poem which bears her name, she is shown vegetating, turning from a woman into a butterfly and thence into a vegetable, and in the text the spirit of imagination called Los labours continually to recreate her in Blake's London:

We builded Jerusalem as a City & a Temple; from Lambeth
 We began our Foundations... *Jerusalem*, pl. 84, 11. 3-4

She is to be found not only across the river in Lambeth, where Blake had lived for ten years, but in the heart of London as well:

Los...beheld Jerusalem in Westminster & Marybone
 Among the ruins of the Temple[.] *Jerusalem*, pl. 31, 11. 39-41

But in London, she is captive, a wanderer like the Jews of the exile:

I behold Babylon in the opening Streets of London, I behold
 Jerusalem in ruins wandering about from house to house [.]
Jerusalem, pl. 74, 11. 16-17

And London welcomes the advent of Jerusalem:

London beheld me come
... he blessed me and gave
His children to my breasts, his sons & daughters to my knees.
His aged parents sought me out in every city & village;
They discern'd my countenance with joy, they shew'd me to
their sons,
Saying [''] Lo Jerusalem is here I she sitteth in our secret
chambers['] *Jerusalem*, pl. 79, ll. 24-29

One of the great lyrics which are interspersed through the poem *Jerusalem* asserts the joining of man to man through art and through commerce:

In my Exchanges every Land
Shall walk; & mine in every Land,
Mutual shall build Jerusalem;
Both heart in heart & hand in hand[.] *Jerusalem*, pl. 27, ll. 85-88

Blake most explicitly joins London and Jerusalem in the city of art which he calls Golgonooza. This is a city, not a man like London or a woman like Jerusalem, but it is a city of gold and jewels, a city of craft and beauty such as he evoked in that childhood story, and it is also London— or what London may become. 'Golgonooza is namd Art & Manufacture by mortal men'. (*Milton*, pl. 23, l. 50) It is a mental state as well as a place: 'travellers to Eternity pass inward to Golgonooza' (*Milton*, pl. 16, l. 30). For Blake, there are four levels of vision, from the single, prosaic vision of science and Newton, up through fourfold vision which unites all man's capacities in harmony. Both London and Jerusalem can exist in the lower realms of vision, though perhaps 'blind & age-bent', but Golgonooza exists only in the realization of fourfold vision. And then it transforms the ordinary London we know: 'the City of Golgonooza... is the spiritual fourfold London' (*Milton*, pl. 18, ll. 39-40). Los the imagination labours continuously to create the city of art, building it across London and its suburbs:

From Golgonooza the spiritual Four-fold London eternal
In immense labours & sorrows, ever building, ever falling

...

Loud sounds the Hammer of Los, & loud his Bellows is heard
Before London to Hampstead's breadths & Highgate's heights, To
Stratford & old Bow; & across to the Gardens of Kensington
On Tyburn's Brook: *Milton, pl. 4, 11. 1-2, 8-11*

And the labour continues throughout the poem *Jerusalem*:

Here on the banks of the Thames, Los builded Golgonooza,
Outside of the gates of the Human Heart...

... It is the Spiritual Fourfold
London: continually building & continually decaying desolate!
Jerusalem, pl. 53, 11. 15-16, 18

The labours of Los at Golgonooza are virtually the reason for his existence:

Los stands in London building Golgonooza...
'I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans[.]
I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create [.]
Jerusalem, pl. 10, 11. 17, 20-21

The city of art is a spiritual creation, one which Blake takes to be the central task not only of the artist but of the Christian and of all men:

A Poet a Painter a Musician an Architect: the Man or Woman who is not one of these is not a Christian[.] You must leave Fathers & Mothers & Houses & Lands if they stand in the way of Art[.]
Jesus & his Apostles & Disciples were all Artsits... The Old & New Testaments are the Great Code of Art... The Whole Business of Man is The Arts...Christianity is Art .
'Laocoon' ,Paragraphs 24, 16-17, 20

Man's life is a continual struggle to create this city of beauty, here, now, among us, in London and everywhere. As Blake wrote in one of his most widely sung lyrics,

Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O Clouds unfold:
Bring me my Chariot of Fire!
I will not cease from Mental Fight
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green & Pleasant Land.

Milton, pl. 2

The labours to build the holy city were accomplished in his poem called *Jerusalem*. In an earlier poem he had asked:

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green:
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen!

Milton, pl. 2

In the address 'To the Christians' which serves as a preface to the last chapter of *Jerusalem*, his last and greatest Prophecy, Blake answered the question he had asked earlier:

England! awake! awake! awake!
Jerusalem thy Sister call!
Why wilt thou sleep the sleep of death?
And close her from thy ancient walls?

Thy hills & valleys felt her feet
Gently upon their bosoms move:
Thy gates beheld sweet Zions ways;
Then was the time of joy and love.

And now the time returns again:
Our souls exult & London's towers
Receive the Lamb of God to dwell
In England's green & pleasant bowers.

Jerusalem, pl. 77

This was a fitting crown to his labour; to welcome to the shores of men the city which is also a woman and who brings with her the Lamb of God. The road from 'London' to *Jerusalem* leads to the city of God.

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NOTES

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PLATES

- Plate 1 *Songs of Innocence*, 1789, frontispiece
- Plate 2 *America*, 1793, pl. 9
- Plate 3 *Europe*, 1794, pl. 10
- Plate 4 'London' from *Songs of Experience*, 1794
- Plate 5 *Jerusalem* 1804-720, pl. 84
- Plate 6 *Jerusalem*, pl. 32
- Plate 7 *Jerusalem*, pl. 99

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Plate 1 Songs of Innocence, 1789, frontispiece





LONDON

I wander thro' each charter'd street
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of woe, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh,
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Elasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

Jerusalem the City of the Temple: from Lambeth
 the bridge our friends: lovely Lambeth: O lovely Hills
 of Jerusalem we shall be glad you no more in glory & praise
 For Jerusalem lies in ruins & the purposes of her are
 But here we built Babylon on Euphrates, compelled in build
 And in valiant, our Little ones to clothe in armour of the god
 Of Jerusalem's Chyrburns & to forge them swords of her Rivers
 I see London bleed & age bent beggars thro the Streets
 Of Babylon led by a child his beard run down his beard
 The woe of Walsingham's Pious echoes: from Street to street
 In all the Cities of the Nations Paris Madrid Amsterdam
 The Corner of Broad Street weeps Poland Street languishes
 To Great Queen Street & Lincoln's Inn all is wretches & woe.

The night fully thick Hand comes from Albion in his strength
 He captures into a Kingdom - one the Double Mexico: Chimal
 Marched thro Egypt in all glory the East is pale at his course
 The Nations of India, the wild Tartar that never knew Man
 Starts from his lofty plains & casts down his tents & flees away
 But we too join all the night in songs: O Los come forth O Los
 Drive us from these terrors & give us power them to subdue
 Arise upon thy Was her li: & see thy Globe of fire
 On Albion's Rocks & let thy voice be heard upon Euphrates.
 Thus sang the Daughters: in lamentation uniting into One
 With Rush as she turned the: in S: voice of destruction.
 Terrified at the Song of Albion they took the Falshood which
 Jerusalem had in her left hand: it grew & grew till it



... against the pillars, as I depress rose from his shirt
Upon the Prospect he stood ready to fall into Non-Entry.
... as my all astonishment & terror he trembled sitting on the Stone
Langran: but the interior of Albans fibres & nerves were his
... as he beheld only the petrified surface:
... his ... in ruins. ... is the person of the Furnace
... the four points of Albans ... upwards
... his ... his ...
... the valleys of Middlesex. ... for aid ...
... from Albans ... Hand, Tyle, Koban.
... they have ... into the ...
... from the bloody field.
... in Albans Ancient Druid Rocky Shore.)



All Human Forms identified even the Metal Earth & Stone all
Human Forms identified Love, birth & returning source!
Into the Planetary lives of Year Months Days & Hours releasing
And the - Awakening into his Birth at the Lake of Immortality.
And I heard the Name of the ... it was they ... named Jerusalem

The End of The Song
of Jerusalem



Piloo Nanavutty

BLAKE & MEDIEVAL CHRISTIAN ICONOGRAPHY

The expression of Blake's genius owes much to medieval art, its influence being particularly noticeable in the drawings and illustrations. Moreover, all aspects of art in the Middle Ages, sculpture, painting, and illuminated manuscripts, affected Blake's style, yet the question of his indebtedness to the last mentioned is discussed, and that tentatively, only by one critic, Anthony Blunt. In a fascinating article on *Blake's Pictorial Imagination* he mentions the influence of fourteenth and fifteenth century illuminated manuscripts on the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and points out resemblances between some of Blake's designs and certain miniatures in the Winchester Bible, the York Psalter, and the Aberdeen Bestiary.¹

It is possible however to go much further and trace the sources of hitherto neglected drawings in Blake and interpret their significance in the light of medieval ideas. When the pencil sketches in Blake's private *Note-Book*, known as the *Rossetti Manuscript*,² and others in *Vala* or *The Four Zoas*³ are subjected to this kind of scrutiny, a new insight is gained which explains both the drawing and the text which it illustrates.

Before examining the strange and bizarre pencil sketches in the *Rossetti* and *Vala* manuscripts, it will be as well to show what opportunities Blake had for seeing illuminated manuscripts and what evidence there is that he availed himself of these opportunities.

Access to medieval illuminated manuscripts in Blake's day could be had through public libraries like the British Museum, the Lambeth Palace Library, and the Royal Library, Windsor; through the courtesy of several private collectors such as Sir Hans Sloane and Sir Joseph Banks; and last, but most impor-

tant, through the public sales of private libraries which were so characteristic a feature of the second half of the eighteenth century.⁴

From his early youth Blake was known to frequent auctions and buy what his slender purse could afford. His biographer, Gilchrist, records how young Blake attended the sales of booksellers such as the elder Langford and Christie, and quotes the testimony of a contemporary, Dr Benjamin Heath Malkin, who, in *A Father's Memoirs of his Child*, says that Langford called Blake 'his little connoisseur; and often knocked down a cheap lot with friendly precipitation.'⁵ Not only did Blake buy pictures, but he ran a print shop of his own with the help of a fellow pupil at Basire's, his master in engraving.⁶

It is more than likely therefore that he was in close touch with leading bibliographers and booksellers of the day as James Edwards (1757-1816) whose brother, Richard Edwards, booksellers of 142 New Bond Street, commissioned Blake about 1795 to illustrate Young's *Night Thoughts*. The complete set of water colour drawings for the *Night Thoughts*, numbering 537 designs, now in the Print Room of the British Museum, remained in the Edwards family for many years till acquired by James Bain, bookseller, of the Haymarket.⁷

Between 1789-1800 Blake was crowding the *Rossetti* and *Vala* manuscripts with curious drawings. These were the very years during which James Edwards was responsible for the sale of several famous libraries, viz. the Pinelli Library of Venice, the libraries of Salichetti of Rome and Zanetti of Venice, and the Bibliotheca Parisiana of Paris d'Illens. An exchange with the Vienna Library enabled Edwards to bring to England rare books and manuscripts from the collection of Prince Eugene de Savoie. Edwards himself owned a choice collection of illuminated manuscripts, including the Bedford Missal.⁸ Blake's friendship with the Edwards' Family and his keen interest in the sales of prints and manuscripts from an early age makes it more than probable that he attended a few at least of the numerous sales taking place in the second half of the eighteenth century, and scrutinised some of the many beautiful illuminated manuscripts laid out for public view. This supposi-

tion is confirmed when certain drawings in the *Rossetti* and *Vala* manuscripts are examined in detail.

Take, for example, the studies of a flying demon, with a human figure between its teeth, in the *Rossetti* manuscript.⁹ It is not realised that these sketches go back for their source to the conventional representations of Hell's Mouth in medieval sculpture¹⁰ and illuminated manuscripts.¹¹ Christ's descent into Limbo is depicted as a descent into the gaping jaws of a monster who either holds within them a collection of naked shivering souls or grinds one between its teeth. The closest parallel to Blake's sketches is a medallion in the *Huntingfield Psalter* at the J. Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.¹² He may also have been influenced by contemporary studies of human heads such as Charles Lebrun's 'Despair,' for instance, and by the work of Lavater, Porta, and Franz Xaver Messerschmidt,¹³ but the fundamental idea of a demon crushing a naked, human figure between its teeth derives from the medieval conception of Hell's Mouth.

Two other sketches in the *Rossetti* manuscript show marked medieval influences: a woman's head cowled and wimpled, being a preliminary study for the winged grotesque at the bottom of plate 2 of *Europe*; and a falling figure, half woman; half reptile.¹⁴

Cowled and wimpled heads of women are of frequent occurrence in Gothic art.¹⁵ Women-headed grotesques in a winged cowl, as in *Europe: 2*, are found in the Romanesque capitals of the Tribune in the Church of St. Sernin, Toulouse, Haute Garonne,¹⁶ and in English Breviaries of the fourteenth century like the Morgan MS. 329.¹⁷ A detail, from Hieronymous Bosch's 'St Martin in a Boat' of a small female figure with her head in a snood, is also very near to the Blake sketches. This is not surprising as he knew the work of the Flemish painters, Bosch and Breughel,¹⁸ who were deeply indebted to medieval art. The tearful eyes and lugubrious expression on the cowled heads mentioned above are also found in Blake's studies of the subject.

Again, the falling figure, half woman, half reptile, in the *Rossetti* manuscript, is modelled on gargoyles in Gothic sculp-

ture like that of a falling woman, with a serpentine body, carved on one of the gables on the south side of Notre Dame Cathedral at Paris.¹⁹

The sketches in the *Rossetti* manuscript rarely illustrate any particular text, and may be classed under the category of unconscious scribblings. It is therefore all the more instructive to find that Blake's mind was so saturated with images from illuminated manuscripts and Gothic sculpture that even when there is no conscious purpose in his sketches the source to which they are indebted is clearly apparent.

In contrast to the drawings in the *Rossetti* manuscript those in the *Vala* manuscript are meant to illustrate some part of the text on the closely written page. *Vala* or *The Four Zoas* is a study of sexual love and jealousy in terms of creative myth. According to Blake, man's personality is made up of the Four Zoas: Urizen, the Rational Intellect; Luvah, the Passions; Tharmas, the Body; and Urthona, the Spirit, whose earthly representative is Los, the Creative Imagination. The sketches in the *Vala* manuscript form an integral part of the meaning Blake wishes to convey, yet they often appear meaningless until their iconographical source is first discovered, and then they can be legitimately interpreted in the light of medieval ideas. This point is well illustrated when the following four drawings are examined: the crocodile, the woman-faced serpent, the bearded grotesque, and the bird siren.²⁰

In the arresting figure of the crocodile Blake symbolises the devouring cruelty of Urizen who attempts to suppress the natural instincts and passions in his blind lust for power and worldly glory. It is necessary to turn to Pliny and the medieval Latin Bestiaries to discover the sources of Blake's delineation. The full significance of the symbolism will not be understood until these sources are first examined:

Pliny, in his *Natural History*, writes,

The Nile produces the crocodile also, a destructive quadruped, equally dangerous on land and in water. This is the only land animal that does not enjoy the use of its tongue, and only one that has the upper jaw moveable and is capable of biting with it, and terrible is its bite, for the rows of its teeth fit in to each other like those of a comb. Its length mostly

exceeds eighteen cubits; It is armed also with claws, and has a skin that is proof against all blows. It passes the day on land and the night in the water, in both instances on account of the warmth. ²¹

In a Latin Bestiary, in the British Museum, the following additional information is given:

It hatches its eggs on land, the male and female taking their turns. Certain fishes, which have crests like a saw, cut through the tender parts of its belly and kill it. And alone of all animals it moves its upper jaw, and keeps the lower one immovable. Its dung is made into an ointment, which wrinkled old women of pleasure anoint their faces with and become fruitful again, till the sweat flowing down washes it off.

And under this figure hypocrites are symbolised, and men of luxury and avarice, who are inflated with pride which sticks to them like bird-lime, who are splashed with the plague spots of luxury and held fast bound by the disease of avarice. Nevertheless, in the light of men, they show themselves as those who walk uprightly and, as it were, most righteously in justification of the law...²²

In another Bestiary in the British Museum it is stated that the crocodile is 'hominibus infestum,' and attacked by serpents which enter its body by the right side and get out by the left.²³ The Norman French Bestiary of Philip de Thaun (c.1121), gives the well-known detail, 'S'il pot hom devure, quant manget ad si plure.'

Blake has modified the traditional image of the crocodile by adding touches of his own. For instance, he gives the beast human feet. From its belly emerges, not the saw-like crest of a fish, but a human hand. The human feet and hand, symbols of movement and action, respectively, suggest that the crocodile's characteristics are also human traits. In the text on the same page Blake speaks of 'dishumaniz'd men,' the crocodile being one such. The remaining details however are traditional: the close-set teeth, the hard skin, the serrated spine, the voluptuous folds round eye and throat, the tubby, fleshy, tail. This last feature is identical with the tail of the crocodile in the satiric *Bestiaire d'Amour* of Richard de Fournival.²⁴

The crowded text on a page in *Vala*, Night the Sixth, contains a vivid description of Urizen descending into the abyss of

the unconscious to explore the victims of his own cruelty, the masculine and feminine instincts and passions which he has so ruthlessly suppressed for the sake of complete domination over the whole personality. Blake's language takes on a Miltonic and Dantesque grandeur as he describes the tortures of the lacerated and defaced emotions:

Then he beheld the forms of tygers & of lions, dishumaniz'd men,
 Many in serpents & in worms, stretched out enormous length
 Over the sullen mould & slimy tracks, obstruct his way
 Drawn out from deep to deep, woven by ribb'd
 And scaled monsters or arm'd in iron shells, or shell of brass
 Or gold: a glittering torment shining & hissing in eternal pain;
 Some, columns of fire or of water, sometimes stretch'd out in
 heighth,

Sometimes, in length, sometimes englobing, wandering in vain
 seeking for ease.

His voice to them was but an inarticulate thunder, for their ears
 Were heavy & dull, & their eyes & nostrils closed up.

Oft he stood by a howling victim Questioning in words
 Soothing or Furious; no one answer'd; every one wrap'd up
 In his own sorrow howl'd regardless of his words, nor voice
 Of sweet response could he obtain, tho' oft assay'd with tears.
 He knew they were his Children ruin'd in his ruin'd world.²⁵

Man's reason is always attempting a rule-of-thumb harmony among the feelings and emotions in its search for absolute power. This is the natural bent of the cold calculating intellect. Every individual will recognise some aspects of Urizen in himself, but not everyone will be able, like Blake, to analyse its workings. The 'holy, hypocritic lust' of Urizen is aptly imaged in the gaping-jawed crocodile. His avarice and deceit are emphasized by the fresh light thrown upon the crocodile by the Bestiary. A knowledge of the popular conceptions which grew around this animal from Pliny and the Bestiaries brings home the biting irony of word and design.

The effects of Urizen's tyranny on the feminine passions is depicted by Blake in the woman-faced serpent in the *Vala* manuscript. The text on the page gives the significance of this weird creature:

The Prester Serpent runs
 Along the banks, crying, listen to the Priest of God, ye warriors;

This cowl upon my head he plac'd in times of Everlasting,
And said, 'Go forth & guide my battles; like the jointed spine
Of Man I made thee when I blotted Man from life & light.
Take thou the Seven Diseases! store them for times to come
In store-houses, in secret places that I will tell thee of,
To be my great and awful curses at the time appointed.'
The Prester Serpent ceas'd! the War song sounded loud & strong
Thro' all the heavens. Urizen's Web vibrated, torment on
torment.²⁶

Blake's Prester Serpent is named after Prester John or Presbyter Johannes, the name given in the Middle Ages to an alleged Christian priest and king, originally supposed to reign in the Orient. Blake may also have had in mind the double meaning of the word 'prester' which signifies both a fiery scorching whirlwind and a serpent the bite of which was believed to cause a deadly thirst to the individual bitten and to kill by its heat.

Blake's Prester Serpent carries not only the seven diseases of man, viz. the seven deadly sins, but is also the instigator in the revolt of the repressed and perverted passions enmeshed in Urizen's web, which, Blake explains elsewhere, is 'the web of deceitful religion.'²⁷ He ascribes the perversion of the passions to several causes, the chief being the brutal power exercised by self-seeking priests and kings.²⁸ The look of disintegration and wide-eyed horror registered on the countenance of Blake's serpent-woman is also in keeping with her character. Nor does the piteous droop of the mouth pass unnoticed. These traits tell their own story of the sexual instincts in woman turned poisonous and burning themselves out in repressed fires of lust. This is reflected in the imaginative touch on Blake's part which transforms the cowl mentioned in the text into a cobra's hood in which the woman's features are embedded, a detail he may have adapted from plates in Edward Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*.²⁹

The serpent who enticed Eve to eat of the forbidden tree is often represented with a woman's face in illuminated Bibles³⁰ and Psalters.³¹ Blake himself has done a magnificent coloured drawing of this creature in one of the water colour illustrations to Young's *Night Thoughts* where he has given her a human

head, bust, and hands, and the long, golden hair of medieval tradition. She winds round a tree in the accepted manner. There is however no resemblance between the winsome-faced young women, with reptilian bodies, who peep alluringly from the folios of the illuminated manuscripts, and the expression Blake has given the woman-headed cobra in the *Vala* manuscript.

In character, Blake's hybrid is akin to Echidna, the serpent woman of classical antiquity. She was believed to be immortal and to inhabit a cave in Armenia. Her geneology was various. She was supposed to be the daughter of Oceanus-Styx and Peiras; or the daughter of Gea and Tartarus. According to Hesiod, she was the sister of Typhoon and the mother of such mythical monsters as Orthos, Cerberus, Hydra, Chimera, Sphinx, and the Nemean lion³². Hence to the Greeks she symbolised the dark, destructive forces in man's unconscious. It is this aspect of her character which is stressed by Blake in his delineation of the Prester Serpent.

Just as the Prester Serpent depicts the perversion of the feminine instincts under the cruel domination of Reason, so the bearded, human-headed, dwarfed creature, with bird's wings, cloven feet and close-fitting cap, typifies the perversion of the masculine instincts under Urizen's tyranny. Like the crocodile, this misshapen monster also represents one of those 'dishumaniz'd men' referred to on folio 35v of the *Vala* Manuscript. The activities of the repressive intellect are thus described:

But Urizen his mighty rage let loose in the mid deep.
 Sparkles of dire affliction issu'd round his frozen limbs.
 Horrible hooks & nets he form'd, twisting the cords of iron
 And brass, & molten metals cast in hollow globes, & bor'd
 Tubes in petrific steel, & rammed combustibles & wheels
 And chains, & pullies fabricated all round the Heevens of Los ;
 Communing with the Serpent of Orc in dark dissimulation,
 And with the Synagogue of Satan in dark Sanhedrim,
 To undermine the World of Los...³³

Los is the creative Imagination in Blake's mythology, while Orc is the revolutionary power born of repression; in other

words, the Spirit of Revolt. It is typical of the rational intellect to undermine the world of the imagination and corrupt even the spirit of honest indignation by making it satanic. The contorted animal at the bottom of the page aptly reflects this state of affairs.

This type of grotesque is of frequent occurrence in marginal decorations in Horae,³⁴ Psalters,³⁵ and occasionally, even in Bibles.³⁶ The nearest analogy I have found so far is to a grotesque in a fifteenth century French Book of Hours executed for Prigent de Coetivy, Admiral of France.³⁷

The influence of grotesques in the work of Bosch and Breughel is also apparent. Compare, for instance, the profile, close fitting cap, and fixed gaze of the grotesque in Breughel's 'Sloth,' in the series of The Seven Deadly Sins, with the same characteristics in Blake's drawing. The bearded and helmeted grotesque in Bosch's 'Last Judgment' is also similar to the Blake sketch. Compare as well the profile and cap of the four-legged grotesque in Bosch's 'St James and the Magician' with the drawing in the *Vala* manuscript. Bosch's sketches of cripples, and others he did for the 'Temptation of St Antony,' contain elements in common with the grotesque by Blake.

Again, the full significance of Blake's bird siren in the *Vala* manuscript is not grasped until the iconographical sources of the drawing are first discovered. Blake has given her the traditional woman's face, bird wings and feet, and reptile tail so typical of the popular medieval conception of the siren. Seated on her back is a small cherub or cupid with a wineglass in his left hand and a wand in his right which he stretches above the siren's head.

Blake is indebted for the form of his bird siren both to the Bestiaries and to classical antiquity. According to E. Male, the origin of the bird siren dates back to the bird woman of Egypt, looked upon as a symbol of the soul separated from the body. Hence its appearance on Greek tombs. The fish siren was known as early as the second century A.D. and is found drawn on an earthenware Roman lamp of that date discovered at Canterbury. The Greek *Physiologus* has a description only of the bird siren. It is to the *Physiologus* chiefly that the Bestia-

ries are indebted. The French Bestiaries of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries have only fish sirens represented but the Arsenal Bestiary of the tenth century reconciles both traditions and distinguishes bird siren from fish siren in the same miniature.³⁸

Popular imagination in the Middle Ages transformed the siren into a nocturnal vampire, a lamia. To reinforce her evil character the medieval craftsman gave her the tail of a serpent or dragon. The bird siren with the reptile tail occurs in a carving on the Musee des Augustins at Toulouse, and on the south aisle of Autun Cathedral.³⁹

Bird sirens also occur in English Psalters, such as Queen Mary's Psalter⁴⁰ and the Isabella Psalter at Munich.⁴¹ In the satiric *Bestiaire d'Amour* of Richard de Fournival, at the J. Pierpont Morgan Library,⁴² and in a Bestiary in the Bodleian Library,⁴³ bird sirens playing harp, flute and pipe are found.

If the body of Blake's siren derived from the type seen in the Bestiary and in medieval architecture, the head, with its carefully coiffured hair and bandeau, is borrowed from models in classical antiquity. See, for instance, the Greek vase in the British Museum, (E. 440), depicting Ulysses and the Sirens.⁴⁴ Each bird siren on the vase has the characteristic band round her head, and the plastered waves in the hair which reappear in Blake's siren. Roscher, in his *Lexikon*, reproduces other examples with this typical coiffure.⁴⁵

The text on the page where Blake has drawn the bird siren contains a vivid account of the destruction of Mystery, the Harlot, 'who never loos'd her captives.'⁴⁶ Blake takes the concept of Mystery from *Revelation*. Just as the siren in the Middle Ages was believed to be temptress, enchantress and vampire all in one, so Blake's siren, Mystery, acts the same role in the *Vala* manuscript and in the *Milton* and the *Jerusalem*. To place, therefore, the image of the bird siren as a tail piece to an account of the destruction of Mystery is singularly appropriate.

Medieval influences are also found in curious drawings in the later prophecies.

Take, for instance, the illustration in *Milton*: 46. On the right, Blake has drawn the Man-and-his-Shadow fighting

their way with a flint through the Forests of Error which are depicted as a dark jungle with tangled roots and stems. The Man-and-his-Shadow evidently represent the Spectre which is defined by Blake, on the same page, as

the Reasoning Power in Man:

This is a false Body, an incrustation over my Immortal Spirit, a Selfhood which must be put off & annihilated always.⁴⁷

The attitude of the figure can be paralleled in illuminated manuscripts. Note, for example, the small, male figure in a miniature of the Maidstone Bible.⁴⁸ The beaked mouth and bird-like eye Blake has given the Man-and-his-shadow are modelled on the same features in the fantastic bird chimeras at Troyes Cathedral, Aube, and at Notre Dame, Paris.⁴⁹ To the medieval craftsman, the chimera was not only a distortion of the truth but a nightmare apparition of falsehood. Hence its adoption by Blake to delineate the Man-and-his-Shadow.

At the feet of this figure lies a double-headed serpent, the two heads reared high in animosity and hate. On comparison with similar heads in illuminated manuscripts it is possible to identify the lower head as that of a dog,⁵⁰ and the upper one, breathing forked lightning, as that of a wolf.⁵¹ Both heads are modelled after the winds and thunders and dragons of the Apocalypses, particularly those in the Lambeth Place Library.⁵² The double-headed serpent represents Moral Virtue described on the same page as 'a cruel two-fold Monster shining bright, A Dragon red & hidden Harlot which John in Patmos saw.' This reference to the *Book of Revelation* is highly suggestive, considering Apocalypses deal exclusively with themes from *Revelation*.⁵³

The full meaning of the strange design in *Milton*:⁵⁴ now becomes apparent. Man has surrounded himself with falsehood which clings to him like a shadow. He attempts to fight his way through the Forests of Error with the primitive weapon of a flint. He is accosted by the monster, Moral Virtue, ready to devour him with her gaping mouths from which emerge forked lightnings as from the heads of the winds and thunders and dragons of the Apocalypses, symbols of destructive power.

In the light of medieval ideas, the Man himself has become a chimera who meets the serpent of Moral Virtue, herself a deeper form of Error, but is not able to annihilate her. The moral is driven home with telling force when the iconographical sources are kept in mind.

Illuminated manuscripts also influenced the decorative motifs in Blake's prophetic books. Thus, bees, butterflies, snails, newts, caterpillars, earthworms, birds and flowers, drawn in *Europe*: 12 and 14, *Milton*: 29, and *Jerusalem*: 98, can be paralleled in the choice collection of Horae in the J. Pierpont Morgan Library.⁵⁴ The winding worm in *Jerusalem*: 82, and the contorted serpent at the bottom of page 98 of the *Jerusalem*, are modelled on the snakes, Seps and Stellio, of the Bestiaries.⁵⁵ Again, the bug and insect of *Jerusalem*: 13, the pestilential flies and gnats of *Jerusalem*: 54, the worms and spiders of *Europe*: 12 and 14, can all be paralleled in two fragments of a Latin treatise on the Vices.⁵⁶ Marine flora and fauna, as depicted in *Jerusalem*: 11, 28, 45, are also of common occurrence in illuminated manuscripts. A large fish swallowing three small fish, on plate 45 of the *Jerusalem*, resembles the same theme depicted in the Huntingfield Psalter,⁵⁷ while the water eel and minute fish on the same plate in the *Jerusalem* are derived from typical eels, sea-horses, and fish in the Bestiaries.⁵⁸ The little gnome, with cockle-shell hat and meshed skirt, in *Jerusalem* 28, seems an unconscious reminiscence of a detail in Peter Breughel's 'Descent of Jesus into Limbo'. Another popular motif which Blake borrows from the medieval artist is that of Ezekiel's vision of the intersecting wheels with the cherubim inside. Compare Blake's treatment of this subject, in *Jerusaalem*: 75, with those in the Gebhard Bible and the Aschaffenburg Evengeliarum.⁵⁹ Lastly, the frequent use in Blake of small, human figures climbing vine tendrils or the lettering of his titles is borrowed not only from marginal decorations in Horse, but seems to go back for its source to illustrated Bibles and Gospels of a much earlier date. In one of the Canon Tables of the Harley Gospels, dating c. 795 A. D., in the British Museum, naked, minute human figures climb up the trellis work on the second and fourth columns of the five columned

arch.⁶⁰ Similarly, in an illustrated Bible of the twelfth century, in the Lambeth Palace Library, there is an ornamental Beatus initial among whose intricate patterns climb small, human figures. In both the examples quoted above the figures display an energy and abandon of movement very characteristic of Blake's minute humans as they stretch their limbs across the branches of a vine or maintain a nimble poise on the tail of a letter.

From the analysis given in the preceding pages it will be seen how sustained was Blake's interest in medieval illuminated manuscripts and in medieval popular conceptions. Both influences extend from the early drawings in the *Rossetti* manuscript, dating c. 1782 onwards, down to the three major prophecies, *Vala*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*, the last of which was written and etched between 1804-1820. The exact significance of many of these curious drawings is only revealed when they are studied in relation to their medieval background. Thus, the sketches of a demon head crunching a human being, in the *Rossetti* manuscript, are meant to be associated with the tortures of the damned as depicted in medieval representations of Hell's Mouth. Again, the symbolism of the crocodile and the bird siren, in the *Vala* manuscript, is not understood except in the light of information gained from the Bestiaries. Nor is the full meaning of the Man-and-his-Shadow, and the double-headed serpent, in *Milton: 46*, grasped unless the Apocalypses from which Blake drew are kept in mind. Moreover, there is the diffused influence of Horae, Psalters, Breviaries, and Missals on grotesques and decorative motifs throughout the prophetic books. Even a partial study of Blake's intimate association with medieval art and ideas therefore throws new light on obscure drawings and enriches our understanding of word and image.

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3. British Museum MS. Additional 39764
4. Seymour de Ricci, *English Collectors of Books and Manuscripts*, Cambridge, 1930, p. 44. Cf. A. Blunt, *op. cit.* pp. 195-196
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6. *ibid.* p. 48
7. Geoffrey Keynes, *Blake Studies*, London, 1949. pp. 59-66
8. Seymour de Ricci, *op. cit.* pp. 89-90
9. *Rossetti MS.* pp. 15-17
10. English eggs, two on the west front and one on the angel choir on the south door of Lincoln Cathedral; Dorchester Cathedral; Church of the Holy Cross at Stratford-on-Avon; French eggs/tympanum of the portail des libraries at Rouen Cathedral; the Last Judgment scene at Bourges Cathedral, Cher; Italian eg. Interior door of St. Mark's Cathedral, Venice
11. Winchester Psalter, fol. 39r; Stuttgart Psalter of Hermann of Thuringia, fol. 91v; Fitzwilliam Psalter, fol. 15r; Canterbury Psalter fols. 163r, 180r, 246r; Queen Mary's Psalter, fols. 281r, 303r. Cf. monster heads with huge teeth in the Tiptoft Missal, Morgan MS. 107, fols. 178r, 178v; Lambeth Apocalypse, Lambeth MS. 209, fol. 6r.
12. Morgan MS. 43, fol. 27v, centre medallion, lower border
13. Ernst Kris, 'Die Charakterkopfe des Franz Xaver Messerschmidt,' *Jahrbuch der Kunsthist. Sammlungen in Wien*, N. F. 6, Wien, 1932. pp. 181-191
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16. Bridaham, *op. cit.* pl. 144 (a)
17. Morgan MS. 329, fol. 82v.
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24. Morgan MS. 459, fol. 20v. Cf. Fols. 15v, 16r. For the serrated spine, see the English Bestiaries: Morgan MS. 81, fols. 15v, 70r; Brit. Mus. MS. Harley 3244, fol. 43r. Druce, *op. cit.* pl. III (2)
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27. Blake, *Poetry and Prose*, p. 415 *Vala*, Night the Eight
28. *ibid.*, p. 98, 194. Cf. p. 87
29. Edward Moor, *Hindu Pantheon*, London, 1810, pls. 7, 47, 75. Cf. Morgan MS. 79, fol. 166r. Although the title page of the *Vala* manuscript is dated 1797, Blake never etched this prophetic book, but kept it by him all his life revising and re-writing sections, and periodically adding finished and partly-finished sketches where space permitted. This would account for the influence of the *Hindu Pantheon*, published in 1810, on a manuscript ostensibly completed in 1797.
30. Cottonian Genesis, fol. 3v; MS. Casanatense, No. 283, See Jacob Leveen, *The Hebrew Bible in Art*, London, 1944, p. 78, n. 3
31. Tickhill Psalter, fol. 5r; Queen Mary's Psalter, fol. 3v; Ramsey Abbey Psalter, fol. 1r
32. W. H. Roscher, *Lexikon der Griechischen und Romischen Mythologie*, Leipzig, 1884-1890, cols. 1212-1213
33. Blake, *Poetry and Prose*, p. 402 *Vala*, Night the Eight
34. Morgan MS. 28, fols. 75r, 143r; Morgan MS. 348, fols. 33r, 253v
35. Morgan MS. 700, fols. 13r, 13v, 18v; Lambeth MS. 233, fol. 141v; Luttrell Psalter, fols. 53v, 60r, 175r, 183v, 192r, 195v, 208v, 210v, 212r, 214r.
36. Lambeth MS. 3, fol. 67r.
37. Fol. 109r. See *H. Yates Thompson Catalogue*, Second Series, No. 85 The MS. was sold among the Western Manuscripts of the A. Chester Beatty Collection at Sotheby's on 7 June 1932, Lot 24. See colour plate D in *Sotheby's Sale Catalogue* of that date.
38. E. Male, *L'Art religieux du XIIe siecle en France*, Paris, 1924, pp. 334-336. For a bibliography on the siren, see. Z. Ameisenowa, 'Bestarius, w. Biblii Hebrajskiej Z XIII Wieku, *Miesiecznik Zydowski*, 1933, pp. 24-27. I am indebted to Dr. Ameisenowa for relevant translations from the Polish of her article.
39. Richard Hamann, 'Das Tier in der Romanischen Plastik Frankreichs', *Medieval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsley Porter*, Camb. Mass. 1939, Vol. II, p. 441, figs. 32, 33.
40. fols. 96v, 97r.

41. Z. Ameisenowa, *op. cit.*
42. Morgan MS. 459, fol. 6r
43. MS. Bodl. 602, fol. 10r. See M. R. James, *The Bestlary*, Roxburghe Club, Oxford; 1928, Supplementary Plates
44. Reproduced by M. Gorce and R. Mortier, *Histoire Generale des Religions : Greece-Rome*, Paris, 1944, p. 286
45. Roscher, *Lexikon*; cols. 627, 629, 630, 634, 637, 638
46. Blake, *Poetry and Prose*, p. 452
47. *ibid.* p. 546
48. Reproduced by E. G. Millar, *Les Principaux Manuscrits a Peintures du Lambeth Palace a Londres*, 'Bull. de Soc. Francaise de Reprod. de Manuscrits a Peintures', Paris, 1924, Vol. 8, pl. XI (d). Cf. pl. IV (a)
49. Bridaham, *op. cit.* pls. 94, 112, 114, 141. Cf. pls. 94, 107, 108, 109, with the bird-headed man in *Jerusalem*; 78
50. See Lambeth MS. 545, fol. 42r
51. Identified by S. Foster Damon, *William Blake, his Philosophy and Symbols*, New York, 1924 & 1947, p. 432, entry 42. Pagination in the *Milton* differs with different copies. I have followed Mr. Keynes's page numberings as given in his *Bibliography of Blake*
52. Cf. Wolf's head with Lambeth MS. 75, fols. 14r, 19v, 36r. Cf. dog's head with Lambeth MSS. 75, fols. 22r, 25r, 26r, MS. 209, fol. 16v; MS. 434, fol. 22r
53. See M. R. James, *The Apocalypse in Art*, London, 1931; *The Apocalypse in Latin*, MS. 10 in the collection of Dyson Perrins, with an introduction by M. R. James, Roxburghe Club, Oxford, 1927, plates; Gerturd Bing, 'The Apocalypse Block-Books and their Manuscript Models', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, v, 1942, pp. 143 - 158
54. Morgan MSS. 62, fols. 19v, 57r, 97v; MS. 63, fols. 6v, 10r, 10v, 14r, 21r, 66r, 66v, 70v, 72v, 73v; MS. 71, fols. 12v, 13r, 44v, 45r, 58v, 59r; MS. 74, fols. 2r, 13r, 19r, 30v, 31r, 35v, 36r, 40r, 44r, 69v, 71v, 72r, 99r, 104r, 105r, 177r; MS. 307, fols. 60r, 114r, 127r, 146r, 152v.
55. British Museum MS. Harley 3244, fols. 64r, 66v; MS. Royal 12c. XIX, fols. 70r; MS. Additional 11283, fol. 27r; MS. Harley 4751, fol. 4r. Cf. A. Konstantinowa, *Ein Englisches Bestiar*, Berlin, 1929, fig. 31. See M. R. James, *The Bestiary*, pp. 46-47, University Library, Cambridge, MS. li. 4. 26, fols. 50v, 51r, 51v
56. British Museum MSS. Additional 28841 and Additional 27695; supposedly written by a grandson of Pelegrino Cocharelli of Ganoa, and illustrated by a member of the Genoese family of Cybo known as the 'Monk of Hyeres.' See MS. Add. 28841, fols. 4r, 4v, 6v; and MS. Add. 27695, fols. 9r, 11r, Cf. MS. Harley 4751, fol. 32r.
57. Morgan MS. 43, fol. 37r. Cf. fol. 49r
58. British Museum MSS. Royal 12F. XIII, fols. 13v, 50r; MS. Harley, 4751, fol. 68r; MS. Harley 3244, fols. 64v, 65r, 66r. Cf. eels, snakes

- and lizards in the Flemish Psalter, Morgan MS. 155
59. See W. Neuss' *Das Buch Ezechiel in Theologie und Kunst*, Munster in Westf. 1912, figs. 55, 76
60. British Museum MS. Harley 2788, fol. 11v. See. A. M. Friend, Jr. 'The Canon Tables of the Book of Kells, *Medieval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsley Porter*, Camb. Mass, 1939,; vol II, p, 658. pl, XVI
61. Lambeth MS. 4, fol, 40v, See, E. G. Millar, *op. cit.* pl. XII (b)

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MILTON AND THE FORM OF HISTORY

In Blake's second— best— known lyric, the chiliastic poem prefixed to *Milton*, Blake proposes to build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land— a hope shared by many, as attested by Charles Wesley's Hymn 166 in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*:

Erect thy tabernacle here,
The *New Jerusalem* send down,
Thyself amidst the saints appear,
And seat us on Thy dazzling throne.

Begin the great millennial day;
Now, Saviour, with a shout descend,
Thy standard in the heavens display,
And bring the joy which ne'er shall end¹.

What concerns me at the outset is not the beliefs of the Wesleys, a subject I will turn to later, but the fact that those who sang this hymn shared sentiments similar to Blake's 'And did those feet in ancient time,/Walk upon England's meadows green?' *Milton* opens, after its Preface, with a millenarian vision and goes on to present a millenarian model of history, according to which history is structured in a series of periods culminating in 'the Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations.'²

Milton presents a model of history as alternatively and simultaneously viewed in the forms of Seven Eyes of God and of twenty-seven Churches of Beulah, the first structure redemptive and the second cyclical³. The two are made compatible, as I will show, by the addition of a twenty-eighth member to the first set. As Susan Fox puts it:

The events of *Milton* are simultaneous because each occurs at the same precise 'instant' of that moment, that same minute, calibrated segment of that seven-thousand-year period that comprises fallen history. All the

actions of the poem occur in the last segment of the moment, the last fragment of time itself, the instant before the apocalypse puts an end to time.⁴

One may choose to emphasize the quality of verging, of apocalyptic immanence, or that of apocalyptic consummation—these are not two separable views of the work but one. The prominence of the Millennium as an about-to-be-entered state in *Milton* is so overwhelming as to be unarguable; what has been little discussed, and what I propose to discuss here, is the relation of the form of history in *Milton* to the tradition of millenarian thought.

Blake's knowledge of the millenarian tradition remains largely a matter for speculation. Much depends on our assumptions. We may choose to assume that Blake avoided reading anything about ideas in many ways close to his own, but what little we do know about Blake's reading suggests a man hungry to test his ideas against those of others. If Blake was curious about the history of millenarian speculation, he could have found out about the early Church's belief through J.L. Mosheim's *An Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern*⁵ or Daniel Whitly's *A Treatise of the True Millennium*.⁶ Whitly is highly informative, though far from being a radical millenarian—he thinks the Millennium is an allegory of the state of the Church after the conversion of the Jews but he does give an extensive account of the early Christians' belief that the millennium involved the renovation of physical existence in the New Jerusalem after the resurrection of the flesh. Combating the views of ancient and modern 'Millenaries,' Whitly yet makes it plain that Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Lactantius, and other early Church Fathers held this belief. Whitly even quotes from Irenaeus a passage concerning the last vintage traditionally attributed to John:

The days shall come in which there shall be Vines which shall severally have ten thousand lesser Branches and every one of these Branches shall have ten thousand Twigs, and every one of the Twigs shall have ten thousand clusters of Grapes, and in every one of these clusters shall be ten thousand Grapes, and every one of these Grapes, being pressed, shall give twenty five *Metretas* of Wine, and when one shall take hold of those

sacred Bunches, another shall cry out, I am a better Bunch, take me, and by me bless the Lord⁷.

One is reminded of the 'Human grapes' of *Milton* 27:3 and of the enormous grapes pictured on the right in plate 2, but it is not my intention here to argue for this or any other text as a particular source. Rather, I am concerned with the availability of a multiplicity of sources that could have helped Blake place himself within the millenarian tradition, both in early Christianity and, closer to home, in England's green and pleasant land.

The chiliast Thomas Beverley, writing in 1697, proposed to determine the time of the Millennium 'by the assistance of the Spirit of Prophecy.' Employing the prophetic books of the Bible, Beverley declares 'by deep and fixed Meditation, by comparing of its part, one with another, and especially waiting upon the *Spirit of Prophecy* for its *Illumination*, we shall see, it is prepar'd, and weigh'd out with the greatest Severity of Truth, Divine Sense, and leads into very sublime discoveries of Divine Wisdom in the Government of the World, in Relation to his Church, the Times and Seasons of it...'⁸ Although the arithmetical method employed by Beverley is foreign to Blake's temperament, the two share the idea that, in Beverley's works, 'when Any offer the Interpretation of written Prophecies, or Prophecies of Scripture, by the Assistance of the same Spirit that gave them; this Interpretation, if Just, and True, and according to the Sense of the Divine Spirit, is the Spirit of Prophecy; because it is the *Testimony of Jesus*, which is the very Essence of the Spirit of Prophecy.'⁹ This sounds very much like a characterization of Los, Blake's own 'Spirit of Prophecy, 'but once more what I wish to dramatize is the fact that a number of English writers from the seventeenth century¹⁰ on prophesied the Millennium and provided models of history that share much with Blake's. These writers included some of the Ranters of the seventeenth century, the Philadelphians and especially Richard Roach early in the eighteenth, Thomas Hartley shortly after the mid-century, Joseph Bicheno and Richard Brothers in the 1790's, and Frances Dobbs and Joanna Southcott early in the nineteenth century.¹¹ There is also the

possibility of personal contact between Blake and millenarian activists like John Wright and William Bryan—something only imagined rather than proved at present, yet possible for a man who attended the first General Conference of the New Jerusalem Church in 1788, frequented by a number of figures with millenarian views.¹²

The heart of Blake's view of history in *Milton* may be found in the long speech of Palambron and Rintrah to Los, beginning at 22:29 and extending through 23:21. Surprisingly little attention has been given to this important passage. Frye indicates a direction for discussion when he writes that 'Milton finds in the world he returns to a crisis in history with the Napoleonic wars, a crisis in religion with the collapse of Swedenborg and the failure of anyone to make a genuinely imaginative development out of the challenge of the Methodist movement...'¹³ The figures requiring discussion here are Swedenborg, Whitefield and Wesley taken as a single force, and Milton himself. Of these, I have considered Swedenborg previously, and I wish to add only a few words to 'A New Heaven is Begun' here, before proceeding to the Methodists and Milton.

In making Swedenborg 'strongest of men,' the Samson shorn by the Churches,' Blake may intentionally recall the opening of his own early prose poem: 'Samson, the strongest of the children of men, I sing...' (C 443). In the *Poetical Sketches*, Blake had concluded 'Samson' before the hero's humiliation, stressing instead the Christlike aspect of Samson by making the angel's words to Manoa an analogue of Mary's Magnificat: 'Hail, highly favored! said he; for lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son, and Israel's strength shall be upon his shoulders, and he shall be called Israel's Deliverer!' (C 445). However, in two water colors of c. 1800-03.¹⁴—*Samson Breaking His Bonds* and *Samson Subdued*, Blake gives equal weight to Samson's God-given strength and to his vulnerability to the Female will. In about 1804¹⁵ he made his rising Albion a type of Samson, drawing upon *Samson Agonistes* for his two-line inscription to the plate. The Blakean Samson is, however, transformed by choosing Sacrifice of Self over sacrifice of enemies. It is true that Swedenborg—as—Samson has, in the

words of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 'written all the old falsehoods' (C 43)— that is more or less what Rintrah and Palambron charge. Nevertheless, Swedenborg is a profoundly ambivalent figure in Milton— a Samson who had been divinely appointed and endowed with liberating power but one who had succumbed, in Blake's view, to the seduction of history.

What would it require not to succumb? 'Men who devote Their life's whole comfort to intire scorn & injury & death' (22:1-2). But why are Whitefield and Wesley (who as Martha England points out, were not martyred¹⁶ made the 'Witnesses [who] lie dead in the Street of the Great City' as in Revelation. Of course Death has a figurative significance here linked to that of the 'Eternal Death' to which Milton goes at the beginning of the poem. Nevertheless, Blake usually began his symbolism with literal truth, and the truth is that the early Methodists often risked death. To choose one of many examples, here is an account first published in 1809:

On a tour to Birmingham and its neighborhood, Mr. Wesley endured still more severe trials... Here the rector and the neighboring gentry, set the mob upon them at every opportunity; so that many of the hearers were wounded, and the preaching house rased to the ground. As usual, however, the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church...¹⁷

Whitefield, as Robert Southey reported in his biography of Wesley, was nearly murdered in Dublin.¹⁸ Incidents such as these must have been widely known, and Blake takes the willingness of the Two Witnesses to *risk* death as a signature of their willing Sacrifice of Self.

At first, Whitefield and Wesley may seem unlikely candidates for Blake. Whitefield was a Calvinist who upheld the doctrine of predestination— a view that Blake had, somewhat unfairly, condemned Swedenborg for supposedly promulgating in *The Wisdom of The Angels Concerning Divine Providence*. Although Wesley's view of perfection, according to which every believer could obtain communion with God, would have been more attractive to Blake, Blake could hardly have been sympathetic to Wesley's views about obedience to authority (as expressed, for example, in *A Calm Address to the Americans*, defending

the power of Parliament to tax its colonies). Furthermore, Blake chooses to overlook completely the schism among Methodists that had led to the separation of Calvinists and Arminians under Whitefield and Wesley, respectively. He treats them both as one figure, but that is because he is interested in what they have in common and not, in this context, in their differences.

Saying this reminds us of how little Blake's historical characters are intended as rounded figures. Blake himself reminds us of this by painting Nelson *with his missing arm and eye* and by calling Newton a 'mighty Spirit' in *Europe* (C 65). For Blake these figures are the sum total of their acts and influences ramified through history to the point at which Blake himself stands prophetic. Thus Newton is a Deist not because Blake thought Newton's views compatible with Toland's—he must have known of Newton's *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St John* (published 1733)—but rather because he considered that what we would call Newton's 'influence' had undermined the foundations of faith. The schism between Whitefield and Wesley is not germane; what is germane is the ceaseless activity of these men for the sake of Albion. Blake's presentation is analogous to Hogarth's plate 11 of *Industry and Idleness*, where the Methodist has leaped into the tumbril to bring the Word to the condemned man while the Anglican rides safe in his closed coach.¹⁹

The doctrinal dispute between Whitefield and Wesley does, however, enter *Milton* in form of the three Classes of Men whom Los instructs his sons and helpers to bind in sheaves for the Last Judgment. As is generally recognized,²⁰ these three classes are categorized in Calvinist terms but the meanings of these terms are ironically inverted.

The first, The Elect before the foundation of the World:
The second, The Redeem'd. The Third, The Reprobate form'd
To destruction from the mothers womb... [7: 1-3, C. 100].

Instead of being predestined for salvation, the Elect are in a Satanic state of error, accusing the sins of others.... They cannot Believe in Eternal Life/Except by Miracle & a New Birth (25:33-34, C 122). The Reprobate, rather than being predest-

tinged for damnation, are prophetic figures who 'never cease to Believe' (35). The Redeemed 'live in doubts & fears perpetually tormented by the Elect'; they have not completed the redemptive process but are in a perpetual state of becoming redeemed. These concepts have a rich aura of historical associations in Blake's time and the period immediately preceding. For this discussion, I am going to refer to one Wesleyan text, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, first published in 1752, but similar statements may be found widely scattered through John Wesley's voluminous writings²¹.

In *Predestination Calmly Considered*, Wesley quotes Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, Chapter 21:

All men are not created for the same end, but some are foreordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation. So according as every man was created for the one end or the other, we say he was *elect* (i.e. predestinated to life) or *reprobated* (i.e. predestinated to damnation). (p. 429)

Wesley goes on to summarize the Calvinist view as he sees it:

Before the foundations of the world were laid, God, of his own will and pleasure, fixed a decree concerning all the children of men who should be born until the end of the world. This decree was unchangeable with regard to God and irresistible with regard to man. And herein it was ordained that one part of mankind should be saved from sin and hell and all the rest left to perish for ever and ever, without hope. (p. 432)

Wesley accuses those who hold such a view of in effect saying:

'[Christ] loved *thee*, thou reprobate? Gave himself for *thee*? Away! thou hast neither part nor lot herein. Thou believe in Christ, accursed spirit, damned or ever thou wert born?' (p. 441)

And of saying:

'And from the time thou wast born under the irrevocable curse of God, thou canst have no peace. For there is no peace to the wicked, and such thou art doomed to continue, even from thy mother's womb.' (p. 446)

The whole scheme, Wesley argues, amounts to 'irresistible grace for the elect, implying the denial of saving grace to all others; or unconditional election with its inseparable compani-

on, unconditional reprobation (p. 449). 'But why,' asks Wesley, 'will He have mercy on these [elect] alone and leave those [reprobate] to inevitable destruction?'

Wesley's answer is that God does not do so, but rather that 'in disposing the eternal states of man... it is clear that not sovereignty alone, but justice, mercy, and truth hold the reins.' (p. 453). Esau, commonly regarded as a type of the reprobate, had his heart changed by God, and 'there is great reason to believe that Esau (as well as Jacob) is now in Abraham's bosom' (p. 454). Wesley's view is: 'Christ died for all. He tasted death for every man, and he willeth all men to be saved' (p. 471). This is a view entirely compatible with Milton's in *Paradise Lost*, where the Father says:

Some have I chosen of peculiar grace
Elect above the rest; so is my will:
The rest shall hear me call, and oft be warnd
Thir sinful state, and to appease betimes
Th' incensed Deitie, while offerd grace
Invites; for I will clear thir senses dark,
What may suffice, and soften stonie hearts
To pray, repent, and bring obedience due. (III: 183-90)

It hardly need be said that this view is also compatible with Blake's in *Milton* and that, furthermore, the Calvinist view that Wesley argues against is the target of Blake's ironical inversions. Blake, however, goes even further. For him the Elect and the Redeemd must be saved by the Reprobate:

Then an Eternal rose
Saying, If the Guilty should be condemn'd, he must be an Eternal
Death
And one must die for another throughout all Eternity.
Satan is fall'n from his station & can never be redeem'd
But must be new Created continually moment by moment
And therefore the Class of Satan shall be call'd the Elect, & those
Of Rintrah, the Reprobate, & those of Palamabron the Redeem'd,
For he is redeem'd from Satan's Law, the wrath falling on Rintrah
(10 [11]: 16-23)

And therefore Milton's Elect self must endure 'Eternal Death', descending to earth to redeem his past errors by entering the psyche of Reprobate Blake.

The appearance of Milton in Los's supreme abode is interpreted by Los as a sign of the impending Millennium:

But as to this Elected Form who is returnd again
 He is the Signal that the Last Vintage now approaches
 Nor Vegetation may go on till the Earth is reapt
 [24: 41;43, c 120]

Here Blake is doing what he so often does in *Milton*: carrying Milton's thought to its Blakean conclusion, which in this instance is its millenarian conclusion. Christopher Hill, in *Milton and the Puritan Revolution*, has stressed the connection between Milton's ideas about history and those of the radical millenarians of what Hill calls the 'third culture.' 'Milton,' he writes, '... had been a radical millenarian long before an organized Fifth Monarchist movement existed.'²² Although Hill bases this statement on Milton's prose writings, to find central statements of millenarian doctrine we need go no further than *Paradise Lost*. In Book III, lines 334-41, the Father tells the Son:

The world shall burn, and from her ashes spring
 New Heav'n and Earth, wherein the just shall dwell
 And after all their tribulation long
 See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds,
 With Joy and Love triumphing, and fair Truth.
 Then thou thy regal Sceptre shall lay by,
 For regal Sceptre then shalt no more need,
 God shall be all in all.

The prophecy is echoed in XII, 460-65, where Michael tells Adam that the Son shall come:

To judge th' unfaithful dead, but to reward
 His faithful, and receive them into biiss,
 Whether in Heav'n or Earth, for then the Earth
 Shall be all Paradise, far happier place
 Than this of *Eden*, and far happier days.²³

Milton also appropriates the idea, found in 2 Peter 3,12-13, that the millennial state will be preceded by a world conflagration. Christ, Michael says, will come

In glory of the Father, to dissolve
 Satan with his perverted World, then raise

From the conflagrant mass, purg'd and refin'd,
New Heavens new Earth, Ages of endless date
Founded in righteousness and peace and love
To bring forth fruits of Joy and eternal bliss.

[XII, 546-51]

A similar idea underlies Blake's conception of history. Night IX of *The Four Zoas* is in part concerned with the burning up of the physical universe, and in *Milton* Los urges:

Wait till the Judgement is past, till the Creation is consumed
And then rush forward with me into the glorious spiritual
Vegetation; the Supper of the Lamb & his Bride; and the
Awakening of Albion our friend and ancient companion.

(25 [27]: 59-62, -C 122)

In *Milton* the conception of history is elaborated as a structure of six thousand years (see 13:17, 21:51, 22:15, 23:55, 28:63, 29:64, 39:13, 42:15). This structure ought to comprise the Seven Eyes of God and the twenty-seven Heavens with their Churches, but a contradiction exists between the Churches of history and the millennial state at the end of history. The Churches go round in eternal circle from Adam to Luther, and because they are so time-bound their number is the cube of three—Blake's most negatively valorized numerical symbol.²⁶ To reconcile the two schema Blake introduces a twenty-eighth Lark in addition to the twenty-seven that are dispatched through the Churches of Beulah.

The Lark is Los's Messenger thro the Twenty-seven Churches
That the Seven Eyes of God who walk even to Satan's Seat
Thro all the Twenty-seven Heavens may not slumber nor sleep

(35 [39]: 63-65)

This Lark seems to be compounded of Shakespeare's that at heaven's gate sings and Milton's startling the dull night. The latter is also the subject of Blake's second design for *L'Allegro*, where 'The Lark is an Angel on the Wing' (C. 682). Similarly, in *Milton* 'the Lark is a mighty Angel' (36:12).

'The millenarion tradition,' as Edmund Leach observes, 'is a theory about temporal recapitulation;²⁷ but implicit in that theory is an escape from temporal recapitulation. So the Seven Angels of the Presence instruct Milton:

Satan & Adam are States Created into Twenty-seven Churches
 And thou O Milton art a State about to be Created
 Called Eternal Annihilation that none but the Living shall
 Dare to enter: & they shall enter triumphant over Death
 And Hell & the Gravel States that are not, but ahl Seem to be.
 (32 [35]: 25-29. C 130)

The conception of a State outside the cycle of history is supplemented by the suggestion of an eighth Eye of God— and eighth day, as it were, of the world week in 15:1-7, where Milton's Sleepy Body walks with the Seven Angels of the Presence 'as an Eighth/Image Divine tho' darken'd' (15:5-6). So in *Milton* the ultimate millenarian event is the awakening of humanity itself.

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Supplementary Note

A note is in order on the textual crux that begins on plate 22[24], line 55, and continues through the beginning of the following plate. In Blake's text the passage appears to read as follows:

But then I rais'd up Whitefield. Palamabron rais'd up Westley.
 And these are the cries of the Churches before the two Witnesses.
 Faith in God the dear Saviour who took on the likeness of men:
 Becoming obedient to death. Even the death of the Cross
 The Witnesses lie dead in the Street of the Great City
 No Faith is in all the Earth: the Book of God is trodden under
 Foot:
 He sent his two Servants Whitefield & Westly: were they Prophets
 Or were they Idiots or Madmen? shew us Miracles!
 Can you have greater Miracles than these? Men who devote
 Their lives whole comfort to intire scorn & injury & death?

In the Keynes text [*The Complete Writings of William Blake* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 506-07] there are double quotes around the whole passage; therefore, although Keynes normalizes punctuation, there is no indication of which lines are thought of as cried by the Churches. Erdman, who

generally does not amend punctuation, replaces the comma after 'Witnesses' with a bracketed possessive apostrophe. He interprets the colon at the end of line 57 as introducing the cries of the Churches. (See C118, 807-08). Stevenson (p. 522) likewise places an apostrophe after 'Witnesses' but also inserts a colon after 'Cross'; he then places quotation marks before line 59 and after 62. In punctuating, Stevenson has the reply to the Churches begin at 23: 1, but in a note he allows for the possibility of its beginning at 22:62 with 'shew us miracles!' Alicia Ostriker (*William Blake/The Complete Poems* [Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977]) also puts a bracketed apostrophe after 'Witnesses.' G. E. Bentley, Jr. *William Blake's Writings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), I, 362) places an unbracketed apostrophe there, noting the 'cries of the Churches are evidently in lines 59-62.' The question is, then, whether the reported cries of the churches begin at line 58 or 59. The most tenable hypothesis is that they begin at 59 and end at the end of 62.

Stevenson convincingly relates lines 58-59 to Philippians 2. 7-8: 'But made himself no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' This is an excellent example of how Blake embedded biblical texts in his own, but it does not rule out the possibility of his dividing the embedded text between the introduction to the Churches' cries and the beginning of the cries themselves. If the Churches are thought of as speaking at line 58, we may leave Blake's colon where it is in the etched text. The words 'shew us Miracles!' on 22:62 should surely be spoken by the Churches in their doubt, to be powerfully answered with the question that begins the next page of text. In another sense, the full page design that intervenes in copies A and B may be taken as the answer to 'shew us Miracles!'—the miracle here being Blake's inspiration by Los.

Notes and References

1. Quoted without reference to Blake by E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, rev.ed, 1968), pp. 52-53. See J.R. Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1948), p. 249. The relation of Blake's poetry to Methodist hymnody has been extensively discussed by Martha W. England, but without reference to millenarianism. See M.W. England and John Sparrow, *Hymns Unbidden* (New York: New York Public Library, 1968), pp. 44-112
2. These are the last eight words of the text (plate 43, line 1). Citations are to *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, rev. ed., 1982), hereafter cited as C
3. See Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), pp. 128-34; M.D. Paley, *Energy and the Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 135-38
4. *Poetic Form in Blake's Milton* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), p. 18
5. London, 1765' pp, 145-46. Mosheim's treatment of the subject is brief, and he refers the reader to Whitly for more extensive information
6. Appended to vol. II of *A Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament* (London, 1703)
7. Page 254. Whitly glosses 'Metrata' as at least 275 gallons. It should be noted that Whitly denies the attribution of the passage to John via Papias
8. *An Apology for the Hope of the Kingdom of Christ, Appearing within this Approaching Year, 1697* (London, 1697), p. 8
9. *Ibid.*, 1. 18
10. On seventeenth-century millenarianism, see Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975 [1972]), pp. 90-98, 287-90. A.L. Morton has argued for the direct influence on Blake of the Ranter Abiezer Coppe; see *The Everlasting Gospel* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1958). Roach, Hartley, and Dobbs are discussed in *The Continuing City*. For Brothers and Southcott, see 'William Blake, the Prince of the Hebrews, and the Woman Clothed with the Sun,' in *William Blake: Essays for Sir Geoffrey Keynes*, ed. M.D. Paley and Michael Phillips (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 260-93. For Bicheno (and also Joseph Priestley), see Clarke Garrett, *Respectable Folly: Millenarianism and the French Revolution in France and England* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 121-43.
11. See my 'A New Heaven is Begun': Blake and Swedenborgianism,' *Blake*, 8, (1979), 64-90
12. 'Notes for a Commentary on Milton,' *The Divine Vision*, ed. V. de Sola Pinto (London: Victor Gollancz, 1957), pp. 135-36

13. See Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* (London and New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, (1981), nos. 453 [pl. 529] and 455 [pl. 530])
14. See Robert N. Essick, *William Blake Printmaker*, pp 182-83, 186. As is widely recognized, the first line of Blake's inscription, 'Albion rose from where he labourd at the Mill with Slaves,' subsumes line 41 of *Samson Agonistes*, 'Eyeless in Gaze at the Mill with Slaves.'
15. See *Hymns Unbidden*, p. 67. Miss England points out that it is appropriate for Rintrah to have raised up Whitefield, who left the Anglican church, and Palambron Wesley, 'a type of prophet able to work within a social order.' It may also be worth noting with respect to Wesley that although we may think of him as a mid-eighteenth century figure, he was also very much Blake's contemporary. He took cold after preaching at Lambeth on October 17, 1791 and died of the ensuing illness on March 2 of the next year; according to Southey's *Letters from Spain* [1807], his body lay in state for several days and was visited by forty or fifty thousand persons, constables attending to maintain order.' See *Letters from Spain*, ed. Jack Simmons (London: Cresset Press, 1951), p. 323.
16. David Bogue and James Bennett, *The History of Dissenters from the Revolution to the Year 1808* (London, Frederick Westly and A.H. Davis, 1833). The authors, evidently Calvinists, are not at all friendly to Wesley's Arminian Methodism and do not appear to strain to put Wesley in a favorable light.
17. *The Life of Wesley and the Rise and Progress of Methodism* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 2nd ed., 1820), II, 271. I must record my agreement with the *Oxford Companion to English Literature* that this is one of the best English biographies.
18. I am aware that David Bindman in his excellent *Hogarth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981) interprets this scene differently (p. 176)
21. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1979 [1978], p. 283
22. Citations are to Merrit Hughes' edition, *Complete Poems and Major Prose* (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957)
23. Cf. also X: 637, where God says 'Then Heav'n and Earth renew'd shall be made pure...' Hughes notes (p. 421) that in *A Treatise of Christian Doctrine* 'Milton stated his faith in 'a new heaven and a new earth... coming down from God out of heaven' and in 'the destruction of the present unclean and polluted world.' Blake of course could not have known *Christian Doctrine*, first printed in 1825, at the time he wrote *Milton*.
24. 'Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.'

25. Cf. also XI 900-01, where the Covenant shall hold 'till fire purge all things new,/Both Heav'n and Earth, wherein the just shall dwell.' Hughes observes (p. 453n.): 'As a theme the final conflagration of the world was strikingly developed in Vedas' *Hymn to the Son of God*, and as a scientific doctrine it found expression, as late as 1696 in William Whiston's *A New Theory of the Earth, From its Original, to the Consummation of all Things*.'
26. Something like this conception also appears on page 115 of the *Four Zoas* manuscript, Night VIII, with a list of thirty-eight sons of Los and Enitharmon. The list begins with Rintrah and Palamabron; Satan is fifteenth; Adam is nineteenth; and the last seven are David, Solomon, Paul, Constantine, Charlemaine, Luther, and Milton. Just a little later on the same page occurs the Satan-Palamabron conflict, the condemnation of Satan, and the delegation of the Seven Eyes of God—all closely related to the opening pages of *Milton*.
27. On Blake's number system in general, see G.M. Harper, 'The Divine Tetrad in Blake's *Jerusalem*,' *William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon*, ed. Alvin Rosenfeld (Providence: Brown University Press, 1969), pp. 235-55.
28. See 'Melchisidech and the Emperor: Icons of Subversion and Orthodoxy,' *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1972, p. 7. Blake would of course fit into Leach's characterization of millenarianism as presenting an 'icon of subversion' over against an 'icon of orthodoxy.'

K. G. Srivastava

TENNYSON'S 'BREAK, BREAK, BREAK': 11. 13-16

The four verses, constituting the fourth and last stanza of Tennyson's excellent lyric 'Break, Break, Break' have not received the critical attention that they richly deserve. The prevailing misunderstanding about the poem is due, in the main, I think, to the uncritical way in which this part of the lyric is usually read by its critics and commentators alike. The poem has been characterised, rather unjustly and unfairly, by no less a critic than Cleanth Brooks, as thin, coarse and confused¹ presumably because it does not evince any of the complexities that are now associated with good poems. Similarly, a critic of the perception and insight of I. A. Richards remarks, I think inadvertently, that 'Break, Break, Break' is one of those poems which are 'built out of sets of impulses which run parallel, which have the same direction.'² More recently, Christopher Ricks finds the conjunctions and juxtapositions of the poem idle and without any logic whatsoever.³ And James J. Sherry has expressed the view that Tennyson had made the poem deliberately confused.⁴ I am sure all of these critics failed to realize the true import of the closing stanza of the lyric. In all probability, all of them read 11. 13.-14 as a mere repetition of 11. 1-2 without perceiving the shift in their meaning. A close reading of the poem, however, reveals that the crucial words of 1. 2 - 'cold', 'grey' and 'stones' are left out completely when 11. 1-2 are recalled in 11. 13-14. Moreover, the preposition 'on' (1. 2) is replaced by the preposition 'at' (1. 14) and the noun 'stones' by 'crag'. With these structural changes in view, it would not be impertinent to look for a shift in the meaning of the verses, under discussion. I think Tennyson had intended 11. 13-14 of the poem to reverse what 11. 1-2 clearly purport. In

order to grasp the full significance of this assertion, we will have to follow the argument of the poem in its entirety.

We are given to understand that after the death of his friend (Hallam) the poet goes out to the sea-side some day and watches the activity of the waves there. He finds the sea-waves dashing against the rocks on the shore and fancies that through this perpetual motion the sea is trying to communicate with the rocks but all its efforts fail for— so the poet feels— the rocks are dead and therefore insensible to the overtures of the sea. (The poet skilfully uses the metonymic expression 'stones' for the rocks in order to suggest their deadness; the deadness of the rocks is reinforced by the epithets 'cold' and 'grey' both of which highlight the gloom and dreariness surrounding the rocks). Perhaps sometime in the past there existed a vital and living relationship between the sea and the rocks, when the latter were very warm and responsive to the advances of the former. But this relationship has long since ceased with the result that all the wails and moans of the sea are falling on deaf ears. It is, I think, some such notion that makes the poet discern an identity of fate between himself and the sea. If the poet has lost his friend, the sea has also lost its pristine vital connection with the rocks. So the poet wishes he could emulate the sea (which is crushing itself in its endeavour to be heard by the rocks) by trying to articulate his innermost feelings, knowing full well that they will not be reciprocated by his friend (who is no more). Thus the poem begins on a harmonious note.

However, the harmony established in the first stanza starts breaking in the second when the poet casts his glance at the seascape. The exclamatory 'O' sounds (used twice in the second stanza) denote his sense of surprise at the newly perceived disharmony in his relationship with his present surroundings. He finds that the fisherman's boy along with his sister and the sailor lad in his boat at the bay are enjoying themselves, quite oblivious of his grief. He further visualises magnificent ships, laden with rich cargoes, drifting placidly towards the harbour, unmindful of his miserable plight. The perception of the prosperous state of the fisherman's boy, the sailor lad and the

ships accentuates the poet's sense of surprise at his own fate which is the reverse of theirs. The fisherman's boy has his sister to make him feel secure; the sailor lad has his boat to sustain him in adverse circumstances and the ships have the harbour to shelter them. But what about the poet? He has lost his place of refuge, namely, his friend, Hallam, for ever with the result that he can neither feel the reassuring and comforting touch of Hallam's hands nor hear his encouraging and consoling voice any more. (The exclamatory 'O' sound in the third stanza, unlike the 'O' sounds of the previous one, is expressive of the inconceivable and immeasurable sense of loss, felt by the poet at the passing away of his friend.)

The marked contrast between his own fate and that of others around him compels the poet to review and scrutinize his first impression of the sea. Clearly, his mode of perception has changed and to his utter dismay, he finds that the sea is, by no chance, in the same adversity as he; the fact of the matter is that it is having a very warm relationship with rocks, now called 'crag'—rugged mass of rocks. This is why, I think, the second line of the poem is recast in 1.14 as 'At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!' bereft of the unwholesome words—'cold', 'grey' and 'stones', all of which evoke the image of death. The use of the term 'foot' indicates that the rocks are not dead but rather very much alive just as their name 'crag', by its very sound, defies Time by retaining their form however rugged it may be. Moreover, the use of the preposition 'at' (1.14) in place of the preposition 'on' (1.2) highlights the closer and more precise relationship between the sea and the rocks as it is perceived by the poet in the last stanza. All this certainly changes the meaning of 'Break, Break, Break.' (1.13) from what the expression implies in 1.1. The earlier occurrence of the expression has the suggestion of heartbreak and frustration whereas its later appearance has the connotation of fulfilment — a successful communication or transmission of message. The poet finds the sea in 1.13 breaking its news of love at the door of the rocks instead of breaking its heart as was the case in the first stanza. This meaning becomes clear when we inspect closely the use of the adversative/separative

conjunction 'But' at the beginning of 1.15 which underlines the utter contrast between the fate of the poet and that of the sea and compare it with the associative/copulative conjunction 'And', used at the beginning of 1.3 to mark out the similarity between the conditions of the two. The poet at the end of the poem feels that in the case of the sea the passage of Time is nothing but fulfilment; every passing day, nay every passing moment, has its own grace to offer in the form of the renewal of friendship between the sea and the rocks. But so far as he is concerned, Time has been rather unkind; in his case the passage of Time means only frustration and nothing else, since the past spent with Hallam is not going to offer him its warm munificence any more. In this way the poet's alienation and isolation from his environment become absolute as he realizes that even the sea⁵ which he had taken to be sharing his own fate, ironically turns out to be the reverse of what it had appeared.

From this new reading of its last stanza, 'Break, Break, Break' emerges as a complex-plot structure with what Aristotle had called *peripeteia* or reversal of the situation rather than as a simple-plot construct, progressing in a straight line without any complexity whatsoever, as has been hitherto erroneously believed. And since this reading is neither arbitrary nor superimposed upon the poem from outside but rather the product of a close attention to the organic interactions of its component members, it should find favour with the lovers of poetry. 'Break, Break, Break' is beyond doubt what Cleanth Brooks calls a well wrought urn though in appearance it is a plain and simple lyric, full of naturalness and spontaneity.

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Notes & References

1. Cleanth Brooks, 'The Motivation of Tennyson's Weeper', *The Well Wrought Urn* (University Paperbacks : Methuen : London, 1971, first published 1947) pp. 143-44
2. I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD, first published 1924, 1963 reprint), pp. 249-50

3. Christopher Ricks, *Tennyson* (Masters of World Literature Series, Macmillan, 1972), pp. 143-44. It is worth noting that Ricks brought out very successfully and convincingly the significance of prepositions and conjunctions in the poetry of Wordsworth. See his excellent essay entitled 'The Twentieth-century Wordsworth' in *Twentieth-Century Literature In Retrospect* ed. by Reuben A. Brower, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971)
4. James J. Sherry, 'Tennyson: The Paradox of the Sign', *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 17, No. 3. Autumn 1977, pp. 204-16
5. If we consider the symbolism of the poem, the sea would stand for the world, the rocks for social institutions, the fisherman's boy for man's childhood, the sailor lad for youth and the ships for old age. The earlier world-view of the poet was somewhat favourable in so far as he had discerned an identity between himself and the sea (considered as the world at large). But when the poet finds the different phases of life alien to himself, he re-examines his first world-view and comes to the conclusion that all is right with the world and its institutions; only he belongs no where; a total alien on the earth.

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE CRITICAL PATH: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism by Northrop Frye, The Harvester Press Ltd, Sussex, paperback edition, 1983, pp. 174,

This book is a philosophic inquiry into the fundamental problems of literature and society. The title of the book, a phrase borrowed from Kant, implies the recommendation of a middle way between dogmatism and scepticism in our attitude towards life as well as literature. Frye convinces us that we cannot follow this middle way, this 'critical path', without having an awareness of our own mythological conditioning. He himself was led into this awareness while he was trying 'to crack Blake's symbolic code' through analogues in other works of literature. It was then that he realized the immense importance of certain structural elements in the literary tradition, such as conventions, genres and recurring images or image-clusters, which he came to call archetypes. These structural elements operate on the literary craftsman with a creative and informing power and their sameness or identity is the ground for the individuality of a particular work. They have their origin in myth, in which not only literature but all verbal constructs of culture — religion, metaphysics, history, law and social and political ideologies have their origin.

Frye's discovery implies that the meaning of a literary work should be sought primarily within the context of literature and not within the context of 'intentional meaning'—the assumption that literary meaning is primarily what a prose paraphrase represents is just fallacious. The context of intentional meaning is always a secondary and sometimes the wrong context. As long as the meaning of a literary work is sought primarily within this context, it becomes a document, to be related to some verbal area of study outside literature such as biography,

psychology, anthropology, history, philosophy and the social sciences. Criticism tends to become deterministic when it is documentary. Documentary criticism is actually allegorical criticism, and allegory is a technique that calls for tact. 'New criticism' has legitimately accepted poetic language and form as the basis for poetic meaning. But it is concerned merely with the figuration of language and is therefore a rhetorical business. It has done away with 'background' and has lost the sense of context, which was a great strength of documentary criticism, and has paid little attention to genre or to any larger structural principles connecting the different works of literature.

The conception of mythically originated structural patterns in the literary tradition should make criticism develop a sense of history within literature, without making historical criticism, which relates literature to its non-literary historical background, irrelevant. It also helps criticism see literature as a totality or a unity, and in relation to other cultural products of civilization. It does not withdraw literature from a social context: 'On the contrary, it becomes far easier to see what its place in civilization is'.

The end of our critical path is a model world, a paradise regained of religion or an idealized world of literature (glimpsed in Proust through instants of remembrance and recognition and in Eliot through timeless moments). Most of us never reach it directly in experience, 'but only through one of the articulated analogies, of which literature is a central one'. As we proceed to traverse the critical path we must keep to a middle way between two uncritical extremes: the centrifugal fallacy of determinism and the centripetal fallacy of failing to separate criticism from the pre-critical direct experience of literature. It may be pointed out that by myth Frye does not mean a form of consciousness, as Cassirer means it, but simply a literary articulation in the form of a story of divine or supernatural beings. Still many parallels can be traced between him and Cassirer, and it will not be futile to do so.

Frye has received enlightenment from Vico who tells him that all the verbal culture of a society, including its literature,

grows out of the framework of mythology that it sets up in its earliest phase (Cf. Cassirer's conception of myth as the matrix of all human experience, from which all symbolic forms emerge). These myths which the society considers divine revelations take on a central and canonical importance for that society. They are believed to have really happened or else to explain or recount something that is centrally important for a society's history, religion, or social structure. They stick together to form a mythology, strike their roots into a specific culture and as the culture develops this mythology tends to become encyclopaedic so as to comprise everything that it most concerns its society to know. Frye calls it a mythology of concern or, more briefly, a myth of concern. The myth of concern that European and American culture has inherited is the Judaeo-Christian myth as set out in the Bible. Concern involves the anxiety of coherence and the anxiety of continuity. Thus voices of doubt or dissent are suppressed, laws are laid down and rituals, including festivals, parades and demonstrations are emphasized. The authority of seniors is taken for granted as essential to social security, for they are supposed to be full of wisdom. Hence the archetype of the father handing on the wisdom of his generation to his son. Polonius haranguing Laertes appears in this light—and has claims on our sympathy, I think, in spite of the irony there.

The earliest phase of culture is an oral one, and the myth of concern begins in it. The poet is a teacher of this myth, and his poetry is formulaic, its repetitions producing the effect, not of monotony, but of the release of a self-propelled energy. This explains the driving power of Homer who has been the despair of imitators. Since magic means secret wisdom in an oral culture, it should be understood that the roll of names and the catalogue of Greek ships in Homer are there for the sake of magical effect.

Oral culture produces continuous verse but discontinuous prose, which appears as commandments, aphorisms, proverbs, dark sayings, parables, fables and pericopes. Even when it has been written this type of prose speaks of its oral descent. We find examples of it in the Bible and in the fragments of pre-

Socratic philosophers. When writing culture emerges later on, it produces continuous prose and discontinuous verse, which actually takes a very long time to manifest itself because of the conservative tendency of poets. The short lyric and the heroic couplet are examples of such verse. The Urdu-Persian ghazal is likewise the product of a writing culture and is therefore a 'civilized' genre.

Writing culture brings in the sense of man confronting an objective world or order of nature. It fosters a vision of isolation which finds expression in tragedy. But isolation which is terrifyingly abnormal in the case of a tragic hero is quite normal in the case of a philosopher. For a philosopher truth becomes the truth of correspondence, 'the alignment of a structure of words or numbers with a body of external phenomena. Such truth appeals, not directly to concern, but to more self-validating criteria, such as logicity of argument or impersonal evidence and verification.' It tends to develop the mental attitude of objectivity, suspension of judgment, tolerance and respect for the individual, which become social attitudes as well. The verbal expression of concern for these attitudes is what Frye calls the myth of freedom. The myth of freedom is a part of the myth of concern, but it stresses the non-mythical element in culture and constitutes the 'liberal' element in society, its relation to society being symbiotic — though in times of deep conflict it may be regarded as parasitic.

Hebrew monotheism was quite a revolutionary myth which was inherited by Christianity. But the emphasis on the other world in Christianity made it vulnerable to 'liberal' attacks. As its monopoly in Western culture broke down, some more secular and political myths of concern rose as its rivals, the most important being the myth of democracy and the revolutionary working class myth of Marxism.

The greater myths of concern have usually begun in a mood perhaps best called 'abhorrence' — abhorrence of idolatry, of sin, of exploitation, of the crime of death and rebirth etc. Abhorrence recurs in Viconian cycles of history to make new myths of concern rise and the old ones fall. Both the model world and the abhorred world are merely imaginative visions.

What prevents our world from becoming quite the abhorred world is the tension between concern and freedom. 'When a myth of concern has everything its own way', observes Frye, 'it becomes the most squalid of tyrannies, with no moral principles except those of its own tactics and a hatred of all human life that escapes from its particular obsessions.' But Frye also points to the other side of the picture: 'when a myth of freedom has everything its own way, it becomes a lazy and selfish parasite on a power-structure.' 'Satire shows in 1984 the society that has destroyed its freedom, and in *Brave New World* the society that has forgotten its concern. They must both be there, and the genuine individual and the free society can exist only when they are. 'The critical path lies between the dogmatism of unliberated concern and the scepticism of unconcerned freedom.

As the sense of the importance of the truth of correspondence makes itself felt, attempts are made in religions, Marxism and even democracies to relate this truth to the truth of concern. Medieval Christian scholasticism, which reached its culmination in Thomism, tried to construct a deductive synthesis of experience. 'Marxism is still struggling with a similar deductive scholasticism, maintaining that its principles are scientific'. It makes me think of the Islamic scholastic tradition, and of Iqbal who sought a rational basis for religion and wanted to have a new and modernized scholasticism for Islam. But Frye observes that really thorough-going efforts to reconcile the reality of knowledge and the reality of faith turn out to be cannibalistic ones: one of them swallows the other. Thus in Hegel Knowledge ultimately swallows faith, and in Thomas Aquinas (and I think in Al Ghazali too) faith ultimately swallows knowledge. The complete deductive synthesis will always remain a dream.

Frye shows how Sidney's defence of Poetry becomes understandable in the context of humanism. For the protection of its society's elitistic culture humanism looked up to the authority of the State and of the Church. But in Milton, who is deeply suspicious of constituted authority in both Church and State and believes in the prophetic authority of the inspired writer,

which is directly derived from God, the implications of humanism are different. For him the message of concern and the message of freedom are identical, a conception which Shelley transferred to a non-religious context.

Poetry becomes more and more socially isolated as the techniques and mental disciplines of writing culture pervade the community more and more completely. Frye rightly points out that poetry attempts to unite the physical environment to man through the most archaic categories of analogy and identity, simile and metaphor, which are essentially categories of magic. Poetry speaks the language of myth and not the language of reason or fact. It knows nothing of progress, but only of recurrence. It is 'primitive', not in a historical, but in a psychological sense; and in this sense 'primitivism' means 'man preoccupied with the existential situation of his own humanity, with the emotions, speculations, hopes, despairs and desires which belong to that situation.'

The anti-poetic myth of progress developed with the development of science in the eighteenth century. Unhappily, evolution came to be regarded as the scientific proof of this myth, and the combination became 'part of an imperialist ideology, designed to rationalize the aggressiveness with which the white man assumed his burden'. Both bourgeois and Marxist progressive myths can rationalize the most atrocious present acts as leading to a future good and call for tremendous sacrifices of life and happiness. But the ideal future they look forward to never comes. 'In the society of our day the unhappiest people are those who...have the future in their bones: who convince themselves, every night, that Godot will infallibly come tomorrow'.

Frye points out that the main point of Shelley's defence of poetry consists in shifting the emphasis from the historically to the psychologically primitive. For Shelley the message of concern and the message of freedom are identical, but in poetry we must look neither for the elements of a myth of freedom nor for any formulation. Literature is not a myth of concern itself, as Shelley assumes, but only the embodiment of a language which displays the imaginative possibilities of concern.

For this reason the modern critic is a student of mythology.

Since mythical and logical languages are distinct the great dream of a complete deductive synthesis of knowledge and faith can never come true. Another great dream which can never come true is to have any one myth of concern—Christianity, Islam or Marxism—establish itself over the world. One great reason for this is that every myth of concern defines itself by exclusion: the only practical solution is a society with an open mythology, accepting, as part of a permanent tension between concern and freedom, a plurality of myths of concern and allowing their peaceful co-existence. Which does not mean that such a society will be prevented from having a central myth of concern. The principle of openness will break only the 'monolithic' aspect of this myth.

The standards of criticism are the standards of a myth of freedom. If we examine a myth of concern by these standards, we shall find that it retreats from what can be believed to what can be imagined. Its truth is imaginative; it is not the truth of correspondence. Thus religion speaks through a poetic rather than through a rational language, and it can be more effectively taught and learned through the imagination than through doctrine or history. The more open a myth is the more its interpretation will be like literary criticism.

The language of concern does not tell us the truth of correspondence. Nor does the language of freedom. Its standards too are approximations, only analogies of a model world that may not exist. Can language tell us the truth at all in the sense of correspondence, when every verbal structure contains mythical and fictional elements? Frye does not pursue this inquiry, but I think it would lead us to something like Cassirer's conception of symbolic forms as the organon of reality and of the essentially symbolic nature of all human experience. We are again reminded of Cassirer when Frye says that the categories of the subjective and the objective do not apply to literature. In literature man is a spectator of his own life, a truth that Kierkegaard failed to recognise. Hence Frye's open mythology society will have the readiness to accept a 'both-and' rather than an 'either-or' situation. As for choice, Frye

remarks that we can really choose only what commits us, and thus 'like Adam and Eve In Eden we can express our freedom only by annihilating it. This is an irony of the human situation ...If we associate a free will... with God, we embark on that dismal theological chess game that ends with predestination in time... If we associate it with an individual, he soon becomes a tyrant who acts by whim and caprice, and so is not free but a slave of his own compulsions. If we associate it with a society, we get the kind of 'will of the people' which is mob rule, where the leaders play the same enslaving role that compulsions do in the tyrant'. I submit that these problems do not arise if the commitment is a commitment of love, which is a relational responsibility, and is one with free will, as in Dante. In this case, as Iqbal points out, man becomes a co-worker with God' in shaping his Destiny, and Destiny, therefore, is a fund of open possibilities. I think these conceptions of love – impelled free will and Destiny deserve some consideration. Love has been equated, as in Blake and Wordsworth, with the imagination and the intellect. Let us hope Frye implicates it when he says; 'the only genuine freedom is a freedom of the will which is informed by a vision, and this vision can only come to us through the intellect and the imagination, and through the arts and sciences which embody them...'

Frye shows how the radical mood of our time finds expression in Bohemianism which uses shock tactics against prudery. He points out that our mass communication media, which reflect the anxieties of the centres of power, are always carrying out 'the steady insinuating of social attitudes and responses that comes pouring from the active mouth of A into the passive ear of B'. They are always selling ideologies, culture, political leaders, contemporary issues etc. Resentment against this is quite human, and it would become panicky if it became obvious that there was no escape. Hence hijacked planes and bombs in letter boxes ('transistor bombs' in Delhi) and hoodlums going berserk. This is very relevant to the contemporary Indian scene, where, in a country of various linguistic, religious and ethnic groups, government controlled mass communication media have been steadily selling majority com-

munity culture and 'national integration,' in the same breath.

Social mythology has been polarized by two mythical conceptions, the social contract conception and the Utopian conception. The former descends from the alienation myth of the fall of man and the latter from the fulfilment myth of the city of God. Utopia with its rigid disciplines can materialize only as tyranny and thus would cease to be a Utopia. Similarly, the Christian unfallen world is in practice 'a world not to see but to see by', an informing power rather than a goal to be attained. The same applies to Islamic, Marxist and other Utopias or ideal states. The real Utopia is an individual goal, of which the disciplined society is an allegory.

With this we come back to where our critical path began, in the contrast between an existing world and a model world which may not exist but is pointed to by its analogies in the intelligible world of the thinker and the imaginative world of the artist. The model world emerges out of the tension between concern and freedom. If such a world existed, we could not live in it. And if we could live in it, the distinction between literature and life would disappear and criticism would cease.

To say that Frye's critical theory is encyclopaedic in its range is to stress what should be obvious. He says his book 'is a farce, in the etymological sense'. Since my review cannot be a farce, I can say, earnestly and with a deep sense of personal gratitude, that the book helps the reader arrive at the most comprehensive perspective not only on literature but on all cultural phenomena. It is simply most illuminating.

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Z. A. USMANI

Pope's Imagination by David Fairer, Manchester University Press, 1984, pp. 189

David Fairer, who thinks that modern criticism has not done 'justice to the richness and complexity about the imagination

in the age of Pope', sets out to establish in his book the following 'general points': Pope's intense interest in the working of imagination within himself and others, his manipulation of the effects of imagination for artistic ends, his exploration of the nature of imaginative activity through character as well as through the readers' response, his absorption in the earlier traditions and ideas about the imagination and their implications in the context of his own poetry, his highlighting of the ambiguities found in the various views of the imagination and his ability to draw 'poetic power' from them, and finally the fact that 'in this important aspect of his writing Pope is clearly working within the native traditions of English literature of 1550—1700. The author has chosen for detailed study such poems of Pope's in which the imagination is, to quote his words, 'a part of the subject matter.' If *Eloisa to Abelard* provides a medium to understand 'the paradox of the imagination', the relationship between truth and imagination is discerned through an analysis of *The Rape of the Lock*, and the final two chapters which deal, respectively, with 'Women and the imagination, and 'The imagination as process', focus upon *Epistle to a Lady* and *The Dunciad Variorum*. The study of these four poems is preceded by an introduction and a chapter, by way of background entitled: 'Pope's imagination'.

The author admits that the early eighteenth century was sceptical of the imagination but adds that Spenser, Shakespeare, Jonson and Milton too had their reservations about this tremendous human faculty. He also justly reminds the reader that fancy and imagination were not two distinct terms in the time of Pope, not even in the critical writings of Dryden, though he seems to be aware of a difference between the two. Hence fancy, imagination and even fantasy have been referred to as almost interchangeable terms in the book. Fairer asserts that for Pope the poet's imagination is not sealed off from the 'chaos of human experience'. Pope is deeply aware of the paradoxical nature of imagination, and it is 'the tension within his work between imaginative sympathy and moral judgment—between a freer and a more stable element—, which gives it much of its power'.

Pope's preoccupation with the subject of imagination is ably established through significant references to his Letters in Chapter one. The poet, who saw man as 'one mighty Inconsistency', viewed the imagination as something in which a person indulged and regarded it as 'a dangerous and renegade power'. Realised as he did the equivocal nature of the imagination, it was his endeavour to impose an artistic discipline on the products of fancy. Pope was aware of the imagination's potential for transcending everyday reality and also of its inconsistency and fancifulness which made it resemble a woman:

If Pope's imagination was in some ways a woman, then she was at times a fallen woman, at times a redeemed woman: she was sometimes Eve, victim of a satanic dream, sometimes the lady in the Maske awaiting the release of her soul into a higher sphere. At all times she was elusive, troubled, brilliant. She delighted him, but frustrated him. Pope followed her, served her, and finally grew disillusioned with her.

The above extract should not produce the impression that the book's language is by and large metaphorical. It has a certain power and richness of its own but it is on the whole, the solid, concise and matter-of-fact language of responsible scholarship and criticism which avoids jargon and enables the reader to share, on an intimate level, the author's critical exploration of the subject.

The studies of the four poems given in the succeeding chapters share a common pattern, which, despite their being extremely well-documented and informative in the best sense of the word, makes them a little monotonous. The most commendable aspect of these studies is the author's attempt to relate the poem under reference to its literary past which is not necessarily confined to the previous works of literature in a particular genre, but also includes the religious, social, political and pedagogic features of the relevant time. Thus a historical context is established, yet the emphasis continues to be on the literary tradition. For instance, in Chapter two reference is made to the Renaissance faculty psychology that recognised the independent status of the imagination as well as its elusive nature and wanted it to be controlled by the rational mind, but it is not difficult to see that the real interest of this

chapter centres upon some of the works of Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton as the literary antecedents of Pope's poem. A useful parallel is drawn between Milton's *Ludlow Maske* and *Eloisa to Abelard* to illustrate the contrast between the two types of imagination: the divine and the base, represented, respectively, by the Lady and Comus in Milton's *Maske*. The author makes a perceptive distinction between Milton's Lady and Pope's Eloisa as he remarks that like the lady Eloisa is a 'physical prisoner', but unlike her she is a prisoner of her imagination as well. Pope's poem is thus 'a battleground of the base functions of the imagination', and the final resolution has been achieved in the imagination of the heroine. Surely Pope's 'Ovidian epistle' is placed in its proper literary context with a good many suggestions to help the reader, but the criticism (to which Fairer has himself referred) still stands that in *Eloisa to Abelard* Pope has not been able to distance himself sufficiently from the heroine. It may, however, be pointed out that the author's aim is not so much to attempt a comprehensive appreciation of the poem as it is to draw attention to the nature and function of imagination as depicted in the poem. All the four studies share this stress, which, in places, tends to be overlaid, and makes the interest of the book a little too confined. Since the poems are projected mainly as allegories of the complex nature of imagination (a mode of interpretation which may not convince some readers of Pope's poetry), the author's approach is bound to become reductive. Not that the author is unaware of the various implications of Pope's poetry. He, for instance, quotes Emrys Jones' remark that 'what Pope as a deliberate satirist rejects as dully lifeless, his imagination communicates as obscurely energetic', but his particular approach does not allow him to concede that Pope's 'conscious intention' could be in conflict with his imagination. Nevertheless the level and quality of perception as exemplified through Emrys Jones' above remark stand out and may prove of greater help in dealing with Pope's poetry in its totality. However, Fairer goes on to add, with great force and clarity, that 'in reading Pope's poetry we may find that our own imaginative responses awkwardly complicate

the issue, but at such moments we should beware of concluding that the poem's meaning must either exclude such a response, or be compromised as a result'. What he cannot admit is that Pope was unaware of any 'complicity' in his writing. As the focus is on the conscious moral intention of the artist, it makes the author examine *The Rape of the Lock* chiefly in terms of 'opposition between imagination and truth' symbolised through Belinda and Clarissa, Ariel and the Baron and the lock and the scissors. The second part of the chapter on *The Rape of the Lock*, which draws attention to the theories of Hobbes and Locke concerning the imagination on the one hand and to the works of Jonson, Milton, Cowley, Rowe and Spenser on the other, provides a useful backdrop to the theme of the mock epic as it is apprehended and projected by Fairer who thinks that the poem is more allegorical than generally thought of and represents the imagination in its myriad aspects. The sylphs are seen as Pope's 'most powerful and sustained image of the imagination'. A parallel is established between Belinda and Milton's Eve. The author is of the view that the 'crowded imagination' of a coquette like Belinda does not necessarily project the confusion of value in her society.

As mentioned earlier the studies of *Epistle to a Lady* and *The Dunciad Variorum* follow the same pattern as established in the first two studies. *Epistle to a Lady* is seen as 'an anatomy of the self-destructive aspects of the imaginative activity' in the fancifulness of women— a subject also treated by some of the eighteenth century essayists. There is a good analysis of the form of the poem along with a comparison with *The Rape of the Lock*. Of particular interest in this regard is the distinction made between the roles of Martha and Clarissa in the two poems.

As in the case of *The Rape of the Lock*, the satirical aspect of the poem is relegated to a secondary position in the explication of *The Dunciad Variorum* (the three-book *Dunciad* is chosen for the study). The author regards the *Dunciad* as an 'expose' of many kinds of distorted imagination and a medium to understand the relationship between imaginative disorder and moral disorder. Special attention is paid to the neoplatonic nature of imagery of mist and mud; and it is held out that

dulness offers in the poem 'a satanic kind of imaginative spectacle' The author's references to some of the passages of the poem are a little too detailed, bordering, at times, on paraphrase as for example on pp. 127-28. However this lengthy consideration of the poem does throw up some valid critical points, for instance, the remark that Pope's perception, pre-Romantic as it was, would make him lose his identity by indulging in private fantasies, or that what Pope satirizes in the *Dunciad* is the imagination's capacity to 'pleasingly confound dissimilar objects' (the phrase is Hobbes'). Thus the author maintains that it is the moral theme which is of primary importance in the *Dunciad* as it is in the other three poems treated in the book.

In the brief but exceptionally solid *Postscript* Fairer admits that it would be an over-simplification to reduce Pope's views on the imagination to a single theory, for he, in fact, did not theorize on this subject. What Byron identified as the two most important aspects of Pope's art: imagination and morality, should always be seen together because for Pope 'a self-enclosed and self-referential imagination' hardly made any sense. It is in the last paragraph of the postscript that the author touches upon an idea which keeps haunting the reader throughout the book: the importance of relating the imagination to morality or to be more exact to truth in this video age of ours in which the link between the two is most threatened particularly through the nefarious manipulations of the high priests of advertising. And here one should admit that a book like this could not have come at a more appropriate time, for it takes up with great conviction and clarity a subject which is extremely significant for our age, and hence the relevance of this volume goes beyond the confines of literary criticism.

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The Continuing City by Morton D. Paley, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1983, pp. 314

The Continuing City is a very coherent and convincing exposition—done with meticulous care and sharply discriminated—of Blake's *opus magnum*, the elaborate and magnificent mythical poem, *Jerusalem*. Consisting of one hundred plates and arranged in four chapters Blake took almost sixteen years (1804-1820) in composing and etching it and giving it a definitive shape and it was edited six times from his printed text. Morton D. Paley begins with providing a resume of chronology, publishing history and the varying critical approaches to it since it first saw the light of day and moves on immediately to consideration of its verse technique and into the sphere of 'oratory'. He examines, that is, the implications of the 'terrific numbers', the 'mild and gentle parts' and the prosaic ones: the three distinct modes of poetic discourse through which the central myth has been projected and which change with the change in the tenor and perspective of the poem. This involves variety and what Paley designates—applicable to the case of Wordsworth's *Prelude*, too—as observance of the sense of 'decorum' as far as the stylistic features of the poem are concerned. Blake's use of the Sublime derives, Paley surmises correctly, partly from the Burkeian version of it but more so from the splendid oratorical passages in the *Old and New Testament*, specifically from the characteristic idiom of John of Patmos. The pathetic, counterposed by ethos implying as it does 'the continuous affections' and evenness and consistency of tone, corresponds to something which evokes sympathy and tenderness. It has been perceptively pointed out by Paley that alongside the authentically Sublime also coexists the pseudo-Sublime or the anti-Sublime as he terms it and this is exemplified, particularly, by the speeches of the Sons of Albion and the Spectre of Erthona, marked as these are by the tinsel and turgidity of rhetoric, masquerading sentimentalism and raw and undisguised passion—perversions of the true eloquence of Los who represents the elemental energies of life and creative potential of the highest order.

Paley devotes a whole chapter, entitled 'Art', and discerningly so, to the correlation between the text and the pictorial designs illustrative of the text in order to highlight the visual-verbal dialectics in this as in other poems of Blake, too. He concedes and acknowledges the primacy of the work done in this regard by Anthony Blunt in his *The Art of William Blake* (1956) which was followed in the course of time by Geoffrey Keynes's Oxford edition of *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1967), David Erdman's *The Illuminated Blake* (1974) and W.J.T. Mitchell's *Blake's Composite Art* (1978). For Blake's prolific genius it was compellingly inevitable to express itself in two different artistic media simultaneously, and designs to *Jerusalem* hold an indispensable key for unlocking the mystery of the depths and intensities of the poem as a whole. Paley regards copy E of colour facsimile, as against the monochrome ones, superior in respect of providing proper aesthetic satisfaction as well as for purposes of explication. It is also characteristic of Blake's peculiar genius that he was attracted more by lines and forms (he always stressed the value and need of the 'wiry, bounding outline' in the manner of Basire) than by colours and masses; by 'linearity' in one word. Most of the major themes mediated through the text get their supporting confirmation and become distinctly visualized by the pictorial designs relevant to them. Paley also makes it plain at the very outset that certain artistic motifs, mythic themes and semi-narrative or symbolic episodes, left partially developed or not satisfactorily worked out (cf. Night VII a or Night IX of *The Four Zoas*) are either elaborated and more fully defined or else compressed and thus given a more adequate articulation here than elsewhere. For instance, something which is expressed in rather abstract terms earlier becomes concretely realized and given more effective dramatic rendering in *Jerusalem*.

As a preliminary to the two crucial chapters (IV & V) on the central myth of the poem Paley furnishes considerable historical evidence pertaining to the legend of Millennium—a period of six thousand years leading to Sabbath or seventh day of the World-week in which the human race would be resurrected to await the Last judgment in Jerusalem. He traces the history

of this tradition from the Bible to the eighteenth century and beyond, underscores Blake's sensitiveness to it and his endeavour at inweaving this body of faith into the details of his mythical framework. In this he seems to be at one with Swedenborg and intuitively accepts and sympathizes with Joachim of Fiore's division of world history into three phases, the contemporary world representing the latest phase. He also shares with the Familists the identification of the indwelling spirit of Imagination with Christ and his apocalyptic visions with the Muggletonians who as custodians of esoteric wisdom, enjoyed considerable prestige and vogue in the seventeenth century England. For the Millenarian idea Blake may have received stimulus and inspiration from persons like John Wright and William Bryan and the contemporary archeologists but unlike them, he was intrigued by putting this ferment of ideas through art and poetry. It is equally valid to uphold that for him the starting-point as well as the end of the quest must have been, as shrewdly suggested by Paley, nothing less than the Book of *Revelation*. Blake's *Jerusalem* is different, in tone and emphasis, therefore, from Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*— which being rigorously neoclassic also expands into Renaissance fecundity—for the former is conceived in terms of Biblical prophecy and apocalypse. And his notion of the Seven Eyes of God, elected by the Eternals (Cf. Plate 58) is believed to lead one to the nameless Eight who is still hidden in the clouds. Jerusalem is visualized as both a city and a woman, and the emergence of a regenerate human community within the perfected City of Art is at the heart of the poem. This City, named Golgonooza, combines the name of the place where Christ performed his supreme act of self-sacrifice or Atonement with the 'primeval ooze of existence'. It is precisely this possibility of the Community being located in an ideal city, built on the model of Solomon's Temple and the Temple of Ezekiel, which is likely to hold out prospects of redemptive hope to the erring and perishable humankind. This is also linked with the notion of Ezekiel's Wheels which are intertwined in peace and harmony and contrast sharply with the Wheels of Albion's Sons—the dominant image for them being the labyrinth—which are

productive of the confusion of frustrated desire and are sources of conflict and disharmony.

With *The Myth of Humanity* Paley plunges headlong into the central concern of the poem: the primordial sexual encounter and its disastrous consequences. Albion, the archetypal man, is subjected to dismemberment and the fact of the Fall which constitutes the myth in chapter Two of the poem constantly looks back and forth to the other three chapters. Whereas in *The Four Zoas* it is Urizen who is at the centre (and in *Milton* he assumes the form of Satan) here it is Albion who is represented both as the aggressor and the victim of sexual jealousy and repression and the concomitant evils. Luvah, the son of Los, is all the time trying to assert his authority over Albion and becomes, therefore, aggressive and domineering. Similarly, Vala exercises dominion over Jerusalem and manipulates to have her cast out from her legitimate place as the bride of the Lamb of God—Jesus. It is also to be noted that not only is Jerusalem of pivotal importance in the poem, being considered both in her quotidian and mythical aspects, but the Jerusalem surrogates, too,—Erin, Dinah, Rosamund, Oothoon and Mary— all aspects of redemption through female love— have to undergo some sort of regeneration in order to function as the custodians or at least the will—wishers of Albion. In fact the entire poem operates upon the antithesis of 'the Jerusalem principle' and 'the Vala principle'. Albion grows into a paranoid by being afflicted in two ways: by the superiority exerted over him by his Spectre and by the revolt of Vala which is cast in his teeth: She becomes not only aggressive but prides herself on her self-sufficiency and exclusiveness. Albion falls into the hands of his Spectre—the Urizenic spirit in him—and this is the cause of his depression as well as undoing: the literary prototype for this is offered by Othello who may very well be imagined to bemoan his sad predicament *apropos* of Iago thus: 'My Spectre around me Night & Day.' Albion suffers not so much from the taint of sexuality which adheres to him inescapably but also because of his being bruised and maimed by his self-accusations. His is a guilt-induced consciousness which turns him into a job figure, smitten by sore boils; it puts poison into the

vessels of his mind and he is condemned to live in the hell of eternal torment. And it is not only Luvah and Vala who take up a positively hostile attitude towards him but irksome to him are also the machinations of two of his terrible Sons: Hand and Hyle— both demonic and grotesque figures and symbols of materiality and soul-killing repression. The state of fallenness, *das Gefallensein*, is pictured and presented in terms of man being self-exiled, his 'river's tent broken', the children's 'laughter in the foliage' turning into cries of helplessness and despair, crops becoming mildewed, meadows changed into wilderness littered with thistles, the pervasive sense of shame and guilt transformed into 'reptiles of the mind' and the whole wintry landscape assuming the shape of 'dead mountain mouth of carious teeth' that cannot spit' (Cf. Eliot's *What the Thunder said*)

The Prophetic Myth—the necessary sequence to the preceding myth and thus forming the crowning chapter of the book— is concerned with the process of the re-ordering of the human psyche : restoring Albion to the pristine state of purity and integration from which a descent took place in the aeons gone by. This task is assigned to Los— the generated form of Urthona— who becomes here, as earlier in *Milton* also— the indwelling spirit of prophecy and Imagination. Corresponding to the persecuted and beleaguered figures— Albion— Vala— Jerusalem, there is what Paley distinguishes as the Los— Spectre— Enitharmon constellation, and Los's commitment is threefold: to have Albion released from the shackles of materialism, to have Vala's Veil— image of the delusive beauty of the phenomenal world— rent asunder and to assimilate the Spectre into his own psychic identity and thus bring his subversive activities to an end. Paley makes a perceptive comment to the effect: 'Los is in his capacity as the poetic imagination, an embodiment of the Logos or primordial world' (p. 262). He has, perforce, to engage himself in the continuous struggle to come to terms with his Spectre: the conflict with him, says Paley, manifests itself inwardly in deep psychic division and outwardly it expands so as to take an ideological form (p. 244). He has to work at his own fiery furnaces, to function as the watchman over Albion and to give dramatic

substance to the climactic vision which Blake had communicated in liquiscent tones and against an alluring pastoral sitting in Night IX of *The Four Zoas*. In *Milton* a certain progression had been registered since the time when the apocalyptic events had been foreshadowed in the form of the human grapes pressed in the winre-press of Luvah. But the greatest hurdle in the achievement of reintegration in the *Prophecies* had been the continued menacing presence of the Polypus— the symbol of 'the cancerously proliferating Selfhood'. Moreover, in place of Satan/Hayley in *Milton* Los in *Jerusalem* is countered and opposed by his Spectre as well as by Enitharmon— his Emanation— whose place is usurped by Vala. The process of eventual reconstitution involves, however, a series of subterfuges, transformations and metamorphoses which reflect anyway the highly ambivalent nature of human impulses and man's inherent freakishness and psychic instability.

Paley mentions with approval the stance of Anne K. Mellor to the effect that it is the Human Form Divine which, despite the incipient threat posed by the Spectre, is at the heart of *Jerusalem* and Los's whole endeavour seems to be directed towards establishing its saliency and actualization of the creative potential of man. The concept of the Human Form Divine or 'Fourfoldness' in Blake's symbology is in a tenuous way linked with that of relationship and connectedness, of love and self-sacrifice about which Norman O Brown's comment: 'The true form of unification— which can be found either in psychoanalysis or Christianity, in Freud or Pope John or Karl Marx is: We are all members of one body' (p. 214) is endorsed implicitly by Paley. Though Paley doesn't say so yet this notion of 'unification' is what Blake is never wearied of reiterating in interchangeable terms like Identity, Forgiveness and Brotherhood— terms which seem to be antipodal to Selfhood, self-righteousness and the excrementitious husk of Moral reasonings leading to erection of walls of separation among human beings— and which he formulates in *Jerusalem* thus:

Wouldest thou love one who never died
For thee, or ever die for one who had not died for thee?
And if God dieth not for Man, giveth not himself

Eternally for Man, Man could not exist; for Man is Love,
 As God is Love: every kindness to another is a little Death,
 In the Divine Image, nor can Man exist but by Brotherhood.

(Plate: 97)

Turning back to Brown may it be added that this notion of human solidarity or Brotherhood (seminal and presiding concept in *Jerusalem*, indeed) based as it is on the principle of 'unification' the way he designates it, was enunciated, very much before psychoanalysis or Marxism were even heard of, by the Prophet Mohammad who in his last celebrated address to his followers in faith declared unambiguously and dangerously that the hydra-headed monster of racial superiority and class consciousness was trampled under his feet, for the fibres of basic life-stuff are the same in all human beings? The prophetic task of reawakening Albion from his deep slumberous repose or from the quagmire of desperation into which he has fallen hinges upon the success to be achieved by him in integrating the recalcitrant forces of the residual self into his own being, making Vala-Jerusalem the same composite entity that it initially was, subduing the Spectre completely by recognizing its real status as the irreducible minimal quantum of the human personality and transforming the Sons and Daughters of Albion into mutually responsive and fructifying segments of a unified whole rather than as warring and antagonistic principles leading towards disruption and chaos.

As far as the form of *Jerusalem* is concerned Paley correctly points out that it does not move in a linear direction but consists of a 'series of pageants' very much like its models: *Ezekiel*, the *Synoptic Gospels* and *Revelation*— the last being both 'vision and artefact'. Basically, and as part of its artistic strategy, it is non-narrative in technique and presents an amalgam of unfolding visions interspersed throughout its compass and is characterized by digressiveness and multifariousness. The mythical events in the poem or its foci of interest in the psychomachy reflected in it are contrapuntal and not sequential as in *The Four Zoas*. Blake's characteristic approach is syncretic and the literary analogues as cited by Mitchell and quoted with tacit approval by Paley in this regard are *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, *A Tale*

of a Tub and *Tristram Shandy*. I wonder if it may be conceded that a more striking analogue for the formal patterning of *Jerusalem* is afforded by Langland's *Visions of Piers Plowman* in which also the spatial relations turn into temporal ones and access to meaning in both the poems is offered by the perspectivist approach. *Jerusalem* has by and large a synchronous rather than a diachronic structure. In Langland as in Blake, too, the human dilemma is envisaged in terms of a polarity between Jerusalem and Babylon: 'a toure on a toft' and 'a dongeon' in 'a depe dale binethe' (Cf. *Prologue*). Both the poems tend to be digressive, recapitulative and encyclopaediac and both the poets were influenced, in point of imagery, by Joachim of Fiore, were bitterly and uncompromisingly opposed to the established Church and institutional Christianity and Los, no less than Piers, is the epitome and repository of imaginative truth. *Apropos* of the Blakean view, Paley asserts succinctly, 'there is no progress in Art but only periodic re-discovery of permanent truth' (p. 84). Following the same stance one may very well supplement him by upholding that the progress within a poem of epic magnitude and dimensions, too, is hardly continuous: on the contrary it reflects discrete moments of intuitive perception which are caught not serially but in a synchronous way and it is this sort of simultaneity in terms of which its real impact can be measured. Paley sums up this point of view while juxtaposing Blake's Jerusalem with Yeats's Byzantium thus: 'but Byzantium, presented in tension with the forces of the natural world, is beyond Time while Blake's continuing City is the fulfilment of Time' (p. 267)— or an abrogation of it? For the latter may be equated with taking a 'Moment of Time' and an 'atom of space' and opening their centre into Infinitude or up into Eden.

The Continuing City, richly documented as it is, betrays a tremendous amount of scholarship, dexterously handled in the service of the explication of Blake's mythic configurations which are deeply esoteric and infinitely mystifying. In this essential task of clarification and illumination of meaning it goes much beyond Wicksteed's *William Blake's Jerusalem* (1953) and also W. H. Stevenson's commentary on it and constitutes

thus an in valuable contribution to the rapidly growing and impressive corpus of Blake criticism. It is deeply engaged with mythical occurrences— connected with one another thematically and in a subterranean way— not only as viable units of significance but as structural wholes embedded in a vision which culminates into the release of the human psyche from pressure of enervating and debilitating forces pitted against it as is evident from even a cursory glance at the last plates (from 95 to 100) of the poem.

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