IV. LITERARY BACKGROUND: THE GRAVEYARD SCHOOL

(A) GRAY, BLAIR, HERVEY, AND LAST JUDGMENT DESIGNS

Blake's ability to absorb positive influences from diverse, often mediocre sources is particularly evident in his relationship with the 'Graveyard School' of English poetry. His fascination with this morbid verse is reflected by his two years' work on watercolours for Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (the longest series he ever committed), which forms the explicit framework of *The Four Zoas*. But in addition he illustrated Thomas Gray's poems including 'Elegy Written in a Country Graveyard,' Robert Blair's *The Grave* and James Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs*. Each of these projects was undertaken during the chronological period of *The Four Zoas*, and contains significant internal linkages to Blake's first epic. My present chapter will primarily assess the influence of Young upon *The Four Zoas*; but first I will briefly examine the importance of the rest of the Graveyard poets upon Blake. It will be my contention that the Graveyard school retains vestiges of the dream-vision genre and leads directly into apocalyptic poetry.
Though Thomas Gray was by no means a member of the loosely knit Graveyard group, Blake's illustrations (1797-98) for 'Elegy Written in a Country Graveyard' indicate his basic critique yet appreciation of motifs held in common. What appeals immediately to Blake in this genre of the meditatio mortis is its fundamental iconographic stance: the confrontation of one's own death. An interrogation of the tomb is conducted throughout these twelve watercolours, the characters peering and pointing at graves, struggling to decipher mortality. Design 8, for example, depicts a feminine Muse examining a tombstone upon which is written, "HERE LIETH Wm Blake." This may be interpreted as Blake's art confronting its own creator as a quintessence of dust, each forcing the other to define its ultimate function. But such a separation of art from the artist, and of the feminine spirit from the masculine body,

1 These designs are reproduced in Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, ed. Irene Tayler (Princeton, N. J., 1971). I am indebted to Tayler's preface for several points of detail in my study of Gray.

2 This latter variation occurs in Plate 7 for Blair's The Grave, where the feminine soul searches underground for her male body who remains buried above.
becomes for Blake a false dichotomy which his own poetry seeks to correct. Design 9 shows the poet Gray and one of his "Swain[s]" 3 pointing at a corpse wrapped in thorns, an image which throughout Blake indicates man trapped in the vegetative cycle of Generation. Clearly it is not death per se which is the crux here, but rather an erroneous mode of life, of perception. Such is not so much a critique of Gray as an amplification, for Gray’s sympathy for "The short and simple Annals of the Poor" (32) approaches Blake’s own inversion, where circumscribed energy becomes the true death: "Chill Penury repress’d thir noble Rage, / And froze the genial Current of the Soul" (51-2). The same emphasis upon life rather than death is made explicit in Design 10, where mothers suckle their babies beneath a tree while watching a distant funeral procession. This homology of birth with death reoccurs throughout Blake’s Graveyard designs. In The Four Zoas birth is equated with death, the womb with the tomb, not (as here) separated by a foreground and background.

Each illustration for the 'Elegy' depicts various

3 'Elegy Written in a Country Graveyard,' l. 97. All future line references to Gray's poem are cited parenthetically in my text.

4 Compare, for example, the Night Thoughts illustration in The Four Zoas (MS p. 91), where the poet Young lies reading, wrapped by an insidious vine of thorns.
downward movements—pointing, digging, staring—in an effort to read the conundrum of the earth as a gigantic grave from which, nevertheless, crops continue to grow (Design 5) and babies emerge from within the darkness of their mothers. But Gray's characters are drawn by Blake as stolid, partially absorbed into the soil. Even the magnificently visceral harvester of Design 5 bending close to the earth with his sickle bears little resemblance to Urizen's joyous reaping in Night IX. Man is rooted in the earth like the trees in the background, and the few upward gestures of hands or eyes (invariably optimistic in Blake) are tentative and quizzical. Just as the harvester crouches over his crop without realizing the apocalyptic significance of his stance, so the poet Gray in the frontispiece design crouches over his page in a gloomy church, writing poetry merely as a glorified epitaph to dust. Each figure is depicted as wrapped in a stultifying cycle of birth, labour and death, never managing to achieve spiritual cognizance. Hence Blake's final

5 Ben Jones, "Blake on Gray: Outlines of Recognition," in Fearful Joy, ed. James Downey & Ben Jones (1975, pp. 127-28), makes the same observation about the reaper of Design 5: "This representation of energy is an element which is undeveloped, if at all considered, in Gray's poem." Jones goes on to compare The Book of Thel with the 'Elegy': "In each poem a melancholy figure contemplates a grave plot and broods on imminent death . . . But there is a difference. Thel is granted an alternative; contemplation of death opens the possibility of the life of vision. There is no such alternative for the narrator in the 'Elegy'."
design for the 'Elegy' is significant, for it shows
the release of the spirit from death as bewildered by
its new freedom. Its companion pointing upward becomes
equivalent to Blake himself, about to lead it on what
will obviously be an arduous journey. Now it must learn
the element of air, as it has thoroughly experienced—
but misinterpreted—earth.

Blake's designs for Gray rightly interpret the
emphasis of the 'Elegy' as, despite its title, personal
melancholy rather than elegiac grief. As such, though
Blake could not have realized this at the time, they
corroborate what Gray confessed in a letter to his
dying friend Richard West as "white melancholy" or
leucocholy, a kind of autumnal sadness which he considered
a blessing in contrast to "black," which occurred
less often but was bitterly nihilistic. The 'Elegy'
concludes with a description of the poet himself,
whose grief has over-stepped its academic confines
into black melancholy:

There at the Foot of yonder nodding Beech
That wreathes its old fantastic Roots so high,
His lifeless Length at Noontide wou'd he stretch,
And pore upon the Brook that babbles by.

6 Cf. a similar design in Blake's illustrations
to Night Thoughts (British Museum series 11.41). Blake's
relationship to the Graveyard poets often takes the form
of a compassionate guide.

7 Correspondence, ed. Paget Toynbee & L. Whibley
Hard by yon Wood, now frowning as in Scorn,
Mutt'ring his wayward Fancies he wou'd rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or craz'd with Care, or cross'd in hopeless Love.
(101-08)

This passage is pertinent for our study in two respects.
First, it links back to the dream-vision tradition,
where a protagonist unable to endure the vicissitudes
of life (often "cross'd in hopeless Love," as Chaucer)
wanders (like Langland or Bunyan) until he lies down
and sleeps in a deep "Wood," whereupon his "wayward
Fancies" incarnate into dreams. Second, the figure
of Gray's melancholic poet who languishes, becomes
nearly "craz'd," and finally dies is replicated in
Blake's Albion who also is stricken at noon beneath
a tree, dying not into literal death but rather human
existence.

If Blake's illustrations for Gray hint at the
figure of Albion trapped by dreams, his sequence of
illustrations for Robert Blair's The Grave (1743),
committed in 1805, presents a detailed précis of The
Four Zoas. "These Designs, detached from the Work
they embellish, form of themselves a most interesting
Poem," notes the original introduction probably written
by Henry Fuseli. That poem had already been written, and the fact that The Four Zoas meshes so explicitly into Blair's work, as well as Young's, implies a closer relationship with the Graveyard tradition than we usually assume. If we follow Blake's original sequence of the Blair designs, they fall into three categories which his own epic reproduced: descent (pl. 1-3), stasis (pl. 4-8), and apocalyptic ascent (pl. 9-12).

The first three designs depict the descent of, respectively, Christ, mankind and an old man into the grave. In Plate 1, Christ descending into the grave, Christ invoked as Blair's Muse (in lines 7-10 of his poem) becomes a mysterious prototype who enters death in order to transcend it. The significance of this design is not recognized until the entire sequence concludes, for Christ returns amplified in the final design of the Last Judgment. In The Four Zoas (VIII. 105.55-106.3) he is represented by Luvah's incarnation into crucified Jesus; but the same Divine Vision, with arms slowly raising into a cruciform position, is present even in Night I hovering over the darkness of the dream and the grave. Plate 2, The Descent of Man

8 'Of the Designs.' Blake's illustrations are reproduced in Blake's Grave: A Prophetic Book, Comm. S. Foster Damon (Providence, Rhode Island, 1963), n. pag. Damon draws some of the same analogies as my study, most notably the identification of the feminine "soul" with Blake's Emanation; but I disagree that "Blake despised the text he was illustrating."
into the Vale of Death, expands Christ's descent to include all humanity (specifically figures from Blair's meditations on tombs). The two designs interpret each other: Christ's descent into the fallen world constitutes a victory which can be duplicated by man; and as Christ originates in an eternal state, so man in the oval mouth of the cave in Plate 2 originates in innocence. 

The Four Zoas uses the same image of the cavern to depict the fallen human body. Ironically, these sorrowing figures are entering phenomenal existence as the ultimate "living Death" (VIII.107.35) because of their failure to perceive eternity which surrounds them. Plate 3, Death's Door, illustrates an old man entering death; a naked youth on top, staring upward and surrounded by beams of light, implies his potential spiritual birth, but remains a frozen effigy. The two figures are paralleled by Urizen's regeneration in Night IX, when he sheds his clothes and hoary age to return to nakedness and youth.

The second category of designs, depicting deathbed scenes, transposes Blair's instant of death into the central sleep which originally causes the Fall in Blake's myth. Plate 4, The Death of the Strong Wicked Man, showing the soul separating from his body and raising his hands in horror against the open window (i.e., of the purified senses) and streaming fire
(i.e., of mental energy), corresponds to The Four Zoas' descriptions of the emergence of a Spectre from a fallen Zoa at the instant of psychic collapse. Plate 6, the feminine Soul hovering over the Body reluctantly parting with Life, corresponds to the separation of the Emanation from each Zoa, an equally disastrous act. The horror of the Spectre and the sorrow of the Emanation at this dislocation contrasts with Plate 5 which separates them, a third death-bed scene where the Good Old Man peacefully parts with his soul conducted upward by Angels. However, there is little doubt Blake means this to be satiric, for it is a vivid description of Urizen particularly in Night VI, his hand perpetually on the scriptures which he himself has written, his recurrent deaths blocked from any genuine insight:

But still his books he bore in his strong hands & his iron pen
For when he died they lay beside his grave & when he rose
He seizd them with a gloomy smile for wrapd in his death clothes
He hid them when he slept in death.

(71.35-8)

Though the Good Old Man's fingers touch the New Testament, the weight of his hand and wrist rests on the Old; he remains trapped between two histories, unable to progress. This is substantiated in that his soul remains the identically bearded, ancient figure as his dying body. Though it flies partway out of the open window, we have not yet reached authentic
transformation. Each of these death-couch scenes enacts the moment of Albion’s Fall into the conventional Christian dualism of soul versus body, or what the next plate depicts as The Soul [i.e., Emanation] Exploring the recesses of the Grave for her separated male counterpart who, invisible to her, crouches above the ground, straddling the moon.

The results of her futile search culminate in Plate 8’s depiction of Blair’s figures united in a single sleep, corresponding precisely to the end of Night VIII where each Zoa enters a “numming stupor” (106.19) and awaits Albion’s call to Judgment.

Total immobility has now been reached. At this juncture in The Grave, Blair reaches his deepest inversion, where the grave becomes a “pregnant womb of ill” (623) and the earth personifies in terms parallel to Blake’s Albion:

Human nature groans
Beneath a vassalage so vile and cruel,
And its vast body bleeds through every vein.

(597-99)

It is this groaning earthen body which ends Blake’s

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9 See p. 369, where I consider this design in relation to Enion’s search for Tharmas in The Four Zoas. One may draw Jungian parallels here, for the female Soul exploring the underworld corresponds to the collective unconscious with its vast store of imagery, separated from the male conscious analytical mind above.

10 We may go further and specify the counsellor as Urizen (still clutching his scroll), the king as Tharmas (in his role as organic matter ruling the fallen world), the warrior as Urthona, and the mother and child as Luvah and Vala.
penultimate Night VIII too, where the Eternal Man suffers throughout all creation. Ahania's cry to the "Caverns of the Grave" (108.8, a phrase taken from Blake's coda to The Grave) may well be intended by Blake as his personal query to the Graveyard poets:

Will you erect a lasting habitation in the mouldering Church yard
Or a pillar & palace of Eternity in the jaws of the hungry grave
Will you seek pleasure from the festering wound or marry for a Wife
The ancient Leprosy that the King & Priest may still feast on your decay
And the grave mock & laugh at the plowd field saying
I am the nourisher thou the destroyer in my bosom is milk & wine
And a fountain from my breasts to me come all multitudes
To my breath they obey they worship me I am a goddess & queen

(VIII.108.11-18)

Here phenomenal existence is characterized by the mortuary images of the Graveyard school as a death-state upheld by institutional Christianity (as exemplified by its practise of burying the dead in churchyards, the scene de rigeur haunted by the Graveyard poet). The result is a loss of man's eternal lineaments, inversion, and a draining of true energy (as conveyed by the images of the plowed field, milk, wine, breasts and breath) into death.

It is at this point in Blake's epic, when Enion denies Ahania's horrific Graveyard vision by indicating how the "furrowd field replies to the grave" (109.28)
to reveal the breathing presence of Albion within the very earth, that the Apocalypse commences. Now it is significant that when Blair reaches this same nihilistic rock-bottom, he abruptly breaks off his vivid evocation of death:

But hold! I've gone too far; too much discover'd My father's nakedness, and nature's shame. Here let me pause...

(634-36)

And he too summons a Last Judgment for his dead in the final one hundred lines of his poem, finally producing some flashes of genuine verse:

... the great promised day of restitution; When loud-diffusive sound from brazen trump Of strong-lung'd cherub shall alarm thy captives, And rouse the long, long sleepers into life, Day-light, and liberty.-- Then must thy gates fly open, and reveal The mines that lay long forming under ground, In their dark cells immured; but now full ripe, And pure as silver from the crucible.

(657-65)

Now Blair's images of containment, rot and despair change to release, flight and renovation. The third category of Blake's illustrations closely follows this reversal. Plate 9, The Skeleton Reanimated, depicts the actual call to Apocalypse, a naked archangel blowing a trumpet inverted over a skeleton's head

11 Damon, op. cit. (n. pag.), is incorrect when he asserts that Blair's Apocalypse occurs only obliquely in the final 28 lines; rather it is intimated throughout the poem and occurs in the final 114 lines.
to blast him awake. As with Albion, the sense of hearing is the first to revive, since Urthona's "auricular nerves" (I.4.1) remain the least fallen of the senses. The skeleton is swathed in a gravedshroud which also becomes the placenta from which he is reborn. This design should be considered in conjunction with the emaciated figure of Albion at the beginning of Night IX, who exists "in the night of death" (120.7). Plate 10, The Reunion of the Soul & the Body, correlates perfectly to Night IX's reunion of each Zoa with his Emanation in sexual comminglings. Plate 11, The meeting of a Family in Heaven, expands individual salvation into the crucial Blakean context of the family, much emphasized in Night IX; and the final plate illustrates The Day of Judgment, a reunion of all beings in a universal Apocalypse.

12 This design was evidently important to Blake, for he drafted it for Young's Night Thoughts (British Museum series II.19), and transferred it again into Night VIII of The Four Zoas (MS p. 105), where it heralds the Apocalypse. It is indicative of how closely Blake sympathized with Blair that the same design fits into the same context of both poems.

13 See particularly MS p. 130, where Albion's prone figure is almost eroded by death, wrapped in winding-cloth, staring blindly upward.

14 See Wilkie & Johnson, Blake's Four Zoas: The Design of a Dream, p. 204.
Blake's final illustration here leads directly into his other Last Judgment designs. It splits open the cocoon of Blair's grave, forcing his poem from self-pity and facile moralizing into apocalyptic fire. The left hand (of Christ) depicts the falling damned, and the right the rising saved. Blake's own imagery from The Four Zoas is again present: Urizen with his Mosaic law, Orc wrapped in his snake, the Whore of Babylon, Tharmas blowing his trumpets, the bursting of the dead from slime and stone. But clearly the movement is circular: the damned plummet earthward only to emerge once again to the right, like swimmers, confronting repeatedly the same choice: to either embrace or flee the mental flames. The open space surrounding Christ and his angels contrasts with the compacted rising and falling figures, like the hub of a revolving wheel. But this Christ is the same figure, hands gracefully spread to hold the Book of Judgment rather than the Keys to Hell and Death, who appears in the first design descending into the grave. The Grave ends by summarizing itself in the following ariel simile:

Thus, at the shut of even, the weary bird Leaves the wide air, and in some lonely brake Cowers down, and dozes till the dawn of day, Then claps his well-fledged wings, and bears away. (764-77)

The implication is that not simply death but human
life and the act of writing the poem have all been states of sleep from which the poet and mankind now wake refreshed. This is the most fundamental tenet of traditional dream-vision poetry, we have seen, and it is reproduced in The Four Zoas, particularly in its own final drawing (MS p. 139), where the sleeping figure of the frontispiece now rises from the earth, arms upstretched like wings, "and bears away."

The culmination of the Graveyard school's influence upon Blake conjoins with Blake's own release from the grave in The Four Zoas to form a later series of illustrations depicting the Last Judgment. Prime among these is his complex illustration (ca. 1810) for James Hervey's Meditations among the Tombs. Here the left side of the picture again rises. That Blake was intimately acquainted with Hervey's work is evidenced by the characters from Meditations who died prematurely rising on both sides, emanating from Hervey who stands at the base facing the vision. Hervey's book, then, flows like corpuscles around an axis of scriptural history. The central staircase

15 Reproduced in Damon, A Blake Dictionary (1965; rpt. 1973), Plate XI, with key.
depicts the history of man as a descent from Adam through the Transfiguration down to Hervey's own time. The three central figures are God, Christ and Hervey, each becoming simultaneously visible to all the other minor personae at the instant of Apocalypse, in this manner reversing the Fall. The descending staircase depicts the tragic descent which Blake traces in *The Four Zoas*; but the bottom of the page, where the dead emerge from the earth, symbolizes the instant of "Self-annihilation." The picture becomes a celebration of the unity of all existence, a flower of mental fire whose sepals become Hervey's work, the blossom the scriptural figures, and the dark root the poet himself.

Many passages in Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs* could have inspired Blake's illustration, but the following description of Apocalypse at the end of the book is, despite its hackneyed idiom, typical of how the Graveyard poets occasionally approached a kind of prophetic intensity:

I must see the graves cleaving, the sea teeming, and swarms unsuspected, crowds unnumbered, yea, multitudes of thronging nations, rising from both: I must see the dissolution of all terrestrial things, and be an attendant on the burial of nature: I must see the vast expanse of the sky wrap up like a scroll, and the incarnate God issuing forth from light inaccessible, with ten thousand times ten thousand angels, to judge both men and devils: I must see the curtain of time drop, see all eternity disclosed to view, and enter upon a state
of being that will never, never have an end. 16

The massive painting advertised in A Vision of the Last Judgment is now lost, but we do have one for the Countess of Egremont of 1808 and an 1810 ink drawing now in the Rosenwald Collection. The latter's iconic complexity gives it the function of a mandala, a microcosm of all variants of existence. Creation radiates from the Divine Humanity at the centre, resulting in a prolix choreography of Apocalypse, where fire either unites each figure in forgiving embrace or causes him to flee in warfare. As with the rest of Blake's Last Judgment illustrations, it constitutes the breaking of the difference between metaphorical vehicle and tenor which is poetically achieved in Night IX of The Four Zoas.

To conclude, my study supports Robert Essick and Jennijoy La Belle's observation that "Blake's own sensibilities have more in common with the Graveyard School . . . than some of Blake's admirers are pleased

16 Meditations and Contemplations (1746; rpt. 1824), p. 68.

17 Reproduced in Damon, op. cit., Plate I, with key.
Blake was first of all attracted to the Graveyard poets' vivid mortuary imagery in contrast to the more restrained Augustan idiom of his contemporaries. Practically every page of *The Four Zoas* is indebted to the Graveyard tradition for this rich imagistic detail: dreams, darkness, moonlight, sleep, the labyrinth of the underworld and its convoluted sexual caverns where human seed is cast, blood, bones, ashes, roots, spectres, graveshrouds, worms, subhuman monsters, unborn embryos, and a general atmosphere of wastage and doom—the list can be extended, and it constitutes so much a part of Blake's epic vocabulary that we do not usually recognize its generic derivation from the Graveyard school. However, Blake uses these tropes for an exact opposite purpose: to depict human existence, not physical death. He bestows the corpse with total animation—a kind of black joke on the original Graveyard poets, in a sense carrying their practise to an extreme. We also note the often hysterical, ranting tone of the Graveyard school echoed by the fallen Zoas, in particular Tharmas who cannot cohere to any lucid form but remains "father of worms & clay" (IV.48.18).

Furthermore, *The Four Zoas* makes a vital connection between this surrealistic graveyard imagery and that which occurs in dreams. It is instructive that Hervey's *Contemplations on the Night*, perhaps the most explicit account of the early eighteenth-century fascination with death, disparages (and yet indicates a fascination with) dreams as follows:

I may venture to call them a kind of experimental mystery . . . Instead of close-connected reasonings, nothing but a disjointed huddle of absurd ideas; instead of well-digested principles, nothing but a disorderly jumble of crude conceptions.19

Hervey here sounds remarkably like many critics of *The Four Zoas*, e.g., Sloss & Wallis. His key phrase, of course, is "a kind of experimental mystery," which 20 Blake's own poem personifies.

The Graveyard school's emphasis upon religious dread, decay and what Hervey terms "the nothingness

19 Contemplations on the Night (1747), p. 213.

20 Hervey's further description (op. cit., p. 211) of sleepers oblivious to their surroundings applies equally to Blake's Albion, including the pastoral fields of Beulah and the death-couch where his dream occurs: "Some are expatiating amidst fairy fields, and gathering garlands of visionary bliss, while their bodies are stretched on a wisp of straw, and sheltered by the cobwebs of a barn. Others, quite insensible of their rooms of state, are mourning in a doleful dungeon, or struggling with the raging billows . . . though reclined on a couch of ivory, are sinking, all helpless and distressed, in the furious whirlpool."
of created things" leads directly into apocalyptic poetry. The tone of Gray's 'Elegy' is sedate, even stoic, but its 'Epitaph' ends by resigning the melancholy poet in the "trembling Hope" of "The Bosom of his Father and his God." Young's Night IX of Night Thoughts culminates in a lengthy Apocalypse, including a vision of Ezekial's chariot (which was the scriptural origin of the Zoas). Both Blair and Hervey's works also climax in an Apocalypse. The Graveyard sensibility reacted against Calvinist predestination by insisting that salvation is determined only at a final Day of Judgment. Death was considered to be the preface to either eternal life or damnation. Fear of the latter was channeled back into the necessity to live virtuously. This explains the shrill didacticism of the Graveyard

Contemplations on the Night, p. 213.

Irene Taylor, in "Two Eighteenth-Century Illustrators of Gray," Fearful Joy (pp.122, 126) compares these final lines of Gray's 'Elegy' to Jerusalem, where the poet's task is to open man's eyes "into Eternity / Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination" (5.17-20). The thrust of Blake's illustrations for Gray, Taylor states, is that "The bosom of one's father and one's God . . .is within; it is one's own bosom, the living spirit of every human being, not something one must wait until death to find. Indeed, those who so mistakenly wait are already partly dead, whatever the state of the physical body." However, a more precise image from Young may have suggested this metaphor to Blake. See pp. 316-17.
school and the raw nerve they touched in the eighteenth-century mind which, on the whole, believed quite literally in an imminent Second Coming. But Blair, Hervey and Young reacted further against neoclassical sobriety by exploiting horrific images and motifs for their own sake, beyond moralistic returns. Their concluding visions seem almost incidental in the face of their primary obsession with death. Fundamentally they were mediocre poets with a nihilistic streak, indulging in sentimental posturing and conventional piety, lacking Blake's firm rational basis. The Four Zoas corrects this fatal tendency, yet utilizes much of the imagery and concern of the Graveyard poems, conjoining it with the tradition of the dream-vision.

23 Cecil A. Moore's reminder, in Backgrounds of English Literature 1700-1760 (Minneapolis, 1953, p. 153) is necessary: "We are often tempted to interpret the so-called graveyard poetry of the eighteenth century ... as a literary affectation, a mere device for procuring an artistic effect, whereas what to us is a psychological curiosity was at that time the normal and all but universal habit of mind among the pious. Instead of turning away from the loathsome facts of decay and putrefaction, they dutifully envisaged the fate of body as well as soul in order to keep themselves in a state of spiritual preparation."
B Y O U N G

It is clear that Dr. Edward Young's long poem in blank verse, The Complaint, and The Consolation; or, Night Thoughts (1742-46), provided Blake a contextual frame for The Four Zoas in at least a literal sense. But to what extent Young's text and Blake's 537 accompanying watercolours influenced his own poem has never been adequately investigated. The remainder of my present chapter will assess this issue.

One reason why Young has not been seriously regarded as a major influence on Blake undoubtedly is the critical disrepute he has fallen into ever since George Eliot's corrective essay in 1857, where she deplored Young's "radical insincerity as a poetic voice." But Night Thoughts was one of the most famous works of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century, going through fifteen editions in its author's lifetime and highly respected by writers as diverse as Pope, Boswell, Johnson, Burns, Coleridge, Ruskin, Schiller and Goethe. "From its first appearance

24 Essays (1883), p. 51.
in the world, this poem has united the suffrages of the criticks in the acknowledgement of its superior merit," notes Blake's publisher, Richard Edwards, in his 'Advertisement' to Blake's illustrations for Night Thoughts. Considering this, Blake may have deliberately capitalized upon Young's popularity. To subtitle his own first epic "A Dream of Nine Nights," number each Night and climax with an Apocalypse as does Young would attract instant recognition, lend a certain lucidity to a difficult poem and provide market value. His monumental series of illustrations for Young's poem, taking almost two years to complete, may well have compelled him to write his own central text rather than merely illustrate one. Edwards, an astute businessman, at first regarded the Young project as commercially lucrative; if indeed it had proved so, Blake's name would have become more widely known

25 All quotations from Night Thoughts are from the edition owned by Blake (his name written in the flyleaf), Young's Night-Thoughts: A New Edition, corrected (1796). Line references will be cited directly in my text; e.g., I.2 means Night I, line 2.

26 There were many literary precedents to suggest that this may be the case. Imitations of Night Thoughts through the middle and late eighteenth-century were common. See Raymond Dexter Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (1922, p. 637ff., Bibliography I), who lists some dozen of these works.
and a follow-up work of his own would have been a natural result. Given these promising initial circumstances, it is ironic that only 43 of Blake's designs for the first four Nights were ever published, in 1797; the rest of the series never saw the light to this day, just as his own manuscript, The Four Zoas, was never printed until years after his death. Both works share a similar origin and fate.

If indeed the popularity of Night Thoughts made it an ideal model, one might expect deeper organic relationships between the two poems. Through the painstaking labour of sketching, drawing in India ink, then water-coloring—welding each illustration in minute exegetical detail with about every twenty lines of Young's text—Blake acquired an intimate draftsman's knowledge of his author. In composing his own epic, he used in 47 out of 68 pages the left-over illustrated proof sheets from the defunct Young project, which often have relevance to the specific narrative written upon

27 The Edwards' edition of the first four Nights of Night Thoughts containing 43 of Blake's designs has been reissued under the editorship of Robert Essick & Jenijoy LaBelle, Night Thoughts or, The Complaint and the Consolation (N. Y., 1975).

28 Usually each of the illustrated lines is marked by an asterisk, presumably by Blake himself. However, Blake utilizes images from the surrounding context as well.
them. It will be my conclusion that Blake utilized Young as a kind of springboard and outer contextual frame for *The Four Zoas*, as he did variously with Watts for *Songs of Innocence* and *of Experience*, Swedenborg for *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Milton for *Milton* as well as *The Four Zoas*, the Bible for most of his work, and several others. As it turns out, Young was the ailing recipient upon which Blake, the doner, grafted his viable illustrations; but finding this not explicit and thorough enough, wrote his own dream-poem as the eternal meaning behind Young's text.

My comparative study of *Night Thoughts* vis-à-vis *The Four Zoas* will concern three areas: theme, style and methodology. The focus will be primarily on each poet's text, though I have examined Blake's series of watercolours now in the British Museum, and these will be introduced where relevant. However, a graphic


30 Is it merely fanciful to conjecture that the dual levels of *The Four Zoas* may have occurred to Blake in this fashion, the artist's "hand of God" (IV.56.26) bending over the text to resuscitate the vastly inferior, sleeping corpus of Young's poem, as the hand of God does over Los' furnaces in Night IV to comfort him?

31 Blake's watercolours for *Night Thoughts* will be cited directly in my text. For example, *BM I.9* means the British Museum series Night I, p. 9.
study would require a book-length study of its own, as is obvious from John E. Grant's preliminary examination.

Night Thoughts revives the dream-vision tradition more explicitly than any of the other Graveyard works we have considered, for its basic metaphor is night/day and sleep/wakefulness. Young characterizes his poem as a dream ("My midnight dream will wake / Your hearts" [VII.1396]), but only because its extreme wakefulness seems a chimera to those who, in turn, dream that they are awake. Young makes an important distinction between "night-visions"--a kind of night-sight bequeathed to prophets and poets (he cites Ezekiel, David, Homer, Milton and Pope)--and "waking dreams," or quotidian life locked into cyclic time (I.163ff.). Significantly, Young admits that in the past he wrongly tried to impose stability upon time:

Night-visions may befriend, as sung above:
Our waking dreams are fatal: how I dreampt
Of things impossible! could sleep do more?
Of joys perpetual in perpetual change!
Of stable pleasures on the tossing wave!
Eternal sunshine in the storms of life!
. . .Till at Death's toll . . .
Starting I 'woke, and found myself undone.
(I.163-8, 172-3)

This recalls Urizen's project, accounted most succinctly in The Book of Urizen:

Reserv'd for the days of futurity,
I have sought for a joy without pain,
For a solid without fluctuation
Why will you die O Eternals?
Why live in unquenchable burnings?
(IV.9-13)

But whereas Young concludes that his error lies in trying to transplant eternity into time and consequently only "a perpetuity of bliss, is bliss" (I.183), i.e., in the Here-after, Blake regards Urizen's Faustian attempt to petrify the flux as doomed, for eternity can only be discovered within time.

The author/protagonist of Night Thoughts wakes from uneasy sleep at the beginning of Night I, "a sea of dreams" (9). He wakes because of sudden personal bereavement, three deaths occurring within one month, including his wife, and his own almost fatal sickness while crossing the Channel. (The extent to which this was biographically accurate does not particularly matter to the poem, save to give it an intensely subjective and 'factual' tone.) Suffering jolts him toward a visionary dimension which inverts his prior conceptions. Now "all on earth is shadow, all beyond / Is substance" (I.120). Daylight existence is perceived as a deadly

33 Young consistently uses marine imagery to describe the fallen dream of profane existence, and it may be that Blake's own use of the Sea of Time and Space was at least reinforced by this example.
dream gripping all men except certain poets and prophets (who discover this inversion before biological death, and must communicate it), the actual dead (who discover it too late), and God and angels (who exist in it continuously). One might compare this discovery to Thel's sudden confrontation with her own graveplot. Young argues that only by waking do we recognize the oneiric quality of life.

Now such is, of course, the outer structure of The Four Zoas: Albion falls asleep, splitting into psychic components having only a relative reality to the (absent) whole; these parts exist, meanwhile, as phantasma, and can only regain their eternal status by being reabsorbed back into wakefulness. Blake illustrates this motif several times in Young. The following Night Thoughts description parallels the solipsistic dream locus of The Four Zoas:

34 Michael J. Tolley, in "The Book of Thel and Night Thoughts" (Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 69, No. 6, June 1965, pp. 375-85), argues considerable borrowings by Blake for The Book of Thel. His case rings solid, particularly in a reference noted previously by Damon, Night Thoughts' "0 the soft commerce! 0 the tender Tyes, / Close-twisted with the Fibres of the Heart!" (V.1063-64) compared to Thel's "She saw the couches of the dead, & where the fibrous roots / Of every heart on earth infixes deep its restless twists" (6.3-4). Certainly Young's "The clod we tread, soon trodden by our sons" (VI.114) recalls the Clod of Clay who counsels Thel, as well as the short lyric 'The Clod & the Pebble.'
While o'er my limbs sleep's soft dominion spread:  
What, though my soul fantastick measures trod  
O'er fairy fields; or mourn'd along the gloom  
Of pathless woods; or down the craggy steep  
Hurl'd headlong, swam with pain the mantled pool;  
Or scal'd the cliff; or danced on hollow winds  
With antick shapes, wild natives of the brain?  
(I.91-7, my italics)

The Four Zoas also places its context within "the Brain of Man . . . & in his circling Nerves" (I.11.15). Blake illustrates the "antick shapes" rising from a sleeping figure only to fall back into the sea (i.e., of Tharmas' Time and Space; BM I.9). The fusion of immobility with desperate and disorientated mobility is characteristic of both poems. For Young's

what, amidst  
This tumult universal, wing'd dispatch,  
And ardent energy, supinely yawns?--  
Man sleeps--and man alone . . . the sole cause  
Of this surrounding storm!  
(II.295-98, 102-3)

Blake draws miniscule dream-figures, including a naked woman who would correspond in his myth to Vala, fighting around a sleeping man (BM II.21). The same situation occurs in the final Night's "Dreams / Through senseless Mazes hunt Souls un-inspir'd" (2090-91): Blake depicts a sleeping man plunged into night, bed-covers becoming a winding-sheet, with dream phantasma dashing over him, including a woman pursued by hunters and a bat-winged demon squatting on his head, while Beulah's moon shines through an open window (BM IX.103). The sleeper has abdicated

35 See illustration p. 296.
Night Thoughts (BM IX.103)
Tho' Heaven, and Hell, depend upon thy Thought,
A Butterfly comes 'crofs, and Both are fled.
Is This the Picture of a Rational?
This Horrid Image, shall it be most Just?
Lorenzo! No: It cannot,—shall not be,
If there is Force in Reason; or, in Sounds:
Haunted beneath the Glimpses of the Moon,
A Magic, at this planetary Hour;
When Slumber locks the general Lip, and Dreams
Thro' tendefl Mazes hunt Souls un-inspir'd.
Attend — The sacred Mysteries begin —
My solemn Night-born Adjuration hear;
Hear, and I'll raise thy Spirit from the Dust;
While the Stars gaze on this Enchantment now;
Enchantment, not Infernal, but Divine!

"By Silence, Death's peculiar Attribute;"
"By Darkness, Guilt's inevitable Doom;"
"By Darkness, and by Silence, Sifts dread!"
"That draw the Curtain round Night's ebon Throne;"
"And raise Ideas, solemn as the Scene:"
authority, and given himself up to internecine war. As we shall see, Blake considered Young himself to be such a sleeper, and Young's fear of death parallel to the Zoas' insistence upon "futurity."

To wake from the dream of profane life one must progress through concatenated rings of sleep, reversing normality; for "Man dreams himself ascending in his fall" (VIII.512). Several times Blake depicts the instant of the original collapse: a man slumbering with his dog on the edge of a sheer abyss, leaning outward (BM V.41); another plunging head first through space, out-stretched arms tearing the planets with him, his own head on a par with the same falling globes (BM VI.15) --Blake uses the same image in The Four Zoas, where Urizen "seized thee dark Urthona In my left hand falling / I seized thee beauteous Luvah" (V.64.28-9). In addition, Young frequently refers to a rock upon which man sleeps or lies shipwrecked (e.g., III.353ff., IV.428); this resembles Albion stricken upon the rock of the Mosaic law.

Young wakes at the beginning of Night Thoughts, and falls into merited sleep at the end. In The Four Zoas, Albion falls asleep at the beginning, and wakes at the end. Though the emphasis is different, the interim in both cases is night, as much a metaphysical
as physical state. The darkness of Young's insomniac "fathomless abyss" (I.64) obscures particularity, reducing objects to a few stark essentials (e.g., lamp, hourglass, moon, bed, open book, owl, stars) which thereby become invested with teleological significance:

   By day the soul is passive, all her thoughts
   Impos'd, precarious, broken, 'ere mature.
   By night, from objects free, from passion cool,
   Thoughts uncontroll'd, and unimpress'd, the births
   Of pure election.
   (V.118-22)

As for Milton, darkness becomes a dialectic, "strik[ing] thought inward" (V.129), causing abstraction; silence purifies (at least theoretically) language:

   Thus darkness aiding intellectual light,
   And sacred silence whisp'ring truths divine.
   (IX.2411-12)

Night represents the space of the poem: metaphorically, in that only the poem can convey the writer and reader into the eschaton yet safely return; and literally, in that Young writes it at night (and claimed to have actually done so). It is an "awful pause! prophetick of [Nature's] end" (I.25), an ellipsis where the actual conditions of death are entered mimetically in order to extrapolate how one will meet them in actual fact. It rehearses the depths of midnight before the Apocalypse; for Christ, like death, will come like a thief in the night. Daybreak is emblematic of the Second Coming (III. 258), and as Young's sleepless Nights progress a dramatic tension increases which explodes, finally, into
an imaginative recreation of the Apocalypse in Night IX. This same structure occurs most powerfully in The Four Zoas.

Young's didacticism is explained by this pressure of the death of time looming closer. Its ulterior objective is to wake the sleeping reader by evoking his fear of death (thus reaching back to John Dennis' identification of sublimity with terror). A more internal motive is to awaken the antagonist, Lorenzo, who remains a hedonist "infidel." Young's exhortations for Lorenzo to "wake" increase during Night IX, just as that word rings particularly through the final Night of Blake's poem, as well as the classical dream-vision. Unfortunately, little real drama is generated here because Young allows no conflict between his own and Lorenzo's views. However, H. Mutschmann has suggested that Lorenzo represents Young's younger, repressed self, the pleasure-loving rake, whereas Philander enacts Young's ideal self, whom the narrator is torn between. 

If regarded thus, a deeper dimension emerges in which the shrill apothegms Young plies against the hapless Lorenzo are attempts to persuade himself of his own thesis, yet never wholly "exorcising" (IX.1364) an authentic

36 "The Origin and Meaning of Young's Night Thoughts" (Tartu, 1939), pp. 7, 15.
horror of death.

In fact, Night Thoughts sheds some of its now fatuous piety if regarded as dramatic monologue. The closer Young comes to ritually recreating the Apocalypse, the more his fear of death intensifies, for he can never be certain that he will actually (not merely "fancifully" through art) be on the side of the saved. His defense of neoclassical "virtue" broadens into a wholesale exoneration of current conservative and aristocratic values, allied, to be sure, with the naked skeleton as a touchstone to test their validity. Yet by definition he cannot define the unknown. His paean to God in the final pages and the massive artillery of his arguments for a benevolent deity take the form of incantation, to force himself to believe death will assume that pattern he desires. But the dialogue with Lorenzo continues unresolved to the bitter end, and the poem concludes with "universal midnight" (IX.2433), a chaos modeled after the ending of Pope's The Dunciad.


38 The continuity existing between Paradise Lost, The Dunciad In Four Books (1743), the Graveyard School and Blake's 'epics', beginning with Vala and The Four Zoas, was first suggested by Michael Phillips, whose detailed study of this theme is in preparation. Cf. Phillips' statement in Interpreting Blake, ed. Phillips (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), p. 3.
Besides darkness and silence, a third attribute of night which Young emphasizes is the moon. Though Blake seems to have been fascinated by moonlight from the beginning (e.g., 'Night' of Songs of Innocence), his specific formulation of Beulah as a lunar married state begins in The Four Zoas. It is possible that this idea became clarified by the lunar atmosphere shining on practically every other page of Night Thoughts; for Beulah's sun in The Pilgrim's Progress shines during the night as well. Young makes a distinction between "sublunary bliss" (I.198)—which is "Soft, modest, melancholy, female, fair" (III.57), but transient and hence ultimately tragic—and "Self-given solar ray of sound delight" (I.219), which is eternal and divine. These are roughly equivalent to Blake's Beulah and Eternity.

The same inversion carries over to Young's treatment of the sun. Based upon Newton's cosmology, he depicts the sun as subject to the same decay as mundane existence,

39 The following passage from Night Thoughts resembles Blake's "little lovely moony Night" of 'The Crystal Cabinet':

Bliss! sublunary bliss!—proud words, and vain!
Implicit treason to divine decree!
A bold invasion of the rights of Heaven!
I clasp'd the phantoms, and I found them air.
O had I weigh'd it ere my fond embrace.

(I.199-203)
merely upon a slower scale: "The sun himself by thy
[i.e., Death's] permission shines; / And, one day, thou
shall pluck him from his sphere" (I.207-08). Blake's
watercolour for these lines shows Death, a white-robed
and -bearded Urizen, grasping the sun with one hand and
raising his dart with the other to puncture it (BM I.15).
Again, for "Strong reason's shudder at the dark unknown! /
A sun extinguish'd! a just opening grave!" (II.658),
Blake draws a figure lying on the shore in what seems
to be an opening grave, hand clasped desperately over
the sun sinking into the sea--a powerful evocation of
transcience (BM II.41). If these two illustrations are
combined, one arrives conceptually at Blake's Los, who
initiates the Apocalypse by tearing both sun and moon
from the sky:

Los his vegetable hands
Outstretched his right hand branching out in
fibrous Strength
Seizd the Sun. His left hand like dark roots
coverd the Moon
And tore them down cracking the heavens across
from immense to immense
Then fell the fires of Eternity
(IX.117.5-9)

For Blake, this image is crucial, and I will consider
it in my analysis of Night IX. It amounts to a shattering
of the fallen nocturnal and diurnal cycles, returning
sun and moon to their internal origin in man. It is
possible that this image came to Blake through Young.

40 Both poets are elaborating upon the New Testament
account of the Crucifixion accompanied by a darkening of
the sun (Matt.27.45). See Night Thoughts IV.245ff. and
The Four Zoas VIIB.92.16.
For Young, the destruction of the universe results naturally from the revelation of God as a solar being:

A Sun, O how unlike
The Babe at Bethlehem! how unlike the Man
That groan’d on Calvery! --Yet He it is
. . .sweeps stars and suns aside.

(IX.172-4, 181)

Light darkens light. But this Apocalypse can only be reached by traversing the extinction of light, death which itself becomes symbolic of the passive receptivity a Christian must inculcate before he is vouch-safed vision. "Darkness has more divinity for me" (V.128):

Young, always conscious of Milton's example, reveres darkness as the ultimate human attribute of God whose light must necessarily be delineated as dark.

41 Interestingly enough, Young's characterization of the spiritual man as "He sees with other eyes than theirs: where they / Behold a Sun, he spies a Deity" (VIII.1107-08) presages Blake himself and his famous description of the sun as a host of angels (A Vision of the Last Judgment, 92). But whereas Young uses the same image in a generalized and impersonal way, Blake's "0 no no I see an Innumerable Company of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty" is more personal, intense and epistemological.

42 One might draw a valid comparison with St. John of the Cross' Dark Night of the Soul, which applies to the Nights of both Young and Blake's poems: "These three parts of the night are all one night; but, after the manner of night, it has three parts. For the first part, which is that of sense, is comparable to the beginning of night, the point at which things begin to fade from sight. And the second part, which is faith, is comparable to midnight, which is total darkness. And the third part is like the close of night, which is God, the which part is near to the light of day." Ascent of Mount Carmel, ed. E. Allison Peers (N.Y., 1958), p. 107.
Night Thoughts is a meditation on time, in broadly the same vein as Ecclesiastes, Eliot's Four Quartets and Rilke's Duino Elegies. Essick and La Belle are correct that "Young's . . . excursion into the psychology of time must have appealed to Blake, himself an explorer into apocalyptic moments of temporal reverse." Young views man as trapped between the futility of time and the horror of either nonexistence or an eternity in Hell. All three dimensions of mundane time are unsatisfactory: the past (memory) traps one in circularity—"On cold-served repetitions he subsists, / And in the tasteless present chews the past" (III.319); the future (anticipation) demoralizes, etiolating energy—"Men perish in advance, as if the sun / Should set ere noon" (VII.89); and the present (physical senses) usually is impossible to live in anyway—"Why past and future preying on our hearts, / And putting all our present joys to death?" (VII.620)—but if one can, is condemned as animalistic:

The visible and present are for brutes,
A slender portion, and a narrow bound!
These reason, with an energy divine,
O'erleaps; and claims the future and unseen.
(VI.246-49)

Young constantly makes this error of futurizing; yet, like Tharmas and Urizen in *The Four Zoas*, elsewhere exposes a genuine terror of the "dreadful secret" (VII. 1307) that men live forever, that no escape exists even into oblivion, for Hell is the doctrinaire concomitant to Heaven. Forty years later, this prospect was to drive a far greater poet, William Cowper, insane with remorse at his predestined damnation. But Young's strategy is to focus upon eternity in order to sacramentalize time. Timelessness pulses through the "thin partition of an hour" (IX.50) which thereby becomes translucent and brittle, ultimately shattered by vision ("transport") rehearsing its own biological death (i.e., the body remains behind in the creative raptus). The impetus of *Night Thoughts* is to pierce time into the numinous. Toward this end Young elongates time to define man as a death-animal occurring in flux, echoing Heraclitus: "Man is a self-survivor ev'ry year, / Man, like a stream, is in perpetual flow" (V.711-12). Time itself he defines as homicidal and finally suicidal (falling on its own scythe during the Apocalypse [IX. 308]), attempting to slice eternity into digestible chunks:

44 Young's "soul shudder'd at futurity" (VI.36), a passage Blake illustrates by a horrified woman looking downward into the abyss; but occasionally becomes "present with futurities" (V.341). Blake's Urizen likewise is "terrified with his heart & spirit at the visions of futurity" (II.34.7), but finally discovers "Futurity is in this moment" (IX.121.22).
Each moment on the former shuts the grave.  
While man is growing, life is in decrease;  
And cradles rock us nearer to the tomb.  
Our birth is nothing but our death begun;  
As tapers waste, that instant they take fire.  
(V.716-20)

This passage is remarkably Blakean, with its homology of womb/tomb and growth/decay. It especially recalls 45

The Song of Los:

The Grave shrieks with delight, & shakes  
Her hollow womb, & clasps the solid stem:  
Her bosom swells with wild desire:  
And milk & blood & glandous wine  
In rivers rush & shout & dance  
On mountain, dale and plain.  
(7.35-40)

As usual, Blake extends the image farther than Young, coalescing womb/tomb rather than merely "rock[ing]" them nearer, thus permitting a far greater constellation of meaning. Yet the basic animism behind his image is shared by Young.

For Young, the mutability of epiphenomena forces an Apocalypse to occur at any single instant between any two objects which position themselves in time via each other's rate of decay. Each object (and time is concretized by the neo-classic conceit of "particles," e.g., I.367) contains its own absence, radiating death back to the central meditator who thereby can detect the same process in himself. Or to reverse Young's 45

It also fore-echoes Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode,' "Our birth is but a death and a forgetting."
brilliant metaphor describing how the reverie of death becomes obliterated in most people, "their hearts wounded, like the wounded air, / Soon close; where pass'd the shaft no trace is found, / As from the wing no scar the sky retains" (I.427-30): here, mutability creates a hole inside every object through which one views its sustaining field of the nontemporal and nonspatial; whereas space itself needs a certain afterglow (i.e., wing-scar) to define itself as presence. We are reminded of Enitharmon's broken heart-gates. The interior wound of time becomes a window into the numinous; in this way, time is transmuted, as in the alchemical sense from lead into gold. Young's critique returns to the fulcrum of the present where free will functions; and since eternity can be reached only through a particular quality of time, he sometimes equates them, similar to The Marriage of Heaven and Hell's "Eternity is in love with the productions of time" (5.10):

Time is eternity;  
Pregnant with all eternity can give . . .  
Who murders time, he crushes in the birth  
A power ethereal, only not ador'd.  

(II.107-8, 110-11)

Blake's illustration for these lines depicts a father measuring an infant, while the mother watches (BM II.11). The implication is that the potential for eternity contained within the child is crushed by the adult world.  

46 Cf. 'Infant Sorrow' of Songs of Experience: "Struggling in my fathers hands; / Striving against my swaddling bands; / Bound and weary I thought best / To sulk upon my mothers breast." Los ties down his son, Orc, in Night V; ironically, he himself represents time, repressing his own potential.
Furthermore, Young engages in a deliberate diaspora of his world into the nontemporal, which acts both as an incentive to leave his old world now drained of meaning, and a personification of the nontemporal to contain his beloved dead. The gift the dead give him is simply the fact of mortality, destroying the illusion of continuity. By his own volition he could never attain such an insight. He has been granted the ambiguous privilege of touching death yet safely returning, shaken, with the knowledge first that death is but "the soft transition" (III.440) into either eternal joy or despair, and second that the choice between these two states depends upon a particular quality of life. Young never seriously questions the validity of his Christian criteria, except obliquely through Lorenzo. His dilemma lies rather in living up to those criteria. That his fear of death yet continued insistence that the virtuous suffer no such fear continues unabated to the end is evidence that he did not succeed.

If Young's eschatological emphasis seems excessive, his vignettes of fallen existence are remarkably cogent
and provide the rationale for his inversion. "Life is war" (II.9), a mental and cosmic combat between rigorously moral forces. But Young depicts Blake's lowest psychological level, Ulro, even more realistically than he does Generation, using imagery of containment: prisons, chains, contraction and concentricity (e.g., bubbles, Blake's design showing each with a child trapped inside who tumbles back into the sea [BM VII.43]; or tears, depicted by Blake as miniature universes drifting through space [BM III.9]). The following scene is modelled upon Milton's Hell, and might well describe the wasteland of The Four Zoas:

A part how small of the terraqueous globe
Is tenanted by man! the rest a waste;
Rocks, deserts, frozen seas, and burning sands—
Wild haunts of monsters, poisons, stings and death:
Such is earth's melancholy map! but, far
More sad, this earth is a true map of man . . .
Loud sorrows howl, envenom'd passions bite,
Ravenous calamities our vitals seize,
And threatening fate wide opens to devour.
(I.285-90)

Geophysical desolation here becomes allegorical; though Young does not penetrate very far into the ideational basis of his identifications, a rudimentary mental cartography does emerge.

Young's descriptions of Ulro are so convincing because it is an inherent danger within his own thesis. His nocturnal meditative method easily causes sensory deprivation, akin to Rimbaud's dérèglement de tous les sens, accounting for his surrealistic flashes
of imagery and lapses into rhetoric as counter-balance for his descent. Blake from the beginning of his poetic vocation worked out a *dramatis personae* which through interaction (primarily warfare and sex) struggles toward liberation; but Young hogs his whole poem, and soliloquy pays for its occasional insight by solipsism. It may be that Young's emphasis upon the subjective is necessitated by his theme, for every man must confront death starkly alone, and the Christian eschaton depends solely upon individual worth. To be sure, Young envisions a brotherhood of man in the final pages of Night IX, as does Blake; but it occurs only after Apocalypse, as a result of second birth (into a new spiritual family). Until then all structures of

*47* Eleanor M. Sickels rightly points out, in The Gloomy Egoist: Moods and Themes of Melancholy from Gray to Keats (N.Y., 1932, p. 30), that "The amount of actual introspection as against doctrine in the Night Thoughts may, however, be easily exaggerated, and it is too easy to forget that emphasis on the worth of the individual is as essential an element in the Christian scheme of salvation as it is in the doctrine of original genius." It is worth noting that Young's first four Nights are the most personal and compelling, no doubt because they constituted the original poem which went through six editions in as many months, becoming so popular that Young added the later Nights. Even George Eliot applauded the "unmistakable cry of pain" in the first few Nights, but traces a deterioration into opinionated abstraction which "baptises egoism as religion" (*op. cit.*, pp. 50, 37).

*48* Compare Young's "Nothing in nature, much less conscious being, / Was e'er created solely for itself" (IX.706-07) with Thel's lesson from the cloud that "Every thing that lives / Lives not alone, nor for itself" (*BT* II.26-7), and the same lesson repeated in The Four Zoas, "Man liveth not by self alone but in his brothers face" (IX.133.25).
mundane existence are doomed, valuable only analogously. The virtuous man by definition must remain isolated from his own culture, and awaits vindication only in an afterlife. Hence the feeling of self-isolation increases, and the inversion of day into night must be assiduously maintained until it is met by a corresponding inversion of night into day during the Apocalypse. As Young's grasp upon time loosens and his proximity to death mimetically nears, his disorientation intensifies. In short, he runs the risk of entering Ulro rather than Eternity, mistaking mere eccentricity for wisdom.

For example, there is an extraordinary long passage in Night VII (653-843) where Young abandons his rector's stance and empathetically enters Lorenzo's world as an experiment in order to demonstrate its absurdity. Instead the result is a scathingly eloquent condemnation of conventional piety, plunging us into the shattered cosmos of the Zoas, where "Knowing is suffering," "Hopes! abortive energies," thought a luxury to man who hungers to become inanimate yet remains terrified of death, while "the poor worm calls us for her inmates." Blake's engraving shows a "particle of energy divine" plunging through space like a crumpled star, an "outcast of existence" strikingly akin to Enion upon the Margins of Nonentity (BM VII.41).
Young concludes, "If such the world creation was a crime" (VII.972), which is precisely the case in Blake. The undercurrent of despair in Night Thoughts, kept under control by a surface layer of moralizing, flows unimpeded through The Four Zoas.

It is evident that certain of Blake's ideas began to congeal into personifications during his work on Night Thoughts. We can see The Four Zoas taking shape in the background, transmitted from Young's text through the illustrations which form an intermediary stage between both poems. This is especially evident in Young's reliance upon reason to the detriment of his emanative faculties, which Blake criticizes. Young uses "reason, that heaven-lighted lamp" (III.2) to write by, but Blake extinguishes that image within the darkness of his own early Nights, where Ahania sees futurity before her "like a dark lamp" (III.44.8). Blake draws the figure of blind Death which slouches through Night Thoughts as his own Urizen, a white-robed and -bearded, patriarchal old man occasionally carrying a manuscript. This association of reason with death radically undercuts Young's poem. Cerebration becomes trapped in its own creations, and the faceted "webs
of wonder" (VI.158) become "curious webs / Of subtle thought and exquisite design, / (Fine network of the brain!) to catch a fly!" (VI.210-12). Blake transplants this image into a negative context, condemning the institutional religion which Young extolls: Urizen's "Spider's web, moist, cold & dim . . . / So twisted the cords, & so knotted / The meshes: twisted like to the human brain" (BU VIII.10.20-22 and FZ VI.73.31-34). Here Young's superb image is turned by Blake against the earlier poet; but it is a mark of Blake's respect for Young that he recognizes the brilliance of the metaphor.

Blake regards Young's tragic fault not simply as undue emphasis upon reason, but rather a failure to integrate logic with the senses, emotion and imagination. In Blake's terms, Young never embraces his Spectre (represented by Lorenzo), consequently never undergoes a genuine Apocalypse. Young's reliance upon reason to the detriment of his other faculties becomes the solipsistic prison of Ulro:

Retire; --the world shut out; --thy thoughts call home; --
Imagination's airy wing repress; --
Lock up thy senses; --let no passion stir; --
Wake all to Reason; --let her reign alone.

(IX.1441-44)

The difference to Blake could not be more striking. His accompanying illustration depicts thoughts returning
like butterflies to the sleeping Young, imagination lying mutilated by his side, and the senses locked in a cage. To repeat, this constitutes Young's poetic methodology, a deliberate sensory deprivation and embracing of darkness, silence and death as catalysts. But the net result becomes restrictive, indicated elsewhere by Blake's watercolour of a flying angel with arms bound and a hood over his head like a hunting falcon's (BM VI.17). Another illustration is even more pertinent: Young stares into a mirror, transcribing his own reflection (BM VIII.53).

In short, Young becomes what Blake terms "Aged ignorance" clipping the wings of imagination in *The Gates of Paradise* (pl. 11); even though, characteristically, he sometimes senses his own failure:

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   age severe
  Old worn-out vice sets down for virtue fair;
   With graceless gravity chastising youth.
   (V.604-6)
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If the senses are denied cross-fertilization with the other faculties, not only logic suffers, mutating into stale Christian apologetics of which the eighteenth-century abounded, but the entire tonality suffers. By imprisoning, Young is imprisoned; by inordinate emphasis upon reason, reason is starved. This is precisely Urizen's position in *The Four Zoas*. Young devalues the senses as dangerous temptations disguising
"our rapturous relation with the stalls" (VII.493).
In Blake's view, Young perpetuates Milton's basic error: a failure to center spiritual evolution upon the "Human form Divine," rather than an ethereal deity. Hence Luvah's realization in Night IX that "Attempting to be more than Man We become less" (135.21) is a sharp retort to Young's "O to be a man--and strive to be a god" (VII.1442).

These and other considerations begin to congeal in Blake's illustrations into personae later appearing in The Four Zoas. For "The Mighty Mind, that son of heaven! / By tyrant Life dethron'd, imprison'd, pain'd" (III.455-56), Blake depicts a naked blond woman taunting a man in a cage (BM III.30). Margoliouth suggests that this drawing is a prototype of Vala feeding the furnace into which Luvah is cast, and that Vala may well be the golden-haired, blue-eyed crowned woman present in many of the watercolours. "It does not seem an extravagant guess that Blake's conception of Vala came to him while he was engaged on the Night Thoughts."

One might add the illustration for "Where sense runs savage broke from reason's chain" (III.22/BM III.6), showing the same naked blonde with a broken chain on

her ankle; above, the hooded indefinite form of Death rears, similar to Tharmas rearing to rape Enitharmon (IV.49.4). Again, for Young's definition of life as "Fantastic chace of shadows hunting shades" (VIII.73/ BM VIII.5), Blake draws a man pursuing a woman, their minute particularity almost bled away by the opaque grey night—a situation replicated many times in Blake's poem.

It is even possible to see Blake's later concept of the Emanation in Young's text and Blake's illustrations. Young speaks of happiness finding "one shrine ... the bosom of a friend; / Where heart meets heart, reciprocally soft, / Each other's pillow to repose

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50 Several other critics have pointed out the resemblances of figures in Blake's illustrations for Night Thoughts to the personae of his prophetic books. Geoffrey Keynes has singled out Blake's drawing (BM VII.22) of a feminine Virtue spinning as possibly "fore¬shADOWING his later symbolism of Enitharmon, the universal woman who weaves the Web of Life" (Illustrations to Young's Night Thoughts, 1927, Introd., n. pag.). Also relevant here would be the drawing of Time's three daughters spinning (BM VIII.7). Esseck & LaBelle (op. cit., p. x) maintain that the figure of a veiled goddess (e.g., BM II.26) "connects with Vala, Blake's nature goddess in his Prophetic Books, whose own veil represents repressive moral law." Finally, Morton D. Paley, "Blake's Night Thoughts: An Exploration of the Fallen World," in William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon (Providence, 1969, ed. Paley, pp. 141-47), discovers at least five of Blake's eight Zoas and their Emanations in various incarnations throughout the Young illustrations. Though such iconographic genealogy is at times strained, given the fertility of Blake's imagination and the exegetical continuity within his poetry itself, the basic conclusion is valid.
"divine" (II.517, 520-23); and during his Apocalypse, "Thrice happy they! that enter now the court / Heav'n opens in their bosoms" (IX.235-6). This recalls the interpenetrating ability of Blake's Eternals, as well as Los exploring Enitharmon's heart-gates. As with Blake, such mutability contains the danger of alienation:

How this life groans, when sever'd from the next!
Poor mutilated wretch, that disbelieves!
By dark distrust his being cut in two,
In both parts perishes; life void of joy,
Sad prelude of Eternity in pain!
(VII.640-44)

Blake's watercolour depicts the separation taking place: a man in the bottom right corner, hands bound, is held by a winged demon, while a woman is dragged off shrieking over another man's shoulder (BM VII.32). The situation recalls Night IV of The Four Zoas, where Tharmas abducts Enitharmon, causing Los' collapse and the emergence of his Spectre. In this case a typically violent Young image describing an abstraction is sharpened by Blake's use of male and female.

Young's apocalyptic slant, which we have seen reoccurring throughout the Graveyard school, is the most fundamental characteristic he shares with Blake. Both Night Thoughts and The Four Zoas climax with
a Last Judgment; both share imagery originating independently from St. John's Revelation. But there are unique exegetical similarities. Young regards the Apocalypse as a vertical surge upward to escape cyclic time—"Man must soar" (VII.389); Blake's Zoas, too, rise from a treacherous cycle, but enter an eternal and creative cycle which is the prototype for the fallen one. Blake's illustration for Young's asterisked lines "Nature revolves, but Man advances; Both / Eternal, that a Circle, this a Line. / That gravitates, this soars" (VI.691-3) is especially applicable to The Four Zoas. It depicts a man poised as if diving upward from the fallen world represented by the uroboros symbol, a snake swallowing its own tail (BM VI.36). Yet his poise is rigid, lacking the sensuous grace of the serpent; it is corrected in Blake's own final illustration to The Four Zoas (MS p. 139), a feminine figure poised to fly off the earth, her body curvaceous and dancing.

The Apocalypse for both poets rises from plumbing the depths of nightmare, where the inversion back toward light can occur. Both emphasize the Second

51 See illustration p. 319.

52 Compare Young's "From sorrow's pang, the birth of endless joy" (V.560), beautifully illustrated by Blake's watercolour of a blue-grey woman crouched in sorrow, with a golden winged angel-girl emerging from her head (BM V.35), with Blake's Proverb of Hell, "Joys impregnate. Sorrows bring forth" (MHH 8.29).
Night Thoughts (BM VI, 36)
Recalls the First. All, to reflower, fades.
As in a wheel, All sinks, to reascend.
Emblems of man, who passeth, not expires.

With this minute distinction, Emblems just,
*Nature* revolvs, but Man *advances*; Both
Eternal, that a Circle, *this* a Line.

*That* gravitates, *this* soars. Th’ aspiring soul
Ardent, and tremulous, like Flame, ascends;
*Zeal*, and *Humility*, her wings to Heaven.

The world of Matter, with its various Forms,
All dies into new Life. Life born from Death
Rolls the vast Mass, and shall for ever roll.

No single Atom, once in being, lost,
With change of counsel, charges the most High.

What hence infers, *Lorenzo*? can it be?

*Matter*, Immortal? and shall *Spirit* die?
Above the nobler, shall less noble rise?
Shall Man alone, for whom all else revives,

No Resurrection know? shall Man alone
Coming as a moral judgment; but Blake gives the oppressed far greater prominence in what seems to be a vindication of Old Testament ethics, whereas Young uses the occasion merely to generate personal dread, ostensibly for Lorenzo's sake. For both, the exploding universe destroys old orientations, forcing each man to discover a new centre: Young's "Where are we now? Ah me! the ground is gone / On which we stood" (IX.211-12) is echoed in Blake's "Where shall we take our stand to view the infinite & unbounded / Or where are human feet for Lo our eyes are in the heavens" (IX.122.24-5). Urizen cries in Night IX, "Times are Ended" (131.31); Young, "TIME was! ETERNITY now reigns alone!" (IX.311). And the following passage from Night Thoughts anticipates Albion's waking activity in Blake's poem:

Time, this vast fabric . . . 
. . . now bursting over his head; 
His lamp, the sun, extinguish'd; from beneath 
The frown of hideous darkness, calls his sons 
From their long slumber; from earth's heaving womb, 
To second birth! contemporary throng! 
Roused at One call, upstarted from One bed, 
Press'd in One crowd, apall'd with One amaze, 
He turns them over, Eternity! to thee. 
(IX.298-306)

In Night IX Blake develops the extended metaphors of "rural work" (IX.124.14) to describe his Apocalypse: sowing, harrowing, reaping, threshing, winnowing, storing

53 Blake's phrase is taken from Paradise Lost, where it describes Adam and Eve's pastoral labour in the Garden of Eden: "On to thir mornings rural work they haste" (V.211).
in barns, the vintage and baking, and the harvest feast. These activities also occur as a motif in some dozen of the Night Thoughts watercolours, which provide a valuable commentary upon Blake's poem. Young too equates the harvest with Apocalypse, resurrection as the growth of wheat from earth literally composed of bones. The disintegration of the universe is parallel to harrowing the field: "Stars rush and final Ruin fiercely drives / Her ploughshare o'er creation" (IX.167): Blake's accompanying illustration depicts a plowman turning over the terrified dead in the soil (BM IX.9). So Urizen also drives his plough "over the graves & caverns of the dead Over the Planets" (IX.124.28-9). Elsewhere Young views this spring activity as a breaking-up of the heart by sorrow's plough in preparation for wisdom to sow seed, which the sun of reason ripens (V.275ff.). Young's Night IX equates the sower with Christ who "sows these fiery Fields / With Seeds of Reason, which to Virtues rise . . . / When grown mature, are gather'd for the Skies" (IX.1888-9, 92). Blake's accompanying illustration depicts Christ

54 In both his illustration and Urizen's activity here, Blake implicitly corrects the Graveyard school's accentuation of death--driving the former poets themselves, as it were, underground to become renovated. In doing so he but follows his earlier Proverb of Hell, "Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead" (MHH 7.2)
sowing tiny human figures in a flaming field (BM IX.93), just as does Urizen in his own poem with the "souls of All the Dead" (124.31), while Orc's flames "heat the black mould & cause / The human harvest to begin" (IX.125.19-20). Blake's next illustration on the verso (BM IX.94) continues the metaphor of growth, illustrating Young's marvelous image of the stars as grapes hanging upon God: "Creations, / In One agglomerated Cluster, hung, / Great VINE! on THEE" (IX.1912-14). Dr. Johnson selected this passage as an example of Young's "bizarre" imagery, terming it "less lucky"; but Blake responded with an equally vivid picture of a sensual, red-haired, Dionysian Christ standing with arms outspread, looking calmly out at the reader in the same post-apocalyptic posture as the famous 'Albion rose' plate, grapes hanging upon him, a naked couple embracing, and a mother nursing her baby. This Christ is clearly parallel to Luvah at the Vintage, "drunk with the wine of Ages" (IX.135.22). It represents a daring extension of the Christian metaphor of sacramental wine

55 See illustration p. 323.


57 See illustration p. 324.
Night Thoughts (BM IX.93)
And is there Cause for higher Wonder still,
Than that which struck us from our past Surveys?
Yes; and for deeper Adoration too:
From my late airy Travel unconfin'd,
Have I learn'd nothing? — Yes, Lorenzo! This:
Each of these Stars is a Religious House;
I saw their Altars smoke, their Incense rise,
And heard Hallelujah ring through every Sphere;
A Seminary, fraught with future Gods:
Nature all o'er is consecrated Ground,
Teeming with Growths Immortal, and Divine;
The Great Proprietor's all-bounteous Hand
Leaves nothing waste; but sows these fiery Fields
With Seeds of Reason, which to Virtue rise;
Beneath His genial Ray, and, if escap'd
The pestilential Blasts of stubborn Will,
When grown mature, are gather'd for the Skies.
And is Devotion thought too much on Earth,
When Beings, so Superior, Homage best,
And triumph in Prolations to the Throne?
Night Thoughts (BM IX.94)
But wherefore more of Planets, or of Stars?
Spherical Journeys? and, discover'd there,
Ten thousand Worlds, Ten thousand Ways devout?
All Nature sending Incense to The Thrones,
Except the bold Lorenzo of Our Sphere?
Opening the solemn Sources of my Soul,
Since I have pour'd, like seign'd Eridanus,
My flowing Numbers o'er the flaming Skies,
Nor yet, of Fancy, or of Fact, what more
Invites the Muse --- Here turn we, and review
Our past Nocturnal Landscape wide: --- Then, say,
Say, then, Lorenzo! with what Bur'd of Heart,
The Whole, at once, revolving in his Thought,
Must Man exclaim, adoring, and aghast?

"O what a Root! O what a Branch is Here?"
"O what a Father! What a Family!"
"Worlds! Systems! and Creations! --- And Creations,
In One agglomerat'd Clutter, hung,
"* Great VINE! on Thee: On Thee the Clutter hangs;
"The filial Clutter! infinitely spread.

* John xv. 5.
being Christ's blood. The fertility motif continues with concluding watercolours of Christ as creator, shepherd and father; particularly splendid is one showing Christ surrounded by dozens of toddlers, carrying "suffer the little children to come unto me" to an extreme!

But to return to the ripening wheat, which along with grapes also constitutes Blake's double metaphor. For Young's "Bid death's dark vale its human harvest yield" (VII.917), Blake engraves families in a yellow wheatfield blending into the crop until they become wheateads ripe for threshing, looking up, embracing. Obviously they have just been resurrected and await the call to Judgment. The corresponding situation in The Four Zoas is, "In pain the human harvest wavd in horrible groans of woe" (IX.131.40). Blake uses "human harvest" several times, which are Young's words, though conceivably both could have arrived independently at such a euphonious phrase.

The parallels between both poets' Apocalypses in Night IX support my contention that the basic structure of The Four Zoas became clear to Blake while illustrating Young. But the Apocalypse for Young is merely an

58 In fact the next illustration depicts their ascent into heaven as a swarm of insects, yet another "bizarre" image to which Dr. Johnson objected. Young was as much a throwback to the Metaphysical poets, whom Johnson deplored, as he was a precursor of the Romantics.
exercise in fantasy, achieving little personal or
dramatic depth. It does not change either the protagonist
or reader's perceptions, revealing a new world as does
Blake. Both Blake and Young emerge from their Nights
to a new morning; but Young immediately retreats back
into the midnight he is so much more at home in, admitting
in one of his flashes of acumen, "But what avails the
flight / Of fancy, when our hearts remain below?" (IX.
2417-18). This retreat is parallel with the dream-
vision poem's reluctance to embody the dream into
wakeful life. The debate with Lorenzo is never
resolved, Young being unable to reabsorb his spectral
self. Significantly, a similar debate occurs in Blake's
Night IX as a dramatic technique, where though each
Zoa and Emanation are persuaded by Albion to undergo
regeneration, terrestrial suffering continues unabated
right up until man is crushed into the Bread of Ages.

59 Sid Carl Gershgoren's observation, "Millennarian
and Apocalyptic Literature from Thomas Burnet to William
Blake" (Diss. Univ. of Calif. 1969, p. 270), is pertinent:
"In contrast to seventeenth-century apocalyptic poetry,
eighteenth-century poems do not totally involve the poet
as dramatic participant, and this is one of their major
characteristics. The poet represents the middle nature
of the sublime, which must exist a step below annihilation
in order for the sublime terror to be expressed. It is
the necessity of this conscious removal of the poet to the
ambiguous position between destruction and safety which
determines his function as narrator in the poem." Blake
is the great exception.
We have considered thematic parallels between Young and Blake; but there is also much in Young's poetic style and methodology which would have commended itself to Blake. *Night Thoughts'* intensity, epic scope and use of depth imagery are comparable to *The Four Zoas*. Like Blake's, the lower spectrum of Young's dream-poem merges into nightmare, where his dark energy originates. But the remainder takes the form of abstract moralisms rather than Blake's lyrical insights—not rising naturally from the nightmare, but as a kind of hysterical calm superimposed over the poem's potential in order to smother it. Indeed Young's complacency may result from probing too deeply: "In Man the more we dive the more we see" (VII.253). His despair generates stop-gap posturings, ersatz mysticism and self-pity rather than Blake's fierce struggle.

Young is basically an emotional poet, far less intellectual and syncretistic than Blake. Neo-classical literary standards disparaged undue emphasis upon the first-person singular; so we often find Young defending his emotional tone:

Think you my song too turbulent? too warm?  
Are passions, then, the pagans of the soul?  
Reason alone baptized?  
(IV.628-30)
And he condemns in turn the orthodox esthetic standards of his time, just as does Blake "the tame high finisher of paltry Blots" (Milton, 41.9):

Oh ye cold-hearted, frozen formalists!
On such a theme 'tis impious to be calm:
Passion is reason, transport temper here . . .
What smooth emollients in theology,
Recumbent virtue's downy doctors preach,
That prose of piety, a lukewarm praise?

(IV.638-40, 43-5)

There is little doubt Blake would applaud such a sentiment. Young flames with exclamations and interrogatives as does Blake; he constantly tries to pierce time into Apocalypse through the intensity of his imagery, rhetoric and theme. The only parallel in the eighteenth century that comes to mind, besides Blake, is Christopher Smart, and it comes as no surprise to find Young praised in Jubilate Agno, "For Y is young . . . God by gracious to Dr. YOUNG."

Young's style is animistic, epigrammatic (often to a tendentious degree), and generated by a philosophical dualism expressed through inversion, oxymoron and paradox. His most common device, as Dr. Johnson noted, is antithesis. Almost every line attempts to conjoin

antinomies, e.g., "insect infinite" (I.80) or "pious sacrilege" (III.172). Whereas the neo-classical and even Romantic reader regarded Young's imagery as obscure and overwrought, the modern reader might well disregard the rhetoric in favour of the imagery. Blake repeatedly responds to these single images in his illustrations and own poem, The Four Zoas. For example, Young describes the Alps at the Apocalypse "enormous dancing on the waves" (IX.1145); Blake's mountains also float in Night IX (122.36-7). Young refers to eternity as "fields of light" (IV.441); Ahania pleads to Urizen, "Resume thy fields of Light" (III.39.1). Young is capable of precise, powerful phrases, such as "Their will the tyger sucked, out-raged the storm" (III.64) and "carcasses mend the soil" (V.665). To take one final example, a tour de force inversion:

From human mould we reap our daily bread.  
The globe around earth's hollow surface shakes,  
And is the cieling [sic] of her sleeping sons.  
Over devastation we blind revels keep;  
Whole bury'd towns support the dancer's heel.  
(IX.93-7)

For anything comparable one must look to Blake (e.g., the inverted underworld of The Book of Thel), Rilke's children dying with bread in their mouths, and the

62 It is significant that André Breton remarks, in Manifeste du Surréalisme (1924), that "Les Nuits de Young sont surréalistes d'un bout à l'autre."
contemporary American poet St. Geraud's "Upsidedown in the earth a dead man walks upon my soles when I walk."

Night Thoughts is a transitional work embodying many neo-classical ambiguities. Young is not consistent, and it is unfair to quote him even in context for some representative view, for he contradicts himself outright. This is odd considering his emphasis on rational discourse. Upon closer examination, however, his logic is seen as a kind of mortar by which highly un-Augustan flights of "Fancy" are clandestinely indulged. In Young's Discourse on Lyric he states his method for Pindaric Odes:

There is this difference from other kinds of poetry; that, there the imagination, like a very beautiful mistress, is indulged in the appearance of domineering; though the judgment, like an artful lover, in reality carries its point [surely an unintentional pun?]; and the less it is suspected of it, it shows the more masterly conduct, and deserves the greater commendation.  

63 I cite Rilke and St. Geraud to illustrate Young's contemporaneity, a facet which is virtually unrecognized. The passage from Rilke I have in mind occurs in Duino Elegies, tr. J. B. Leishman & Stephen Spender (1968), IV.75ff.: "Who'll make its [the child's] death / from grey bread, that grows hard, --or leave it there, / within the round mouth, like the seeded core / of a nice apple?" For St. Geraud, see The Naomi Poems, Book One: Corpse and Beans (Chicago, 1968), p. 61.

64 1728, p. 4.
This remarkable metaphor maintains that the relationship between the imagination and conscious structural technique is one of lovers. Artistic control brings imagination to orgasm (i.e., total absence of control); therefore apparent chaos, surrealistic and apocalyptic images are in fact sustained and arrived at by form, logic and the ripening of time.

It is tempting to apply this formula to Night Thoughts, but unfortunately we find there neither a beautiful mistress nor artful lover, except tangentially. Instead we encounter a rich, ugly old maid courted by incapacity. Young's logic is parochial, for it depends upon nonrational metaphors for whatever coherence it possesses. That is, intellectual content becomes eroded by its own images which are basically emotional in origin, causing a curiously naive literalism as well as flashes of childlike animistic brilliance. Again and again Young casts himself into the largesse of his theme in order to generate intensity and thereby wed himself to the correct side of his Christian valences. In doing so he overextends his own cultural climate, but also poetic ability. His emotive passages are unstable, liable at any instant to jolt back into banality. Invariably his imagery is greater than its rhetorical context. Blake's images, on the contrary, create, not merely substantiate, conceptual breadth;
and in resuscitating Young's images, he provides the firm rational base which they originally lacked. In Paley's excellent formulation, "We begin with imagery but end in myth."

Yet it is precisely Young's instability which permits his imaginative victories. If one agrees with Ezra Pound that a single good image is worth a thousand words, then Young is the creator of many superb imagistic 'poems'. In his Preface to Night Thoughts, he insists "the method in it was rather imposed, by what spontaneously arose in the Author's mind on that occasion, than meditated or designed." The word "spontaneously" here might at first seem a fortuitous anticipation of Wordsworth; but as an excellent gloss, Conjectures on Original Composition, written astonishingly enough when Young was seventy-six, further links him into the organic tradition:

An Original may be said to be of a vegetable nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of Genius; it grows, it is not made: Imitations are often a sort of Manufacture wrought up by those Mechanics, Art, and Labour, out of pre-existent materials not their own.66

Keynes is correct in stating there is much in this


66 Conjectures on Original Composition in a Letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison (1759), pp. 8-9.
pamphlet which Blake would approve of, and he suggests that perhaps Blake read it. Young goes on to criticize his century's emphasis upon memory to the detriment of creativity, and sees the poet's responsibility as a continual re-beginning from subjective wellsprings. The following exhortation could well describe Blake's own procedure in *The Four Zoas*:

Therefore dive deep into thy bosom; learn the depth, extent, bias, and full fort of thy mind; contract full intimacy with the Stranger within thee; excite, and cherish every spark of Intellectual light and heat, however smothered under former negligence, or scattered through the dull, dark mass of common thoughts; and collecting them into a body, let thy Genius rise... as the Sun from Chaos.

*Night Thoughts* was a germinal work to Blake not in spite of but because of its amorphous quality, its combination of despair yet sanctimonious piety, shrill didacticism yet painful soliloquy, brilliant images embedded in spurious rhetoric. It possesses a unique power of sparking a separate creative process in its reader. The massive energy which Blake poured into his watercolours for Young overflowed naturally into

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67 Op. cit., n. pag. Once again in relationship with *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Young's distinction here between original and imitation is quite similar to, and sheds light upon, Blake's prolific and devourer.

his own epic, Vala, in turn splitting the seams of this original poem into The Four Zoas, continuing its outward surge into Milton, and coming to rest in one giant form.
V. A READING OF THE POEM

To read The Four Zoas is like plunging into the core of a star about to explode in nova. Its incandescence and compression mold Blake’s imagery, concepts, idiom and personae into an extraordinary form initially difficult to orientate to the world in which we think we live. In Milton and Jerusalem, similar alien forms are now critically recognized to possess intricate rational and esthetic structures, their complexity forcing the reader to abandon his habitualized modes of reading and perception in favour of imaginative vision which inverts to transform his original world. But partly because The Four Zoas exists in incomplete manuscript draft and partly because it is "Blake’s most experimental poem," one cannot be certain whether difficulties are due to the unfinished state of the manuscript or rather to the intrinsic poem itself. Since Blake never committed his poem to etching or engraving, the reader is tempted to regard it as a failure and relegate interpretive difficulties to presumed textual flaws. Modern criticism’s emphasis

upon structuralism, academic scholarship and the autonomy of the text tends to reinforce such a view.

However, my reading of The Four Zoas has convinced me that if one abandons oneself to its internal imagery and narrative flow an entirely coherent form emerges which is in no way diminished by occasional textual ambiguities. On the contrary, since the poem depicts the transition from the Fall of man to his Apocalypse, or from time to eternity, the spaces of transition were deliberately left unmelded by Blake in order that both antinomies may be seen in their most lucid raw form at the farthest end of each spectrum. Throughout the poem linguistic density alternates with brief flashes of lyrical translucence, structurally dependent upon each Zoa's element of earth, water, fire and air. The widest alternation transforms the compacted wreckage described in Nights I to VIII into the Apocalypse of Night IX. The central concern of my present chapter will be to explore this transformation, and try to discover how and why resolution is achieved.

I intend to trace three major motifs through The Four Zoas, showing how they conjoin in the final Night, and how each is a variation upon a single theme. First the Fall of man will be analyzed, including the split of each Zoa into a Spectre and Emanation, with emphasis
upon the flashback technique. Second, patterns of regeneration will be traced through the first eight Nights to indicate how the Apocalypse is contained within the substantive body of the poem, not merely appended in an inexplicable final Night, as so many critics maintain. Third, Night IX's Apocalypse will be examined to show how it extends the basic themes of the prior text, yet achieves, through what may provisionally be termed a shift in perspective, the dialectical breakthrough toward which the poem struggles. I will attempt to illustrate how Blake's later revisions do not split the poem into The Four Zoas as distinctive from an earlier Vala, but are part of a seamless unity.
FALL

Ah thou sinful sleep! how for thy sake
am I like to be benighted in my Journey!
I must walk without the Sun, darkness
must cover the path of my feet, and I
must hear the noise of doleful Creatures,
because of my sinful sleep.

The Pilgrim's Progress, 45

The Four Zoas begins in media/ res not simply because
of the epic tradition, but rather post-lapsarian history
is the only place Blake and his dramatic personae can
begin. The Fall has already occurred, since the
manifestation of each Zoa as an entity antagonistic
toward a separate Emanation results from the prior
collapse of Albion, the Ancient Man. The reader never
views Albion's Fall in the dramatic present because it
is, by definition, pre-historic and pre-individualistic.
Albion splinters into the phenomenal cosmos, and can
only be recovered by the arduous re-uniting of each
Zoa, Spectre, Emanation, animals, plants, stones,
and finally the dead themselves, all of whom together
constitute the only authentic account of what actually
took place (see esp. VIII.110.3-28). Thus the entire
poem must be interpreted as the struggle to articulate
the reasons for man's fallen state. This is conveyed
through two primary techniques. First, each Zoa
and his Emanation duplicates the original Fall in a face-to-face confrontation generating sexual guilt, jealousy and alienation. It follows that each couple also contains the potential for reversing the Fall if they do not blindly follow its ingrained tragic pattern. As it turns out, Los and Enitharmon are the first to do so. Second, at moments of crisis, each character remembers the initial Fall in a sequence of flashbacks which gradually piece together what happened. Both of these techniques occur from the beginning of the poem, so we will begin with Night I.

After a short but important proem where Blake introduces his themes (which we will consider later), the poem proper begins, significantly, with the cry, "Lost! Lost! Lost!" (I.4.7). Tharmas and Enion are locked in an 'interface' turning each other into a subject-object relationship before their eyes. The

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2 It is noteworthy that James Hillman's radical methodology of dreams, The Dream and the Underworld (1979, pp. 52-3), describes the initial entry into dream as follows: "The movement from three-dimensional physical perception to the two dimensions of psychical reflection is first felt as a loss . . . We hunger, bewailing, paralyzed, repetitive . . . Loss is not the whole of it, however, because the dimension sensed as loss is actually the presence of the void. Actually, we are experiencing a different dimension, and the price of admission to it is the loss of the material viewpoint . . . The transition from the material to the psychical perspective often presents dream imagery of sickening and dying." Valid psychological observations such as this can be gleaned from Blake's poem at every point, but my objective will be to trace the complicated narrative, rather than to observe its profound experiential significance.
other Zoas "have receivd their death Wounds and their Emanations are fled to me [Tharmas] for refuge" (I.4.15). That Blake did not intend a conventional linear sequence is evident from the start, for we must turn to the account given by the Messengers of Beulah at the end of Night I to understand what has happened. There, as a result of Urizen and Luvah trying to usurp Albion, Urthona standing by his anvil is the first to fall:

He dropd his hammer. dividing from his aking
bosom fled
A portion of his life shrieking upon the wind
she fled
And Tharmas took her in pitying. Then Enion
in jealous fear
Murderd her & hid her in her bosom embalming
her for fear
She should arise again to life
(I.22.20-4)

Hence Tharmas' cry that Enion has stolen 'his' Emanations. Enion now contains "a portion of [Urthona's] life," Enitharmon. The bio-medical imagery of "embalming" signifies, however, stasis rather than free-flowing energy, and is a horrifying concept of pregnancy.

Tharmas and Enion proceed to re-enact an archetypal scene of "The Torments of Love & Jealousy" (as Blake's sub-title announces as one of the poem's themes). What begins as the deep gaze and touch of lovers turns into anatomization and recoil from what each imagines he or she sees. Enion, viewing the presence of other

3 Blake models the beginning scene of The Four Zoas upon Milton's description of Adam and Eve directly after
their Fall (Paradise Lost IX). It seems probable that he had in mind these significant lines: "each the other viewing, / Soon found thir Eyes how op'nd, and thir minds / How dark'nd; Innocence, that as a veile / Had shadowd them from knowing ill, was gon" (1052-5). Enion's desire to be hidden from Tharmas' gaze reflects Adam and Eve's vain attempt to escape each other and God after their sin. Again, Tharmas and Enion enact Adam and Eve's "Thus they in mutual accusation spent / The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemning, / And of thir vain contest appeerd no end" (1887-89).

females inside Tharmas, accuses him of adultery, though he protests, "It is not Love I bear to Enitharmon / It is Pity" (I.4.13). Tharmas' compassion toward suffering traps him into differentiating between love and pity, which further hardens into Judeo-Christian moralism: "my Emanations are become harlots" (I.4.36). Enion cannot realize until too late that the presence of other women inside her lover is actually a reflection and praise of her own rich multiplicity within the unity of Jerusalem, or "her own children's souls" (as a deleted passage makes clearer, Erdman p. 742). By accusing Tharmas of sin she creates it both within herself and him. In McNeil's observation, "Action is not a consequence of thought in The Four Zoas, but rather the way a thought is expressed."

The stage is now set for a re-casting of the Fall. The seismic reverberations of Albion and Urthona's collapse become equivalent to the transmission of historical and genetic error imprinted upon physiological existence (Tharmas). The breakdown begins in the poem as a failure particularly of human touch, replaced by Urizen's cold analytical gaze:

Why wilt thou Examine every little fibre
of my soul
Spreading them out before the Sun like Stalks
of flax to dry
The infant joy is beautiful but its anatomy
Horrible Ghast & Deadly
(I.4.29-32)

Once the externalization of male and female has begun,
attraction alternating with repulsion replaces the prior
interplay of contraries. Without Enion, Tharmas becomes
"a Nothing left in darkness" (I.4.44); he is appalled
by her dual "flower expanding" and "fruit breaking from
its bud" (I.4.41-2), or the causal connection between
sex and birth. Enion promptly withdraws into stock
feminine roles, and "dies" to escape the eye-to-eye
introspection which if continued "bring[s] self murder
on my soul" (I.4.38). Death is probably meant here in
a sexual sense of absorption into her private body,
as it is later for Enitharmon (II.34.47ff.); this fits
in with the Gothic "tabernacle" (I.5.7) she weaves
to embalm Jerusalem, for the manuscript illustration
for page 44 shows this tabernacle to be her womb.
Separated from his Emanation, Tharmas sinks into his
own isolated masculinity, the sea, from which Enion
weaves a substitute, or Spectre, to interpose between
the deadlock of eyes.

Tharmas and Enion's characterization throughout
the poem returns to enrich the meaning of this central
event. Tharmas as the "Parent power" (I.4.6) constitutes
the instinctual and reflexive biological basis of the human body, a "sea of Time & Space" (IV.56.13) into which all the other characters plummet. As the body, he must necessarily be the first to feel the numbing effects of Albion's sickness. Without Urizen's intelligence, he displays a heartbreaking myopia (Enion herself becomes totally blind); without Luvah's emotional power, he cannot distinguish between rage or love, and therefore spurns yet longs for his lost Enion; without Urthona's imaginative ability to forge artistic forms, he helplessly spawns the raw protoplasm of life. Tharmas hungers to die, but cannot; in him Blake seems to localize a death urge deep within the basis of biological life, yet an opposite blind surge toward procreation. In fact the two are interlinked. It is because Tharmas is "father of worms & clay" (IV.48.16) that he hungers to end the anguished existence of every thing on earth. The poem's personae constantly collapse into his cold but fecundating ocean, to be cast ashore in an evolutionary surge which culminates in the shape of man but inevitably disintegrates back into "living death" (II.28.6). Though

5 My remarks throughout this chapter on what various characters, images and events 'symbolize' are an amalgam of patterns within The Four Zoas, and try not to draw upon Blake's often more explicit amplifications in his later work. When outer references are used, these are identified as such. The relationship of The Four Zoas to Blake's other work is reserved for Chapter VI.

Northrop Frye draws attention to an 'Orc cycle' central to Blake's myth, one must realize that each Zoa is trapped in his own cycle as well. When Albion falls, his head rests upon a rock, hence petrifies into Urizen's domain of the Mosaic code, while his limbs overwashed by Tharmas' waves rot, exuding the various subhuman phantasma through which the characters pass:

The Eternal Man is seald never to be deliverd
I roll my floods over his body my billows & waves pass over him
The Sea encompasses him & monsters of the deep are his companions
Dreamer of furious oceans cold sleeper of seeds & shells
Thy Eternal form shall never renew
(IV.51.15-19)

Tharmas tries to murder Albion within his materialistic embrace but finds this impossible, for each organic death but perpetuates a further birth. Sex is horrifying to many of the characters in the poem because in the last analysis it is the force that drives the green fuse of the fallen world, though at the same time it contains the implicit conditions whereby man may transcend the cycle. Tharmas' will to die is actually a perversion, or rather incomplete manifestation, of a will toward spiritual rebirth.

As Tharmas and Enion re-enact Albion's Fall, so does every other Zoa and his Emanation. Urthona, the most blameless of the Zoas, yet chauvinistically "scorn[s] the frail body" (VIIA.84.24) of Enion and issues from
her nostrils in his spectrous form to hover jealously over Enitharmon. Los and Enitharmon until Night VIIIA engage in furious squabbles: "She drave the Females all away from Los / And Los drave all the Males from her away" (I.9.31-2). Their jealousy is only compounded by their marriage under Urizen's fiat. Urizen and Ahania play the same juvenile games: "He drave the Male Spirits all away from Ahania / And she drave the Females from him away" (II.30.51-2). In the bitterly ironic Night II, while Ahania is in the midst of telling Urizen how Albion cast Vala from his side, Urizen duplicates the same event, telling Ahania she has become like Vala then casting her away, causing his own collapse. Luvah and Vala remain for a time frozen in the same eye-to-eye tableau which destroyed Tharmas and Enion: "alone forsaken in fierce jealousy / They stood above the heavens forsaken desolate suspended in blood / Descend they could not. not from Each other avert their eyes" (I.13.5-7). Vala eventually feeds the furnace into which Luvah is cast, hearing his howls with joy, forgetting his eternal identity yet perversely searching for him throughout the poem, taking out her frustration in the dictatorship of all nature and civilization by Night VIII. She and Orc, reborn from Enitharmon, continue the same wars of jealousy until mutual exhaustion. Imagistically and thematically, each of these encounters interlinks through cross-references,
which lack of space prohibits from fully presenting here.

But in each case, the basic situation remains an externalization of lover and beloved from the endophysical unity symbolized by Albion, a variation upon "torments of Love & Jealousy," a total severance of each Zoa from his Emanation, and the emergence of a Spectre or Shadow (Blake does not at first distinguish between the two) as a ruthlessly megalomaniac, moralistic caricature who operates in the fallen world as the 'real' self, encased by character-armour. Each Fall constitutes in its positive sense a sharpening diagnosis of what originally went wrong, and in its negative sense an influx of Albion's disease to all parts of the body/cosmos, contaminating all levels of existence.

We have examined how each protagonist--antagonist is a more accurate term for the Zoas--exemplifies a separate locus of disintegration, perpetuating the Fall until Blake's poetic idiom becomes a desperate cry. Blake's second method of tracing the Fall remains to be considered: a series of flashbacks (about twelve major ones, plus constant laments on the order of "Once . . . But now") which, John Beer suggests, makes the poem's

7 See Brian Wilkie & Mary Lynn Johnson, Blake's Four Zoas: The Design of a Dream (Appendix B), who list and briefly describe these flashbacks.
plot somewhat like a mystery story where various clues are traced back to a mysterious crime. But the significance goes deeper. At moments of crisis, particularly at or after sexual coitus, childbirth, physical violence, and recognition of one's lost Spectre or Emanation, each character's memory clears and a kind of \textit{déjà-vu} flashes him back as close as he can come to the initial Fall as a separate fallen entity. These accounts are contradictory: not because Blake was illogical or did not complete his poem, but rather because they depend upon fragmented memories easily distorted by immaturity. Each Zoa blames a combination or all of the others for his plight. Enitharmon, for example, deliberately falsifies her flashbacks to make Los jealous. Vala in her final incarnation as the Whore of Babylon blames Luvah's death upon Urizen, Christ, Enitharmon, Ahania, Enion, and finally anyone (VIII.103.3ff., VIIB.94.12-23). But even in the midst of her wholesale slaughter of civilization, it is significant that her flashbacks achieve a certain lucidity impossible otherwise: "But happiness can never \textit{come} to thee 0 King [Urizen] nor me / For he [Luvah] was source of every joy" (VIII.103.17-18). Those Emanations repelled to the Margins of Nonentity learn Orphic nightsight: "Listen to her whose memory

\footnote{Blake's Visionary Universe, p. 148.}
beholds your ancient days," cries Ahania just before the Apocalypse (VIII.108.20). When Urizen emerges from Tharmas' chaotic sea into the Frankenstein human form in which Los has bound him, he too achieves a brief flash of objectivity, admitting his guilt for the Fall (V.63.24-65.12). All these examples illustrate the providential luminous "Space" or "window" (e.g., I.5.35, 9.9-13) inserted by the Daughters of Beulah between birth and experience in which every child catches a glimpse of Eternity before the Mundane Shell closes over his senses. This snatched glimpse haunts and yet sustains each character through their interlocked struggles. Blake's task becomes increasingly to discover precisely what the fragmentary vision entails.

At such moments of relative lucidity between the Zoas, their confrontation releases part of the locked past. Suddenly the entire fabric of what has been taken for reality collapses, and each character realizes that he is in fact a dream phantasma. The flashback juxtaposes the fallen world with a shadowy unfallen one glimpsed through and behind a translucent body, though, again, we are never given the precise data of the original Fall. The slumbering core of each Zoa emerges like a child paralyzed with terror. Always this movement is seen as a return through the chimera of historical dream-time toward Eternity as the only authentic grounds of Apocalypse.
It is therefore no accident that the final Apocalypse is in one sense an extension of the flashback through Albion's presence as the traditional dream-vision guide, carrying as in a single hand all the Zoas, Emanations and nature backward through time to "The Man of future times become as in days of old" (IX.120.5).

It seems probable that Blake's technique here is indebted, again, to *Paradise Lost*. Milton isolates five major areas where sin originates: Satan, the fallen Angels, Adam, Eve, and mankind as viewed in Adam's final vision. Each of these areas exists both independently (for otherwise free will could not function) yet as part of a causal sequence (i.e., humanity's sin is transmitted from our primal parents; Adam chooses death through love for Eve; Eve is tempted by Satan; and Satan leads the other Angels into damnation). This technique in both poets presents a composite reconstruction of the origin of suffering; a series of almost photographic focuses upon a single primeval event in order to penetrate man's psyche. In each instance, the events which surround the specific Fall become more revealing than the actual act itself, gathering resonance the closer their proximity to the central 'sin' which itself defies all analysis. The precise nature of the Fall which initiates a disastrous chain-reaction throughout all creation remains finally impenetrable, for its immediate effect is
to destroy continuity, causing a transic sleep which memory cannot pierce. Blake emphasizes this dreamlike quality of the Fall to a far greater extent than Milton. Time and again his personae indulge in a kind of therapy, combining vestigial memories to reach backward and recover their lost unity in an effort to halt the momentum of their downward plunge. But these projects inevitably compound their sense of loss, and end up merely tying them to the past.

Thus in order for regeneration to occur, the flashback paradoxically must focus upon the present, allowing past and future to fuse in a single metabolic "minute particular," i.e., the "window" within every atom and eternity within every instant which a Daughter of Beulah (appropriately enough, Eno, the "Aged Mother" [1.3.1] who sings the entire poem) makes at the beginning (I.9.9-18). Until the past can be actualized within the present, the nostalgic bitterness and temporary repentances of the flashback but chain the Zoas deeper into time, as with Milton's Satan: "Desperate remorse swallows the present in a quenchless rage" (VIII.101.32).

When all the flashbacks are pieced together, the final account of Albion's Fall is seen to involve, to use Beer's phrase again, a "phallic lapse." Albion

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falls asleep weeping in his "tent," or body, while Urizen and Luvah sleep on the "porches," or senses (1.21.16, 29). The precise sequence of events happening next is ambiguous: Luvah and Urizen plot to usurp Albion and exchange their respective locations, Urizen's south for Luvah's north. But blame cannot be attributed to any single Zoa, for it is mutual. Luvah makes Urizen drunk on the Wine of Ages, and Urizen gives Luvah his Horses of Light which ordinarily draw his Apollonian sun chariot for the harvest plowing. Both attack each other and Albion simultaneously; the result is collapse:

The stars threw down their spears & fled naked away
We fell. I seizd thee dark Urthona In my left hand falling
I seizd thee beauteous Luvah thou art faded
like a flower (V.64.27-9)

Like mountaineers rapelled together who ordinarily constitute a single unit ("O the mind, mind has mountains," wrote Hopkins), the Zoas drag each other down in a chain reaction.

But what is the secret "pain" (I.21.17) which causes Albion to weep in his tent before this insurrection? For the earliest and most reliable account we must turn

10 Quoted from one of his five 'Sonnets of Desolation,' "No worst, there is none."
to Enitharmon's tête-à-tête with the Spectre of Urthona, both reincarnations of Urthona who, as the least culpable Zoa, remembers clearest. Enitharmon unlocks "secrets of Eternity" (VIIA.83.5), relating how she saw (in a dream) Albion walking in Beulah where he was seduced by Vala and fainted at high noon. The horrified Eternals build a wall around Beulah. Albion "reveled in delight among the Flowers" until pregnant Vala gives birth to Urizen, "First born of Generation," and further splits into a hermaphrodite whose male portion is her missing consort, Luvah (VIIA.83.5ff.). Like the Dreamer of the Roman de la Rose, Albion tries to find his way out of the dream-garden back into Eternity, but already the corruption of his faculties has set in, and he sinks into sleep. The other Zoas grow up in Beulah meanwhile, within his dream, thinking nothing is wrong until they too are stricken. It is at this point that Urizen and Luvah's rebellion takes place. One notes that all four levels of existence meet in this account: Albion as Eternity, Vala as Beulah, Urizen as Generation, and Luvah as Ulro. The Fall has occurred on all levels in a single place: Beulah.

It would seem, then, that the Fall originates not through an insurrection of psychological faculties nor even strictly a phallic lapse. Rather it rises from
positive joy which, if dwelt in too long, obliterates Eternity's more ferocious combustions. This is substantiated by the final flashback given by the Eternals themselves in Night IX (133.lff.): "Man is a Worm weard with joy." Night IX reveals that the Eternal pattern is an alternation between a masculine active drive outward and feminine passive "deaths" inward, or hibernative spaces where the Emanation weaves a winter cocoon from which she emerges like a moth each spring. As the Spectre of Urthona articulates this myth, Vala's Edenic garden is a personification of femininity in which the male dwells like the Holy Spirit, swathed "In undivided Essence . . . Imbodied" (VIIA.84.5), a beautiful metaphor for sexual union. If the Eternal rhythm of deaths followed by rebirths is maintained, then the two states alternate in artistic creativity, of which the universe itself is an unfolding manifestation: "Creating Continually / The times & spaces of Mortal Life the Sun the Moon the stars / In Periods of Pulsative furor" (VIII.113.4-6). But at the same time it contains the grave danger of its excessive prolongation, violence, and the inability to withstand a loving eye-to-eye nakedness, turning agape into eros, the "fortuitous concourse of incoherent / Discordant principles of Love & Hate" (II.27.12-13).
We may now draw certain generalizations concerning the Fall as evidenced within the two narrative techniques we have considered. The original instant of Albion's collapse into psychic and physical components is recapitulated constantly throughout the poem. It occurs as a primal event re-enacted by each Zoa, Emanation, Spectre, all creatures in nature, and within any single trope perceptually illustrating its own lack of cohesion. Blake's fragmented idiom is but a natural reflection of the fragmentation of the Zoas who, in turn, exist as further reductions from and reflections of Albion's central dilemma. It cannot be emphasized too highly that each Zoa distorts his narrative context as a field of presumed 'reality' stemming from his own incompletion. This is not simply a technique of dramatic voice but rather the literal epistemological creation of worlds which are illusory, within the skin of a single "DREAM / of Nine Nights." The personae of Blake's poem suffer for three reasons: (1) the milieu upon which they inflict their perspectives is incomplete and needs its polar contrary of wakefulness within Albion in order to function healthfully; (2) they are opposed by a multitude of antagonistic perspectives, each intent
upon perpetuating his own dream-world as absolute;
(3) each retains, however dimly, a memory of his Fall
from a wakeful state or Golden Age, which does not allow
him to accept the status quo as natural. Like Milton's
Devils, each of the Zoas is bitterly aware of his
incompletion or state of damnation, and yearns to return
to unity; but this realization itself motivates intestinal
conflict. Pain but intensifies their self awareness.
The net result is conflation, pain and bewilderment,
causing one world-view to engulf another and emerge
momentarily triumphant, while the loser re-enacts the
Fall in a yet further diminution of the actual (i.e.,
Albion lying on the rocks), a yet further splintering
into disparate parts warring among themselves, with
even less memory of where they originated. This constant
clash and engulfment of worlds comprises for Blake
an implicit dialectic: a search for, synthesis and
defeat of different intellectual concepts constellated
upon each Zoa's gradually realized symbolic content.
Such symbolic content has four major dimensions,
and therefore the poem should be interpreted (simul-
taneously if possible) in each of these ways: the
cosmological (mythic), historical, societal (within
Blake's own time), and psychological. Each confrontation
attempts to pierce time into Eternity and achieve a
genuine Apocalypse, but consistently fails, further
compounding the atmosphere of despair as Blake proceeds.
To anticipate, it will be my conclusion that the same micro- and macrocosmic simultaneity applies to the converse of the Fall, the Apocalypse. Just as the original Fall is contained within every image, concept and persona, so is the Apocalypse. It is present in two major forms: explicitly in the post-Vala revisions which Blake interpolated throughout his first version(s) of the poem, and implicitly within the imagery and narrative flow. Each fused synesthetic image curls around the potential for reversing the Fall; but the Zoas are crippled and cannot at first realize the simplicity of such a resolution. Nevertheless the Apocalypse is constantly available if the correct method can be found to enter its purging flames rather than the destructive flames of Orc, the freezing ice of Urizen, or the veiling obscurations of Vala. The structural implication which follows is that Night IX is contained within the previous Nights, and, conversely, the previous Nights are contained within Night IX. The same dialectic of Fall and Apocalypse is present throughout the poem, and is in fact never resolved in any absolute sense, for man continues suffering even when the poem ends. The Four Zoas enacts the regeneration of only one man, Albion--and by extension, Blake; the rest of humanity remains deadlocked, his subjective Zoas battling and his Emanations lost.
Though the poem advances the idea that one man is every man, and that the universe is a single "Human Form Divine" (IX.126.10), the necessary concomitant is that only one man at a time can emerge into an Apocalypse. In essence, every individual is already saved, but he must relinquish his false individuality in order to discover this radical fact for himself. The way to do so is portrayed by the poem.
(B) REGENERATION

When Thought is closd in Caves. Then love shall shew its root in deepest Hell
(V.65.12)

Is there a coherent raison d'être for the emergence of an Apocalypse within such a pessimistic poem as The Four Zoas? To answer this question we must turn again to the grounds of the Fall itself. Each Zoa constantly hovers on the razor edge of Apocalypse. As Blake states explicitly in A Vision of the Last Judgment, "Whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual" (84). For error to be rejected it must be fully embodied within minute particulars; this is Blake's difficult task throughout the poem. The Apocalypse must be achieved without violating the poetic integrity of the dramatic personae. We must return to the individual Zoas themselves to see how they contain the potential of achieving a genuine renascence.

We have explored how each Zoa and Emanation perpetuates a commonly shared Fall. But in addition, each chokes on a particular conundrum or complex of questions which he must solve in order to pierce through
his many false incrustations to his true "Centre" (VIIA. 90.11, VIII.110.18). This conundrum is both unique to himself, and a variation on a single Fall.

Let us begin, again, with Tharmas. He is locked into the dilemma of chaos as opposed to instinctual unity, and must learn to modulate his manic fury into a receptive serenity in order for Enion to return. Otherwise his drive toward chaos threatens to disrupt the fallen world and Blake's epic form into total incoherence. The Four Zoas constantly verges upon outright disintegration or 

psychosis, partially conveyed through Tharmas. He becomes, in fact, quite insane, as do the other Zoas; he can never achieve a lucid form on his own, and his struggles to articulate chaos represent Blake's to forge an epic voice:

one like a shadow of smoke appeard
And human bones rattling together in the smoke
& stamping
The nether Abyss & gnasshing in fierce despair.
Panting in sobs

Christine Gallant, in Blake and the Assimilation of Chaos (Princeton, N.J., 1978, pp. 52, 72), points out that Tharmas' position throughout the first eight Nights is to dissolve into chaos, "becoming one with the unconscious with all individual identity lost." This dissolution of the conscious, she reminds us, corresponds to Jung's analysis of one of the two primary neurotic reactions to the unconscious, the second being to try to control chaos by inflicting order upon it, an activity which Urizen exemplifies.
Thick short incessant bursting sobbing, deep desiring stamping struggling
Struggling to utter the voice of Man struggling to take the features of Man. Struggling
To take the limbs of Man . . .
The Dead reared up his voice

(III.44.14-19, 22)

Tharmas asks three questions immediately after his emergence from chaos here into human language and esthetic form, which capsulate his spiritual conundrum. (1) "Cannot those who once have loved ever forget their Love?" (IV.47.17). The answer is no, for even when Tharmas can no longer hear Enion's thin voice she remains part of his psychological nature by her very absence, and he can never absolve her into oblivion. This constitutes a source of both further despair yet hope. (2) "Are love & rage the same passion? they are the same in me" (IV.47.18). A long apprenticeship to pain is needed before Tharmas finally learns, in Night IX's Garden of Vala, how to calm his seas. He dimly recognizes in Night IV that he can never re-embody Enion on his own but requires the help of Los; by temporarily wrenching Enitharmon from Los, he causes the Spectre of Urthona to emerge, perhaps the most important regenerative agent in the poem. At the end of Night VI, this Spectre and Tharmas form an alliance to shelter Orc from Urizen's steady advance, "Communing" (IV.75.12) together, just as Los later learns from
the Spectre to genuinely communicate with Enitharmon: "Come hither be patient let us converse together" (VIIA. 87.51). Harold Bloom has pointed to the end of Night VI as the "first positive turn in the poem's action," but actually it occurs before. Tharmas tries to seek even Urizen's help in Night IV to weave mankind from his organic sea in the hope that Enion will "resume some little semblance" (IV.48.5, 8). But his "Renew thou I will destroy" (48.7) is a parody of Los and Enitharmon's later destruction of spectrous life in order to re-create it. Tharmas wants the right thing for the wrong motives, i.e., self-destruction. Yet it remains true that his rage could be transmuted into a positive force, given the opportunity. (3) "Are those who love, like those who died. risen again from death / Immortal, in immortal torment. never to be deliverd" (IV.47.19-20). The answer is again both harrowing and hopeful, for neither Tharmas nor any of the other Zoas can find relief in death, which is seen rather as periods of sleep or blackouts when their pain threshold is violated. Each revives to re-enact their inner conundrum, death and resurrection over again until the cumulative weight of past suffering itself becomes a positive drive toward Apocalypse, establishing the polarity of darkness from which the first glimmers of dawn appear. Los expresses the same concept to Enitharmon at his

own regeneration in Night VIIA: "Why shouldest thou remember & be afraid. I surely have died in pain / Often enough to convince thy jealousy & fear & terror" (87.50-1). The failure of the Parent power inflicts itself upon the helpless children; but the children, who maintain genealogical linkage back to the pastoral Golden Age of Albion, yet contain a fresh possibility of finding a solution to the deadlock.

Tharmas' Emanation, Enion, is the first character in the poem to be purified. As mater matrix, her kingdom is a brotherhood of animals, insects and plants, complementing Tharmas' marine imagery. In the unfallen state, these dance around the winepress; in the fallen, they are victims of man's animosity, representing the deepest animalistic part of the fractured psyche, a basic innocence which keen's, through Enion's laments, the overwhelming necessity for Apocalypse.

Enion is purified in three distinct stages. First, she unites sexually with the Spectre of Tharmas, as does Enitharmon later with the Spectre of Urthona. In both cases, the Spectre does not brutally rape the woman, as several critics have complained, but mutually blends
with her. Sex and war are two primary methods of metamorphosis advanced by the poem whereby individuals can merge and thereby gain insight, if used correctly. "The Spectre is in Every Man insane brutish deformd . . . a ravening devouring lust continually / Craving" (VIIA. 84.36-8), and can never be regenerated because it is intrinsically unreal, relating only to a cannibalistic world. Tharmas' Spectre disappears in the poem after coitus with Enion; and in the Apocalypse, the Spectres of Urthona and Enitharmon (i.e., Enitharmon's "Shadow" who has mated with the Spectre in Night VIIA) simply evaporate with "a faint embrace a fierce desire as when / Two Shadows mingle on a wall" (IX.118.2-3). Blake will ask, "Who shall call them from the Grave?" (IX.118.6) in both a poignant yet exulting sense, for they are never alive except provisionally. Nevertheless the full horrific presence of the Spectre must be acknowledged and indeed embraced in order for a deeper essence to emerge. Hence when Enion mates with the Spectre of Tharmas, both modulate each other:

Opening his rifted rocks mingling together
they join in burning anguish
Mingling his horrible darkness with her tender limbs then high she soar
Shrieking above the ocean: a bright wonder that nature shudder'd at
Half Woman & half beast all his deadly waving colours mix
With her fair crystal clearness in her lips
& cheek his metals rose
In blushes like the morning & his rocky features softening

(I.7.1-6)
The act is reciprocal. She partakes of his metallic darkness, and he of her soft translucence. Enion's shriek reverses her refusal to give herself wholly to Tharmas at the beginning of the poem; she is partially purified through acknowledging the phallic basis of life, and becomes a "self-enjoying wonder" which quickly changes to painful pregnancy: "the rough seas vegetate" (I.7.9-10). One notes that the same process occurs in Enitharmon's mating with her Spectre: a shriek, renewal of phallic vitality, yet a continued fear toward Urizen's moral code as punishment for her obvious enjoyment.

This introduces the second stage of Enion's regeneration: physical childbirth and maternal love. It is probably true that the Emanations in the poem are purified long before the Zoas because of the biological linkage of sex to childbirth. \(^{13}\) Enion's compassion for her children, Los and Enitharmon, forces her to "Rehumaniz[e] from the Spectre in pangs of maternal

\(^{13}\) Cf. Milton O. Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny (N. Y., 1938), p. 228. "In Blake's fires, as in the fires of alchemy, the feminine contrary is purified first. If man fell by woman, it is by woman that he is redeemed. The feminine emotions, driven to desperation by the increasing severity of the rational mind, turn from vengeance to forgiveness in their own defense." Percival is unique in that he is perhaps the only critic to emphasize the necessity for the prior regeneration of the Emanation before her counterpart Zoa can follow her example.
love" (I.9.3). Her children proceed to deliberately "draw her Spectrous life / Repelling her away & away by a dread repulsive power / Into Nonentity" (9.4-6). Despite its surreal imagery, this is recognizable as the normal behaviour of adolescents toward their parents:

To make us happy [says Enitharmon] let them weary their immortal powers
While we draw in their sweet delights while we return them scorn
On scorn to feed our discontent; for if we grateful prove
They will withhold sweet love, whose food is thorns & bitter roots

(1.10.3-6)

But, as even Urizen discovers at the end of Night V, love cannot so easily be abolished: "When Thought is closed in Caves. Then love shall shew its root in deepest Hell" (65.12).

Enion's third stage of purification occurs on the Margins of Nonentity, where she attains wisdom through weakness, suffering and old age. She becomes the eternal mother weeping for all creation, torn by a bitter wind (e.g., I.17.1) which blows throughout the poem's imagery behind the struggles of the Zoas, dissolving the membranes of egotism and disseminating each character as a seed

14 It is significant that Enion uses the term rehumanize at this dark stage in Night I, for along with self-annihilation and regeneration it represents Blake's most important agent for causing authentic spiritual rebirth (cf. IX.132.36, "Joy . . . humanizing"). Even in the earliest drafts of Vala, a movement toward Apocalypse can be detected. It follows that the vivid regeneration described in the revised ending of Night VIIA is a natural development of earlier motifs.
back into her earth to grow again. Enion’s laments are saturated with natural imagery, "tree & herb & fish & bird & beast" (VIII.110.6). These constitute an anguished fallen family whose plangency reminds man of his lost unity with nature.

Enion’s own conundrum is expressed by a complex of questions she asks from Nonentity. Her first lament shows a deep awareness of suffering throughout all nature, and asks, simply, "Why?":

Why does the Raven cry aloud and no eye
    pities her?
Why fall the Sparrow & the Robin in the foodless
    winter?
    Faint! shivering they sit on leafless bush,
    or frozen stone
(1.17.2-4)

The final stanza of this exquisite little lament is particularly evocative:

The Spider sits in his labourd Web, eager
    watching for the Fly
Presently comes a famished Bird & takes away
    the Spider
His Web is left all desolate, that his little
    anxious heart
So careful wove
(1.18.4-7)

As in Songs of Experience, the fly is seen anthropomorphically

A full catalogue would include the following: raven, sparrow, robin, dove, nightingale; lion, wolf, sheep, dog, oxen, cattle, bat; moth, emmet, grasshopper, newt, spider, fly, earthworm (especially important as the phallic innocence of man); thistle, nettle, briar, weeds, moss, corn, olive, cedar, vine, seeds, roots; milk, and the black earth.
--but so is the spider, bird and even web, all trapped in a vicious cycle where it is necessary to murder in order to survive. Such childlike animism is doomed by its own all-embracing compassion, which Blake characterizes as a particularly feminine inability to rigorously discriminate error. Only "the Science of Wrath" (VIII. 115.36) can cut through Urizen's Web of Religion in which he sits at the end of Night VI "gorged with blood" (75.31)--like a spider. Sorrow and compassion are not enough.

Enion carries compassion to its logical extreme in her second lament, the now famous "What is the price of Experience?" (II.35.IIff.). Here her questions have deepened. She has taken upon herself the sins of all the rest of the Zoas through vicarious suffering, rejecting even the seductive consolation of esthetic form: "Do men buy it [experience] for a song / Or wisdom for a dance in the street?" (35.11-12). She deliberately chooses to suffer until all suffering ceases, though she sees no hope for it ever doing so ("Thus could I sing & thus rejoice, but" [36.13]).

16 This line may summarize all the complex reasons why Blake turned from the short lyric to the more prolix prophetic form of verse. The lyrics in The Four Zoas are almost always contextually corrupt, perverted by erroneous motives or reasoning into egotistical uses.
Her decision here is akin to Ivan Karamazov's in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, who would reject salvation even if only a single child burns to death in all history.

Enion's four laments, occurring at the ends of Nights I, II, III and VIII, carry important structural significance to the poem. Her first lament reaches Albion stricken at the beginning of Night II, where *Vala* originally began, and illustrates the simultaneity of each Night's events: "Whence is this voice of Enion that soundeth in my Porches" (II.23.4). Her second lament "Vibrates" to Ahania who as a result, like Pilate's wife troubled by a dream of Jesus' innocence, cannot accept Urizen's usurpation of Albion's power: "And never from that moment could she rest upon her pillow" (II.36.14, 19). To translate this allegorically, Ahania's feminine intuition is based upon Enion's physical senses, and

17 Northrop Frye's statement in *Fearful Symmetry* (p. 277) that the Emanations in *The Four Zoas* are "just shadowy creatures who do practically nothing but wail, and seem to have chiefly a symmetrical function," is inaccurate.

18 It is possible that Blake's treatment of simultaneity here and elsewhere was influenced by *Paradise Lost*, where the vacuum of space transmits sound waves instantly. For example, the Devils' shouts "the hollow Abyss / Heard far and wide" (II.518-19).

19 See Matt. 27.19. Pilate rejects his wife's dream, and suffers guilt thereafter; so does Urizen.
must follow them into the underworld: "Ahania fell far into Nonentity" (III.44.5). The two women alternate their laments antiphonically at the end of Night VIII, where Ahania takes Enion's place on the Margins of Nonentity, while Enion falls into a yet further depth, the "Caverns of the Grave" (VIII.109.13). This phrase is from Blake's lyric, "The Caverns of the Grave I've seen," published as a coda to his illustrations for Blair's The Grave. Enion becomes equivalent to the feminine Soul exploring the recesses of the Grave in Blake's illustration for Plate VII, where "The Grave is Heaven's Golden Gate." The candle held in the Soul's hand associates her with the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, explicitly introduced a few lines later in Enion's lament: "A voice came in the night a midnight cry upon the mountains / Awake the bridegroom cometh I awoke to sleep no more" (VIII.109.20-1). Enion's final lament has reached rock bottom, and she emerges upward with seed imagery to console and prophesy.

Once again we see how "When Thought is closd in Caves. Then love shall shew its root in deepest Hell" (V.65.12).

20 See Matt. 25.6: "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." In Matthew's account, Jesus here announces the signs of imminent Apocalypse, including the destruction of the temple and "wars and rumours of wars" (Matt.24.6); these also occur in Night VIII for the same function. Following these tribulations, "Shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light" (34.29); this is precisely Los' function at the beginning of Night IX, when he tears down the sun and moon.
Finally even Rahab, the monstrous embodiment of Vala's triumph of the Female Will, hears the laments:

But when she saw the form of Ahania weeping on the Void
And heard Enion's voice sound from the caverns of the Grave
No more spirit remained in her
(VIII.111.8-10)

Rahab begins the same feminine process of regeneration until the Sanhedrin is forced to burn her. That her ashes reanimate into Deism, or Blake's own eighteenth-century England, illustrates both the felicity yet limited value of the Emanations' purgation. It returns the poem back to where Tharmas set the Wheel of Destiny in motion, as Percival observes, thus creating another crucial "Space" in which Albion may awaken and exert his will. Yet each Emanation must return into the world of Generation to appropriate her insights into a working relationship with her male counterpart; hence the necessity for the Garden of Vala episode in Night IX, where Enion is finally reborn as a child and learns to accept Tharmas' advances. The Emanations are both repulsed away from the main arena of the Zoas, yet drawn toward the Margins of Nonentity, where they are partially purified of their spectrality, and articulate darkness into song. But

21 Op. cit., p. 237. "Presumably Albion must now either repudiate his error or travel again the round of nature." He does the former.
their insights can only influence the fallen world through the heartbreaking poignance of their laments which slice through the poem at vital junctures like glittering icicles.

The conundrum which Luvah must solve is love turned into hate, rather than Tharmas' split between coherence and chaos: "I suffer affliction / Because I love. for I was love but hatred awakes in me" (II.27.13-14). Urizen subverts Luvah's emotional energy by enclosing him in a blast furnace where love, having nothing to give itself to, inverts upon itself and "melt[s] with woe" (II.28.3). Luvah's magma is mixed with Vala's ashes (which re-animate as they do at the end of Night VIII) and poured over the earth to form the shell of Urizen's Mundane Egg, a concretized armour similar to the Spectre's, replacing the porous cellular membrane or albumen of a true egg, thus preventing the birth of the new Man. Luvah flows into unorganized chaos, always Blake's major horror; but he cannot re-animate like Tharmas or Vala because the vulnerability of love is easily subverted by Urizen. Tharmas can starve Urizen, withholding empirical data from Cartesian science, for Urizen thrives
to a great extent on solipsism. But Luvah, finding himself completely intermixed into atomistic matter, turns into his opposite, hate.

Luvah's conundrum of love versus hate becomes manifested in the poem as a causal connection between physical war and sex. War engenders a momentary brotherhood (rather than the brotherhood of Eternity) intent upon destroying an 'evil' Other, merging both parties into outright bestiality (VIII.101.45-102.14). Sex uses the same dualism—of male/female rather than England/France—to procreate new life which once again tries to escape its confinement through conflict. In a vicious circle, the womb thus provides cannon-fodder.

Luvah can only be dredged from his fragmentation by a surge downward through the fourfold universe, in the form of Christ wrapped in Luvah's robes of blood. Christ too must become a child: "for the source of life / Descends to be a weeping babe / For the earthworm renews the moisture of the sandy plain" (II.34.80-3). His Passion replaces Luvah's lost passion, solving Luvah's conundrum in the only way possible: by returning love for hate, and thereby retrieving the pure core of love contained within spectrous hate. It follows that both Christ and Luvah are crucified, for they are the
same entity.

Urizen cannot understand this reincarnation of his old enemy, for his directional instinct to position himself in an arbitrary "vortex" when no such orientation can exist for any single fallen Zoa makes it impossible to see that Christ descending is actually Luvah ascending (i.e., returning to Eternity). The dual levels of The Four Zoas penetrate toward each other from opposite polarities, like a tunnel excavated simultaneously at each end, fusing in Night IX.

This brings us to Urizen's stalemate: inability to accept flux. In the unfallen state, his cognitive guidance participates with the other Zoas in a symbiotic whole, where thought becomes synonymous with feeling, perception and imagination. But when Albion hands him the sceptre in Night II, he possesses unlimited power over the other Zoas, and misuses it. The freedom of Eternity becomes terrifying to him because it never

22 This is probably the reason we are given two accounts of the crucifixion. In Night VIIB, "They vote the death of Luvah & they nailed him to the tree" (92.13ff.); in Night VIII, "Thus was the Lamb of God condemned to Death / They nailed him upon the tree of Mystery" (106.1ff.). The two personae merge only in Night IX. This seems a more reasonable hypothesis than haphazard revision on Blake's part.
solidifies into any final form but rather constantly flickers in the mental wars of creation and destruction. Freedom turns into fear of the Void; the beautiful page-emptiness (and its potential art) of space "stonifies" into the Mosaic commandments. Just as a baby is born headfirst in most cases, so Urizen falls farthest. He tears the living flux into digestible chunks, then freezes around them to form a separate self both as a possession and analyzable object. What follows is a series of descents, tumbling through space attempting various desperate modes of schematization to fix a permanent centre as a kind of bomb shelter from the flux. He constantly builds structures to make sense of the universe, thereby closing it off: the Mundane Shell, Web of Religion, Newtonian geometry, instruments of war and science, temples, religious scriptures. But these projects are doomed to failure for they base themselves upon the basic split which is the fallen human self. The more Urizen succeeds in finding temporary security, the deeper he represses his fundamental insecurity, and the more his terror of "futurity" floods back again as a recurrent nightmare.

Urizen can never achieve an autonomous world even though he is willing, like Milton's Satan, "to pervert all the faculties of sense / Into their own destruction
if perhaps he might avert / His own despair at the
cost of every thing that breathes" (VIII.102.21-3).
Just as he cannot comprehend Christ's illogical incar-
nation into Luvah's robes of blood, so he is mystified
yet jealous of Orc's apparent joy in his own flames.
Orc glorifies in the destruction of the status quo, but
unlike Los cannot replace destruction of old forms with
the creation of new ones; hence his flames become "Self
consuming" (VIIA.80.48), a demoniac parody of "Self-
anihilation." Urizen's "cold attractive power" (VIIA.
80.38) easily subverts Orc's savage, sensual revolution
into establishment politics. The same "cold infectious
madness" (IV.52.28) of pure rationality infects Los
when he binds Urizen into human form, or an anthropo-
morphomorphic God who absorbs poetic potential.

But Urizen's tragic need to force all existence
into his own version of reality proves his undoing.
When he positions himself into a writing stance, he
becomes solipsistically "closed up in . . . transparent
rock" (VIIA.79.5-6); and "since life cannot be quenched
life exuded" (VIII.106.24). A Root of Mystery forms
beneath his compass-extended feet as a symbol of all
that he excludes from his artifacts. The labyrinthine
quality of this root is similar to the Zoas' loins
bursting into "pipes" when their Emanations are torn
away, and to the convolutions of the Polypus; it constitutes a perverted version of sexuality, or Vala's Female Will. When Urizen's laboriously constructed worlds shatter, as inevitably they do, he plummets into the abyss, struggling to position himself but ending back where he started:

I lose my powers weaken'd every revolution
   till a death
Shuts up my powers then a seed in the vast womb
   of darkness
I dwell in dim oblivion. brooding over me the
   Enormous worlds
Reorganize me shooting forth in bones & flesh

   & blood
I am regenerated to fall or rise at will
   (VI.73.8-12, my italics)

Reorganize and regenerate are words which Blake ordinarily reserves for apocalyptic transformation, and it is significant that they are used here. Once again Urizen comes face to face with a cosmos which requires not his sole guidance but rather all the Zoas working together as a unity: if he were to allow it to flood inward, dissolving his false strictures, then he would achieve genuine regeneration. But the Apocalypse which could rise at this point is blocked by the survival of his iron books linking him to his past:

the books remaind still unconsumd
Still to be written & interleaved with brass
   & iron & gold
Time after time for such a journey none but
   iron pens
Can write And adamantine leaves receive nor
   can the man who goes
The journey obstinate refuse to write
   (VI.71.39-43)
It is probable that Blake recognizes here his own methodological danger, for in his own work he rarely discards an image or symbol. Urizen's conundrum is, in its deepest personal sense, Blake's own: the tendency to perceive life in rational terms to such a degree that the other faculties suffer.

But the distinction between this type of rational art (which is also "verse" [VIIA.81.10], i.e., the Old Testament) and Los' is crucial. Urizen depends upon Mnemosyne or Memory, the mother of the classical Greek Muses; hence his art becomes institutionalized, and he but perpetuates the original Fall—indeed as a kind of poetic justice, for he formulated the stock Christian doctrine of Original Sin in the first place. It is not until Night IX that Urizen's books burn as the scroll of the heavens, freeing him from historicity (118.8). On the other hand, Los' Muses are the Daughters of Beulah with their fluid senses and shifting time scale. Los "fabricate[s] forms sublime" (VIIA.90.22) by rigorously smelting and pounding history on his anvil into its molten essence, which he then modulates into instruments of mental warfare—that is, purely operational works of art, not codified scripture (as indeed Blake's own poetry is usually interpreted). And Enitharmon uses a similar method of selectivity, "weaving" vegetative counterparts for suffering Spectres in Night VIII.
The intimation here is that Blake's symbols do not achieve their homology through deliberate extension into a system, but are created out of the pure duration of the present. In *The Four Zoas*, any single instant contains all history as well as all futurity; any single spatial point contains all space. It follows that Los (and Blake's) artistry possesses an astonishing intercoherence simply because it becomes wholly naked, open to the flow of the creative present. Los does not codify, like Urizen, but rather transposes the eternal "Voice" into the intricate harmonics of time.

But before Los learns to plant an emanative mythology in the "auricular nerves" (I.4.1: poetry as oral voice) of the earth, he must pass through four regenerative stages, each representing an historical type of poetry and Blake's own evolution as a poet. These are: (1) childhood, or the pastoral lyric (*Songs of Innocence* and *of Experience*); (2) adolescence, or the medieval chivalric tradition with its exploration

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23 I am aware that my interpretation of *The Four Zoas*, breaking down the complex narrative into single incidents, reads very much like an intimate biography of Blake's life, particularly where Los and Enitharmon are concerned. This may or may not be coincidental. I suspect that the poem is intensely autobiographical, but for the most part this cannot be proved. However, a fascinating reconstruction does emerge if we consider it, hypothetically, in this light.
of jealousy and idealistic love (The Book of Thel, Visions of the Daughters of Albion and the many Notebook lyrics concerned with this issue); (3) the binding of Urizen, or rationalistic and neo-classical art--i.e., a reaction against it (the Lambeth Books and most of the early Vala); and (4) rejoining with his Spectre and Emanation, or a mature prophetic vocation (Night IX, the final The Four Zoas, Milton and Jerusalem). We will consider each of these stages in turn, since Los' conundrum dwells at the heart of the poem. For Blake's proem explicitly identifies Los as the poem's main focus: "Sing / His Fall into Division & his Resurrection to Unity" (I.4.3-4). A dual meaning is contained here: the poem recounts not only what has already happened, but literally sings it to happen. True song, true poetry is Apocalypse.

In a brilliant simile, Blake describes Los and Enitharmon's first stage as a blind wave (perhaps tidal?) slowly rising out of Tharmas' organic, uterine sea until the human brain is differentiated:

The first state weeping they began & helpless as a wave
Beaten along its sightless way growing enormous in its motion to
Its utmost goal, till strength from Enion like richest summer shining
Raised the bright boy & girl with glories from their heads out beaming . . .
They sulk upon her breast

(I.8.3-7)
But the mother is always temporary. The above solar image amplifies into the child becoming a false Copernican centre, while Enion is repulsed into a planet "revolving round in dark despair" (I.9.6). Los and Enitharmon live naked in the "Moony spaces" (I.9.19) of Beulah, recognizable as the same Garden of Vala in which the Fall took place, and recurring again in Night IX. It is surrounded by "the margind sea" (I.9.32) of Tharmas, an appropriate image in that Los and Enitharmon must enter that sea of experience in order to expand their art. Los and Enitharmon are the first personae born in the poem; it follows that their respective ability to control time and space represents not so much the survival of Urthona's imagination as the simple fact of hereditary priority. Modelled explicitly upon Milton's Adam and Eve, whatever they do causes immense historical repercussions, setting a tragic precedent. This explains why their voice and thought automatically becomes prophecy and act. Their sexual vitality, though flawed by jealousy, is envied by the other Zoas deprived of all sexual contact (II.34.5, IV.47.1-6). Their ability to absorb energy from others' suffering later evolves into the artist's absorption of spectrous suffering in order to return it as purified joy.

Perhaps Blake here alludes to Jude 1.13's description of the damned as "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever"? 
But Los and Enitharmon misuse their Edenic senses in adolescent games of chastity, jealousy and role-playing, "now taking on Ahania's form now the form of Enion" (II. 34.38). Before they realize it, this second stage of "embryon passions" (I.9.24)—which Blake sees implicit within even the newborn infant who "sulks" on its mother's breast suckling her milk--turns playful hide-and-seek into an increasingly anguished adult failure to communicate, finally re-enacting their parents' gestalten, the split into Spectre and Emanation. Los' prophetic vocation remains blocked at this stage by his interpersonal problems with his Emanation. The specific contention between them seems to be that she regards sex as evil unless it occurs under Urizen's moralistic aegis:

If the God enraptured me infolds
In clouds of sweet obscurity my beauteous form dissolving
Howl thou over the body of death tis thine
Farewell the God calls me away I depart in my sweet bliss

(II.34.24-26.47)

Enitharmon refuses to meet Los in a full spiritual and sexual commingling, leaving only a "dead cold corpse" (34.48) in his arms. Her mind abdicates each night back to her conditioned childhood God who himself is secretly emasculated (i.e., torn from Ahania). In Night VIIA, where the same "couch" scene occurs with positive results, Enitharmon's deeper fear emerges that "Life lives upon Death & by devouring appetite / All things subsist on
Sex becomes for her the archetypal sin, devouring the "ruddy fruit" (VIIA.87.16) of her breasts, of the Tree of Knowledge. Ultimately then, she is afraid of damnation, even when Urizen's Nobodaddy is replaced by the Lamb of God descending in her own heart (VIIA.87.53-60). For his part, Los sees clearly through Urizen's hypocrisy from the beginning: "I perceive Thou hast Abundance which I claim as mine" (I.12.21); for as The Marriage of Heaven and Hell states (pl. 11), all gods were originally poetic creations. But his desire for Enitharmon is so intense, he accepts a provisional marriage under Urizen's jurisdiction, and pretends that "Our God is Urizen the King" (IV.48.15), while secretly plotting to revenge Enitharmon's moral contamination, and finally gets his opportunity in the binding of Urizen.

This introduces Los' third stage. He experiences his first mature suffering when Tharmas abducts Enitharmon, which causes his Spectre to emerge. This separation cripples him, forcing him to learn that his dormant visionary ability depends upon healing his dislocation from both Spectre and Emanation. From this point until the end of Night VIIA, his allegiance lies uneasily with Tharmas' rich storehouse of empirical imagery; for he recognizes that whenever the poet is drafted into Urizen's abstract service or believes that he is
autonomous (Los at one point tries to maintain that "Urthona is but my shadow" [IV.48.20]--precisely the opposite is the truth), his emanative faculties are even further diminished.

Los now attempts to transmute Urizen's "formless unmeasurable Death" (IV.52.12) into a human shape so it will not contaminate the entire sea of life. Most of this material is transferred from The Book of Urizen, but with some important differences. In The Four Zoas, Los is stronger. Instead of delusive pity for Urizen dividing him, this role is taken by Tharmas, as Erdman observes. Nor does Los join Urizen in a stagnant period of oblivion or creative stalemate dryrotting his prophetic voice; rather he engages in a wild dance of mingled exultation and despair. Moreover, The Four Zoas formulates the principle behind Los' contamination: "he became what he beheld / He became what he was doing he was himself transformd" (IV.55.22-3). He catches a momentary glimpse into the Eternal level, seeing "the hand of God over his furnaces" (56.26) setting the Limits of Opacity and Contraction within the fallen human form. However, he does not realize the significance

25 For my analysis of The Book of Urizen related to The Four Zoas, see pp. 509-12.

of this vision until Night VIIA, where building
Golgonooza reveals the same "Twofold Limit" (87.12)
within every work of art. In essence, then, the binding
of Urizen is a necessary and beneficial embodiment of
error into human senses in order for it to become fully
crystalized in Night VIII and cast off in Night IX.
Los has taken up the hammer of his true persona, the
blacksmith Urthona, who dropped it at the Fall (I.22.20).
But Los' artistic empathy binds his own faculties into
Urizen's insane rationalism; this is why his bones
join Urizen's "hurt[ling] on the wind . . . Into unusual
forms" (IV.55.29-30). We may translate this conceptually
as the way an artist's integrity becomes eroded by
its battle "against principalities, against powers"
as Blake's epigram from Eph. 6.12 identifies as the
enemies of his poem. Los' spastic hammer strokes
become destructive, lashing Enitharmon's limbs too in
"chains of sorrow" (IV.53.6) which join them together
for the first time. It is probable that these hammer
blows and whirling chains represent a furious copulatory
rhythm "in revenge" (53.12) for all he has suffered
from her coy chastity, causing Enitharmon's pregnancy

27 It may be that Los' characterization as a
blacksmith was stimulated by Paradise Lost's description
of an anonymous blacksmith forging tools, in Adam's
vision of Book XI, beginning: "In other part stood one
who at the Forge / Labouring, two massie clods of Iron
and Brass / Had melted . . ." (564-73).
immediately afterwards.

The whole scene of the binding of Urizen and Los' manic dance afterwards (which Erdman suggests may be modeled on rabies) vividly illustrates Blake's own state of mind during the Lambeth period and the bulk of *Vala*. Los' visionary senses are almost destroyed by trying to contain Urizen's Deistic cerebrality, "stiffning pale inflexible" into "one stedfast bulk" (V.57.6, 19). But now he and Enitharmon are fully wedded in a marriage of sorrow, destroying forever their former adolescent games:

The winter spread his wide black wings across from pole to pole
Grim frost beneath & terrible snow linkd in a marriage chain
Began a dismal dance. The winds around on pointed rocks
Settled like bats
(V.58.12-15)

Sickness, exhaustion and gradual convalescence occur from this point until the victorious end of Night VIIA. The strategic problem now becomes to confront Los with a positive vision; for his ability to become what he

28 There are two alternative explanations for Orc's conception. Either he results from the demonic Marriage Feast of Night I, where Los and Enitharmon "eat the fleshly bread, they drank the nervous wine" (12.44); or his father is Tharmas, who "rap'd bright Enitharmon far / Apart from Los" (49.4-5) at the beginning of Night IV. If the latter, then Orc is illegitimate, which would partly explain Los' jealousy toward him and link him to Luvah's other reincarnation, Christ, whom Blake also believed was illegitimate.

beholds and labours on is the most important single discovery the poem has come up with so far. If Los can fully see the "Divine Vision" hovering above and behind the substantive narrative, then he can be transformed into a regenerative agent. But he cannot transmit this vision until his personal deadlock with Enitharmon heals to show him the relevance of his art. In order to retrieve his childhood visionary ability he must return to Beulah through Enitharmon's three gates; but "she closed and bard them fast / Lest Los should enter into Beulah" (I.20.6-7). Hence the burden of regeneration shifts to Enitharmon.

We have already partially discussed Enitharmon's regeneration as parallel with Enion's. But Blake's metaphor of a woman's interior gates focuses particularly on Enitharmon, threading through the poem to give it structural coherence. The Gates of Eden are identified as a woman's body, specifically her brain, heart and loins, which can be closed respectively through mental self-centeredness, emotional frigidity and physical chastity. In Night I, Jerusalem comes to reside within Enitharmon's heart, reincarnated presumably through
Enion back to Tharmas who rescued her at the beginning. This means that freedom (or absolute reality) exists as a viable presence within Enitharmon, but neither knows it and cannot know until all three gates shatter. Furthermore, regeneration must begin with any final incarnation of the prototypes folded within. The process of salvation presented here bases itself upon a series of sleepers hermetically sealed within each other, like Chinese puzzle-boxes, each dreaming the outer envelope of existence. To wake is paradoxically to destroy one’s illusory status, yet die into a deeper self. Jerusalem is "embalmed" (I.22.24) by Vala, or the naturalized female will, who must emerge first in order to release (albeit inadvertently) her deeper sister. Orc in turn presumably capsulates Vala. A sequence of births takes place, each painful. Orc "from her heart rending his way" (V.58.17) is born, weakening Enitharmon's heartgates which further dissolve through maternal love, paralleling Enion. At the binding of Orc by Los, Enitharmon's heart can no longer withstand the combined pressures of maternal suffering and the mothlike Jerusalem waking within her chrysalis heart:

30 Blake does not explicitly say so; but this would explain Orc's incestuous fascination with his sister.
Enitharmon on the road of Dranthom felt
the inmost gate
Of her bright heart burst open & again close
with a deadly pain
Within her heart Vala began to reanimate in
bursting sobs
And when the Gate was open she beheld that
dreary Deep
Where bright Ahania wept
(V.63.11-15)

This shattering releases, once again, a luminous space,
allowing a conjunction of the poem's different levels.
Now Vala is in a position to be born, and does so after
Enitharmon's mating with her Spectre, which constitutes
the final breaking of her chaste loins. Three Nights
later, Vala "burst the Gates of Enitharmon's heart with
a dreadful Crash / Nor could they ever be closed again"
(VIIA.85.13-14). At this point a premature resurrection
takes place, foreshadowing the Apocalypse as it does
in Matthew: "The dead burst from the bottoms of their
tombs" (VIIA.85.18), as if to counterbalance the dis-
placement of Enitharmon's open heart. It is an inverted,
premature resurrection, occurring again at the end of
Night VIIB and in a deleted passage at the end of
VIII (Erdman p. 761) where Rahab sees a door open in
Christ's sepulchre and the Divine Vision shine.

31 Blake never explains here or elsewhere what
Dranthom entails, but perhaps he is thinking of St.
Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus.

32 This passage was probably deleted because of
its definitive appearance in Night VIIA; but it illustrates
how the breaking heart—in this case, Christ's on the cross,
plus the rending of the temple's veil (which symbolizes
for Blake sexual hypocrisy)—releases "windows" into
Eternity.
What is significant here is that these signs of impending Apocalypse are directly related to Enitharmon's regeneration.

Enitharmon's final traumatic heartbreak sends her slipping toward the Margins of Nonentity where her sisters of sorrow have gone. But now Los is able to enter her, and with his superior intellect acts as the traditional dream-vision guide to interpret her changes:

at the awful gates
Of thy poor broken Heart I see thee like a shadow withering
As on the outside of Existence but look! Take comfort!
Turn inwardly thine Eyes and there behold the Lamb of God
Clothed in Luvah's robes of blood descending
to redeem

(VIIA.87.39-43)

Enitharmon gazes within herself fully for the first time, and instead of Void and depravity views her own true self, Jerusalem.

Now the final astonishing metamorphosis occurs within Jerusalem herself, linking this ultimate Emanation with her masculine counterpart, Albion: "The Divine Vision seen within the inmost deep recess / Of fair Jerusalem's bosom in a gently beaming fire" (VIII.104.2-3). The "dolor" of birth which so horrified Tharmas at the beginning of the poem (I.4.39-45) is now seen to be the birth pangs of the Christ-child and of the new Man. For the first time, Los "Could enter into Enitharmon's bosom & explore / Its intricate Labyrinths
now the Obdurate heart was broken" (VIII.99.26-7).
These labyrinths with their imagery of secrecy, silence, darkness, folded wings, whispers and moonlight are recognizable as the place where the Fall originally occurred. Hence it is a great victory to see them exposed now in ultimate nakedness, like the expanding corolla of a flower. The same breaking and unbaring process happens to the other Emanations in Night IX, for example when Ahania's heart "Burst its bright Vessels" (121.37) with excess of joy at her reunion with Urizen.

It remains to be added that, as a parody of the above, physical war also tries to obliterate the difference between inner and outer worlds, opening the body to the sun in an effort to escape the agonized construction of fallen man:

This is no warbling brook nor Shadow of a Myrtle tree
But blood & wounds & dismal cries & clarions of war
And hearts laid open to the light by the broad grizly sword
And bowels hidden in hammerd steel rippd forth upon the Ground
(VIIIB.93.14-17)

I have dwelt on Enitharmon's regeneration because it is essential to Los' own fourth evolution at the end
of Night VIIA. Certainly the dialectic of regeneration is most explicitly presented in the two revised endings of this Night; but it is Enitharmon, not Los, who first embraces the Spectre of Urthona and whose heart first breaks into threefold vision. The earlier part of this Night reintroduces Los' conundrum, for he is back to his basic frustrating domestic situation of Night I, observing chaste Enitharmon asleep on his bed. But this time her "Shadow" has withdrawn downward into a dream-world where she confronts her Spectre, whereas in Night I she retreated upward toward Urizen's moral code. In itself this reversal of movement signifies an improvement. But Los must come to terms with her continued sexual fear in order to appropriate her underworld changes into his own role as imagination. Los remains bitterly jealous of Orc's attraction toward Enitharmon, for now Orc siphons off the lyric sensuality which Los lost (the alliteration is significant) during the binding of Urizen. Now we see Los' conundrum in its starkest terms: the sheer power of his prophetic ability and the magnitude of his despair frightens Enitharmon ("trembling at my terrific / Forehead & eyes" [VIIA.81.27-8]), just as Tharmas' "terror" forced Enion to withdraw at the beginning of the poem. Los must learn to "modulate" (VIIA.90.26) his own lucidity into "sweet moderated fury" (90.19) in order to accommodate his Emanation's more passive, moonlight wisdom.
Now the most remarkable inversion in this remarkable poem takes place: the Spectre of Urthona, whom Harold Bloom rightly characterizes as "the most enigmatic of Blake's mythic beings," reveals that he is a deeper reincarnation of Urthona than is Los, and that Los in fact represents his Spectre. "But mingling together with his Spectre [i.e., Los] the Spectre of Urthona / Wondering beheld the Centre open" (VIIA.86.2-3). One may skip over these crucial words many times before suddenly realizing their significance. Los must become absorbed by the Spectre, and the Spectre in turn by Urthona. Hence at the end of the poem, Blake exults (referring to Los), "Where is the Spectre of Prophecy where the Delusive Phantom / Departed & Urthona rises" (IX.139.6-7). Critics uniformly praise Los as the gradually emerging hero of the poem; but his regeneration depends upon the prior efforts of the Spectre, who though admitting his "insane brutish / Deform'd" (VIIA.84.36-7) nature, constitutes the real 'hero'—though only Albion is real in any other than a provisional sense. The Spectre of Urthona submits the poem's most explicit analysis of the principles of regeneration we have been tracing, and is worth quoting at length:

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Thou never canst embrace sweet Enitharmon
terrible Demon. Till
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33 Blake's Apocalypse, p. 229.
Thou art united with thy Spectre Consummating by pains & labours
That mortal body & by Self annihilation back returning
To Life Eternal be assurd I am thy real Self
Tho thus divided from thee & the Slave of every Passion

If we unite in one, another better world will be
Open within your heart & loins & wondrous brain
Threefold as it was in Eternity & this the fourth Universe
Will be Renewed by the three & consummated in Mental fires divine
(VIIA.85.32-43)

Nights VIIA and IX here knit: the consummating and self annihilation which Los enacts with his Spectre are precisely equivalent to the same terms used in the "Mental fires divine" of the Apocalypse. A radical revision not only of the personae but of the poem itself is implied. In other words, at this instant for three characters, the Apocalypse has already occurred.

From this juncture on, the triad of Los, Enitharmon and their Spectre sustain and interpret each other's terrifying psychological changes. Whereas Enitharmon alone could not sustain her loss of self, Los acts as counterbalance, deliberately eating from the Tree of Knowledge to prove to her it does not mean eternal death. In turn, this courageous act would demoralize Los, for it reverses six thousand years of Urizen's rule, except that the Spectre "mingling with him comforted him /
Being a medium between him & Enitharmon" (VIIA.87.26-7). And when the Spectre despairs at his opposing "Spectres
of the Dead" (87.40) who have no counterparts, Los comforts him. The net result is an artistic unit recreating their own discovery for all creation. Los joins his Emanation in a full spiritual and physical sense only when he includes her within his daily journeyman work. Her conditions boil down to a simple matter of "modulating his fires studious" (90.26) in order that she may participate in them:

O Lovely terrible Los wonder of Eternity
Los my defense & guide
Thy works are all my joy. & in thy fires my soul delights
If mild they burn in just proportion & in secret night
And silence build their day
(90.16-18)

Here a delicate balance of night with day is established to correct the poem's complete possession by night. Conscious artistic labour remains rooted in night, with its underworld of dream, but is not disrupted into anarchy by the new realignment.

At the end of Night VIIA, the other Zoas are drawn into this renascence: Tharmas, Urthona's Spectre, Orc, Rintrah, Palambrium, Urizen's sons, and finally Urizen himself, whose craggy exterior peels away to reveal a helpless baby:

Startled was Los. he found his Enemy Urizen now
In his hands. he wonderd that he felt love & not hate
His whole soul loved him he beheld him an infant Lovely breathed from Enitharmon he trembled within himself
(VIIA.90.64-7)
So ends this cathartic Night.

As a direct result of this activity, Albion stirs within the broken heart of Los, the masculine counterpart to Jerusalem stirring within Enitharmon. "Man began / To wake upon the Couch of Death he sneezd seven times" (VIII.99.11-12). Night VIII continues the process of winnowing Spectre and Eternal essence into separate forms which alternate in an intensified dialectic culminating in Christ's crucifixion as Luvah, thus presenting all the Zoas in a single arena for the first time. As in the New Testament, the forces of evil reach their zenith just before the Apocalypse. The Shadowy Female's "stony stupor" (VIII.107.21) gradually encompasses each Zoa, solidifying him into a pure embodiment of his spectrality, or what might be termed the absolute essence of the Fall. Urizen hardens into a dragon, Orc into a snake, Tharmas into a pillar of sand, the Spectre of Urthona into "a vast Fibrous form" (107.22), and finally Los and Enitharmon begin to burst within the Void which, in fact, represents the increasing clarity of emptiness left in the wake of each Zoa, as a page is erased to begin anew. Their death here is usually interpreted as showing a lack of textual continuity into Night IX,

34 Bloom points out, in 'Commentary' to Erdman, op. cit., p. 879, that the biblical reference here is to the Shunammite child whom Elisha restored to life (II Kings 4.35). This fits in with Los' mature vocation as a prophet.
but actually it constitutes implicit victory. For "Tharmas gave his Power to Los Urthona gave his strength" (107,31), and Los is now in a position to perform the single act which the entire thrust of the poem has centered in his human form: tearing down the sun and moon.
Cela commença sous les rires des enfants, cela finira par eux.

Rimbaud, Les Illuminations, XI

Practically every critic asserts that The Four Zoas contains Blake's definitive version of the Fall, and that the later two epics concentrate instead on the Apocalypse. But this is an oversimplification depending upon a strict distinction between the two which Blake does not make. Throughout the first eight Nights, Blake recovers the vivisected pieces of man's fallen body, tracing them into four distinct regions. Chaotic suffering is particularized into causality as far back historically and psychologically as Blake can penetrate before it disappears in the pre-historic dislocation of a single Man. This formulation of individuality into a plurality of personae itself constitutes a radical discovery, for it denies the existence of any fixed self. Salvation becomes waking back into a metabolic universe where every single thing must retain particularity if it is to function as the organs of a single body. To be sure, poison runs through Albion's arteries rather than oxygenated blood, and he is seen to be hopelessly
diseased, with each organ misplaced. Yet every sense and faculty contains in microcosm its full potential for health, however atrophied. By the time we reach Night IX, the basic structure and interrelationships of the Zoas have been firmly established. By discovering what is wrong in human nature, Blake implicitly defines what is right. The Apocalypse requires 'only' a radical shift of perspective to allow a different current to flow through the concatenations Blake has already traced, turning physical warfare into mental. Man can be saved at any single point if he is willing to pierce through Vala’s veil and accept the possibility that on the other side he may not exist at all. By delineating the Fall to its utmost extent, Blake puts himself in the only position whereby the Apocalypse can emerge: within the body of a single man, Los, the poet (who is implicitly responsible for the poem in which he is contained), who in turn wakes his deeper essence, Albion.

The significance of the ending of Night VIII is that it crystalizes all history into a single nexus, Blake’s own contemporary point in space and time: “The ashes animated and they called it Deism” (VIII.111.22). History “concenters” in Los. With a single spastic reaching outward with his dying body he initiates the Apocalypse:
Los his vegetable hands
Outstretched his right hand branching out in
fibrous Strength
Seizd the Sun. His left hand like dark roots
coverd the Moon
And tore them down cracking the heavens across
from immense to immense
Then fell the fires of Eternity
(IX.117.6-10)

This is an act of despair, even rictus. But as The
Gates of Paradise affirm, "Fear and hope are Vision" (pl.13).

For its internal significance we must turn to two pre¬
ceding passages. In Night II, when Albion drifts into
a final coma his body externalizes the cosmos: "Aloft
the Moon fled with a cry the Sun with streams of blood /
From Albion's Loins fled" (25.10-11). As a solar being,
Los must re-internalize this cosmos. So long as sun
and moon are spokes in a mechanistic system, the fallen
diurnal and seasonal cycles wrack man on a wheel.
To compound the problem, Urizen contaminates the Eternal
cycle even further by compelling Los' solar energy
into his own religious service. In Night VII B, Urizen
"took the Sun that glowd oer Los' / And with immense
machines down rolling, the terrific orb compell'd,
the Sun reddning like a fierce lion in his chains /
Descended" (96.9-12). The tyger of raw amoral energy
has become chained.

35 Los' name spelled backwards becomes Sol, as
Damon first noted.

36 Blake's description here of the sun restricted
into Urizen's temple "To light the War by day to hide
his secret beams by night / For he divided day & night
in different orderd portions" (96.16-17) gains resonance
when we realize he is criticizing Milton's description
of God creating the universe, in *Paradise Lost*:

for yet the Sun
Was not; shee in a cloudie Tabernacle
Sojournd the while. God saw the Light was good;
And light from darkness by the Hemisphere
Divided.

(VII.247-51)

Now the profundity of Los' act is clear. In one
desperate stroke he rips apart Cartesian time and space,
and through the resulting cesura Eternity inundates
all beings in (perhaps alchemical) purging "flames of
mental fire" (IX.117.18). One must remember that the
whole purpose behind Los' artistic labours in Nights VIIA
and VIII was formulated by his Spectre, who "Gave Tasks
to Los Enormous to destroy [my italics] / That body he
created but in vain for Los performed / Wonders of labour"
(VIIA.87.4-6). The body referred to here is Los, who
is only a temporary means to an end. Since he himself
is a Spectre, he must annihilate his temporal identity
through his own art in order to spark the Apocalypse
to reach a critical mass. The terminology of *The
Marriage of Heaven and Hell* holds true here: the

37 Cf. Blake's water color for *Night Thoughts*
(BM IX.11) depicting the beginning of Apocalypse as
a spark bursting above a man who wakes terrified from
sleep, widening into a fissure of fire, like a crack
in the wall.
cleansing of the perceptions, or widening of the chinks in man's cavern, attains its objective when the cave bursts and the senses commingle synesthetically to let daylight pierce the sepulchre of the fallen body. Los remains "terrified at Non Existence" (117.5), as do all the other Zoas at the juncture of their return back into unity, because the body as he knows it must die in order for it to become resurrected into its true "Human form Divine" (126.10).

Los' seemingly destructive act at the beginning of Night IX is but repeated in various ways throughout the ensuing Apocalypse. Albion must abandon his rock, and walk about like a convalescent returning to health, before compelling the destruction of his false dream phantasma; Urizen must cast off his petrified dragon form in order to return to his eternal status; Tharmas must calm his seas and emerge blowing his Triton horn of Judgment; the human harvest must die into seeds and be pressed into the Bread of Ages, while the human grapes are squeezed in the winepress to become the Wine of Emotion; each Emanation must go to her winter death to weave a cocoon for spring; Luvah must be cast into the earth for compost. In all these examples, death becomes a vital part of the Apocalypse, for it establishes the Eternal dynamics of beginning/ending/beginning.
This is implicit within the timeless circularity of children's games; in fact the children of the Songs return at the coda of this poem to "play / Among the wooly flocks" (138.34-5).

The second phase of the Apocalypse is brutal social revolution. Orc "gathering / Strength from the Earths consumd & heavens & all hidden abysses" (118.12-13) blends with the mental flame. When Urizen plows and sows the human seed, it is Orc who follows behind to "heat the black mould & cause / The human harvest to begin" (125.19-20)--in a subordinate position. Freed from Urizen's prior restrictions, he becomes a positive though (as with Los) suicidal force, for he eventually consumes himself in his own flames: only at this point does he revert back to Luvah. The socio-political dimension of the Apocalypse remains strong throughout Night IX, as it does in St. John's Revelation envisioning the collapse of the Roman empire.

But Orc cannot be counted author of the Apocalypse,

Thus the relevance of my quotation from Rimbaud to preface this section. An illuminating comparative study could be done between Blake and Rimbaud, shedding light on both poets, for each passed through a similar Hell and attained a similar Apocalypse.
as Frye posits, because the "living flames winged with intellect" (119.19) occur after his extinction, up until the final coda where "Man walks forth from midst of the fires the evil is all consum'd" (138.22). Orc is doomed in his own serpentine circularity, "pillars of fire rolling round and round" (118.12). Later the same image describes Enion's regeneration, from a "whirlwind" enclosing a shriek, bones, groan, tears and finally a "gentle light" (132.14-17)--a summation of the entire poem.

In this second phase of Apocalypse, the "reek of burning" (to use Rimbaud's description of himself in Une Saison en Enfer) increases. Those entities and artifacts which are most unreal, or spectrous, consume themselves first, for they cannot endure the lucidity which the mental fire ignites. The Spectres of Los and Enitharmon wither into shadows; Urizen's iron scrolls burn; Rahab and Tirzah "give themselves to Consummation" (118.7). Orc manages to hold out until after the harvest, but Mystery burns longest of all until pressed into wine; then it too consumes.

The manuscript indicates that Night IX began originally at 119.24, "Beyond this Universal Confusion."

39 Fearful Symmetry, p. 308.
As it now stands, however, universal confusion refers to the phase of the Apocalypse just described; but its original juxtapositions may have been first to the original version of Night VII B, where the Prester Serpent excites man to war (98.31), and later to the initial ending of VIII, or Urizen's war. In both cases the implication we may draw is that the Apocalypse of the first 98 lines of Night IX is in some sense identical with the warfare of the preceding Nights.

Now that the Zoas have mutually negated each other, their surviving artifacts burst into flame, having no context to sustain them. The cumulative outrage of history bursts into destruction, and seems at first totally nihilistic simply because "Mysterys tyrants" (119.13) are so innumerable, and spectrality so intermixed within the very veins of the earth. At this point each single Zoa, human, animal, plant and "each speck of dust" (123.29) begins literally to explode, ridding itself of false containment, its mortar of metaphor. What we are seeing is mental war with a vengeance, "the Bloody Deluge living flames winged with intellect / And Reason round the Earth they march in order flame by flame" (119.19-20). This is precisely what Blake predicted as his objective in the proem:

The Song of the Aged Mother which shook the heavens with wrath
Hearing the march of long resounding strong
heroic Verse
Marshall’d in order for the day of Intellectual
Battle
(I.3.1-3)

Clearly it is Blake's own "Verse" which impels the
Apocalypse, linking once again to Los, whose artistic
creations have become animated--his objective throughout
Night VIII. The same motif is strengthened by the
military context of Blake's epigram (Eph. 6.12), where
Paul urges the Christian to put on the armour of God.

Now the Apocalypse enters its third, calmer phase:
the awakening of Albion. In the region deserted by
Urizen, he regains his senses of touch, hearing, sight
and voice:

On this rock lay the faded head of the Eternal
Man
Enwrapped round with seeds of death pale cold
in sorrow & woe
He lifts the blue lamps of his Eyes & cries with
heavenly voice
Bowing his head over the consuming Universe he
cried

0 weakness & 0 weariness 0 war within my
members
(119.28-32)

The scene returns to Night II, where Albion relegated
authority to Urizen before succumbing to sleep. His
waking shifts the entire poem now into a wider context,
forcing the reader to reinterpret the preceding Nights where we have been tricked into learning a whole new mythic vocabulary to apply to what now turns out to be a dream. The most astonishing inversion of the poem is that its struggles are essentially unnecessary. Gradually it dawns on the reader that Albion is the only valid character in the poem, containing all the rest.

To be sure, this dimension has been implicit from the start through Blake's direct references to Albion stricken by the sea, and periodic flashbacks remembering a strange multiplicity within unity. Los as a child prophet recognizes that "In the Brain of Man we live, & in his circling Nerves" (I.11.15). The indefinite presence of Albion sleeping behind the narrative is gradually fleshed in, or particularized in Blake's sense of bestowing human form. But it is not until Albion wakes in the final Night to direct his own integration that this becomes clear. Albion is, in fact, the poem's only true persona. Strictly speaking, the poem is not simply his dream, but rather the song of Eno the Ancient Mother recounting his dream. This creates a final paradoxical twist: that both Fall and Apocalypse have already occurred.

The single most important factor for reversing the Fall is to wake Albion from his unnatural sleep,
forcing him—and the reader—to realize that he is dreaming the world, dreaming the poem. Natural sleep, on the other hand, is regarded as a necessary descent into Beulah’s moonlight, rising of its own accord back toward holistic mental flames. As we have seen, Blake here reproduces the pattern of the dream-vision poem: if the dream-world takes over, then sleep becomes demoniac possession.

Albion wakes to pain, the "narrow house" (i.e., tomb) of his atrophied perceptions:

    The Corn is turnd to thistles & the apples into poison
    The birds of song to murderous crows My joys to bitter groans
    The voices of children in my tent to cries of helpless infants
    And all exiled from the face of life & shine of morning
    In this dark world a narrow house I wander up & down (119.42-120.3)

The burden of regeneration now shifts back to Albion’s vital "Centre" (VIIA.87.3, VIII.110.18) which has been vainly searched for throughout the poem. His elegiac flashback associates him with the fallen world of the Zoas, who have repeatedly indulged in such flashbacks. Each Zoa has tried to usurp Albion’s authority, or what perhaps can best be defined as the will ("The Will cannot be violated" [VI.44.32]), by asserting that he is God. But Albion recognizes that health and sanity

40 Theomania strikes each of the Zoas in the following sequence: Urizen: I.12.23, III.42.19; Luvah: I.22.2; Los: IV.48.18; Tharmas: IV.50.14.
depend upon realigning his organs into a metabolic whole. His lament is followed by recanting his error: "Why sit I here & give up all my powers / To indolence to the night of death" (120.6-7: i.e., the Nights of the poem). Whether intentionally or not, Blake here echoes Urizen's condemnation of Ahania in Night III: "Shall the feminine indolent bliss. the indulgent self of weariness / The passive idle sleep the enormous night & darkness of Death / Set herself up to give laws to the active masculine virtue" (43.6-8). But whereas Urizen falsely blames the fallen world on woman, Albion recognizes his own loss of control and courageously refuses to revert back into sleep. Rather he simply looks at the fallen world, like Bunyan's Christian: "Yet will I look again into the morning" (120.10). Until now, each Zoa has only seen with his eye, not through it.

Albion proceeds to call each Zoa from sleep, combining memory (of their true function within him) and volition within the resuscitating powers of the human voice:

Come forth from slumbers of thy cold abstraction come forth Arise to Eternal births shake off thy cold repose Schoolmaster of souls great oppressor of change arise

This summons to Urizen derives from Jesus' command
to the dead Lazarus, as noted by Erdman: "Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth" (John 11. 43-4). The Lazarus myth is consistently applied throughout the poem to depict Albion's sleep; but here its application to Urizen again illustrates how the Fall independently reverberates within each Zoa. Urizen's sleep in chaos recapitulates Albion's; he is woken and guided by Albion's wiser vision. Later, Vala sleeps in her garden, and Luvah takes Albion's function as dream-guide to wake her and interpret her changes. In the same scene, Tharmas also re-enacts Albion's sleep: "my weary head is on the bed of death / For weeds of death have wrap'd around my limbs in the hoary deeps" (129.21-1), and Vala in turn takes on Albion's role, until the summons becomes a kind of incantation, capsulating in a single word the entire regenerative process: "Awake 0 Enion awake . . . / . . . awake awake . . . / Awake Tharmas awake awake" (130.16-18). But each character can tolerate only so much reality as his fallen state permits. Even Albion cannot enter the final consummation until he is completely joined with his Zoas and their Emanations:

And Urizen arose up with him walking thro the flames
To meet the Lord coming to Judgment but the flames repelled them
Still to the Rock

(124.2-4)

Urizen does not respond to the first summons until Albion exerts what Night VIII terms the Science of Wrath: "I will cast thee out / If thou repentest not & leave thee as a rotten branch to be burned" (120.45-6). Such severity treads perilously close to Albion's original casting of Luvah and Vala from consciousness (see III. 42.1-6), as well as each Zoa's rejection of his Emanation. But it is significant that Albion's relationship to Urizen here takes the same role as the Spectre of Urthona did toward Los in Night VIIA: "But if thou dost refuse Another body will be prepared / For me & thou annihilate evaporate & be no more" (85.46-86.1). This threat slashes through the self-deluding pity which the Zoas have indulged. By confronting each Zoa with the terrifying prospect of non-existence which first compelled Los to tear down the sun and moon, Albion forces them to make a life-or-death decision.

Urizen becomes quite poignant trapped in his grotesque dragon form, weeping for his lost humanity. Just as Albion upon waking returns to his original situation of Night II in order to rectify it, so Urizen returns to Night III where he had "look[ed] upon futurity darkning present joy" (37.10). Now he admits his error: "O that I had never . . . cast my view into futurity nor turn'd / My back darkning the present" (121.3-5). For the first time he abandons his Faustian construction
projects and turns his back upon the Void he fears so much, confronting the present:

Then Go O dark futurity I will cast thee forth from these
Heavens of my brain nor will I look upon futurity more
I cast futurity away & turn my back upon that void
Which I have made for lo futurity is in this moment
(121.12-15)

It is significant that Blake originally wrote remembrance in place of each futurity above, indicating that the past and future are interchangeable abstractions from which Urizen must free himself.

Note that Urizen uses the same rigorous method which Albion practises on him, "casting" away his spectral self. What we are seeing is "Self annihilation" before the Spectre of Urthona formulated the concept as such in the revised ending of Night VIIA (85.34).
By abandoning all attempts to impose a rational structure upon the other Zoas, the deeper dimension of Urizen's struggles throughout the poem emerges: he genuinely believes that the absence of repression will release total chaos. "Let Los self cursd / Rend down this fabric as a wall ruind & family extinct / Rage Orc Rage Tharmas Urizen no longer curbs your rage" (121.24-6).
Just as Los' rending of the sun and moon was an act of despair, so Urizen relinquishes control even though believing this means the collapse of all order. But only when he is faithful to his own despair does
the seemingly negative present revert back to pre-lapsarian time and space. As Albion rose from his rock, so Urizen rises from within rock:

- - - he shook his snows from off his Shoulders
& arose
As on a Pyramid of mist his white robes scattering
The fleecy white renewd he shook his aged mantles off
Into the fires Then glorious bright Exulting in
his joy
He sounding rose into the heavens in naked majesty
(121.27-31)

The movement is from age to youth, clothing to nakedness, endless cyclic descent to levitation. Urizen merges back into the centre of balance held by Albion's wakeful body; in turn, this releases his deadlock with his Emanation, and Ahania's outrushing flight off the printed margins into Nonentity reverts back to her masculine polarity, "as when a bubble rises up / On the surface of a lake" (121.34-5).

Immediately Albion's new awareness regulates each of his parts. Ahania is unable to endure the clarity of Urizen's change, and dies through "Excess of joy" (121.36). But her vitality remains dormant, as was Jesus' in a similar sepulchre at the beginning of Night IX. At this point the poem dips dangerously back toward the fallen cycle, for Urizen's Emanation has once again been torn from his side; "tears & howlings & despair" (121.41) begin from his daughters. But Albion now takes the function of the traditional dream-vision guide
which we have seen as a structural device in the Roman de la Rose, Chaucer, Langland and Bunyan: his knowledge of the wider context in which these deaths occur provides a corrective interpretation upon the main narrative to prevent the Fall from happening all over again. He explains that Christ is the prototype for "Self renewing Vision" (122.7), and that the unfallen seasonal cycle folds the female in winter sleep from which she emerges resurrected each spring. Actually the Emanations have pleaded all along for such an alternative rhythm and its positive "veil" (133.18) of moonlight to protect them from "consuming" in the furious clashes of male creative energy. One notes that the Apocalypse is possible only in distinct stages, from waking, despair, casting away error, and a keen recognition of the dream levels of phantaasma which have been taken for reality.

Now Urizen's intellectual gates definitively break, just as Ahania's heartgates have done:

I have Erred & my Error remains with me
What Chain encompasses in what Lock is the river of light confind
That issues forth in the morning by measure & the evening by carefulness
Where shall we take our stand to view the infinite & unbounded
Or where are human feet for Lo our eyes are in the heavens
(122.21-5)

42 See I.4.23-5, IV.56.7-10.
Here Urizen is thinking aloud, spontaneously, and we see his mind clarify before our eyes. First he recognizes the impossibility of schematizing the universe into any single rationalistic perspective (Blake probably pokes a dig at "Lock"[e] as well as Newton). Unlike his past endeavours, he does not formulate new laws to freeze the fluctuating "river of light," but nevertheless still supposes that his new perception of infinity must be based upon some single perspectivist self which confronts space as a detached object: "Where shall we take our stand." Such an attitude represents an improvement from his struggles particularly in Night VI to "on high attain a Void / Where self sustaining I may view all things beneath my feet" (72.23-4). But now, looking outward, his feet suddenly disappear--"Or where are human feet." He is unable to position himself in his formal compass stance, for his expanding senses literally tear the ground from under him, and he becomes what he beholds: infinity. "Lo our eyes are in the heavens" is meant quite literally, for his clarified sight escapes the confines of a three dimensional horizon,

43 Blake's excursion into astronomy in Night IX undoubtedly was intended as a corrective against Young's long praise of Newton's cosmos in Night IX of Night Thoughts. See Isabel St. John Bliss, Edward Young (N.Y., 1969), pp. 129-30.

44 Several critics have suggested that Urizen derives from horizon, which means "to limit."
mingling with its object to create innumerable but equally central perspectives or vortexes. In short, his eyes become stars, rather than construct them as in Night II. This is corroborated by the poem's coda, where "The Expanding Eyes of Man behold the depths of wondrous worlds / One Earth one sea beneath nor Erring Globes wander but Stars / Of fire" (138.25-7).

At the precise instant of Urizen's final epistemological recognition, the physical universe around him explodes. His words transform into actuality while he speaks. At the exact point that he states, "Our eyes are in the heavens," his expanding sight carries the universe with it, destroying further speech and the Cartesian system altogether. Whereas Los initiated the first phase of the Apocalypse by removing the false ganglion centres of sun and moon, Urizen initiates its fourth by tearing open the entire sidereal universe:

He ceasd. riven link from link the bursting Universe explodes
All things reversd flew from their centers rattling bones
To bones Join, shaking convulsd the shivering clay breathes
Each speck of dust to the Earths center nestles round & round
In pangs of an Eternal Birth
(122.26-30)
The violence of raw energy released from the poem's precise crystallizations of error becomes at this juncture enormous. All nature is caught up in shuddering labour pangs; for as *A Vision of the Last Judgment* states, "The Whole Creation Groans to be deliverd" (92). Animals return to human form; mountains hang suspended in air; the dead resurrect, each enacting the same strict justice which Albion and Urizen have committed upon themselves. Urizen's regeneration shatters his Mundane Shell, unleashing the stars so they speak to each other across the gulf like great thrumming whales. The throb of Luvah's heartbeat inside the egg intensifies, the destruction of the universe becoming equivalent to a chick bursting from its egg. The chick cannot know what lies outside his shell, but is compelled by despair at his constriction, though in fact it is himself who expands. All pain now is seen as labour, struggling to give birth to each miniature Albion contained within each atom. Everything simply bursts, exploding in Albion's bloodstream like crystals, turning inside out

Thus fulfilling the prophecy in Night I: "But the bright Sun was not as yet; he filling all the expanse / Slept as a bird in the blue shell that soon shall burst away" (12. 38-9). Blake's use of the platonic Mundane Egg here may have been influenced by Thomas Burnet's *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1681-90), which describes the earth as an egg which hatches when it is heated to a critical point during the Apocalypse. Burnet was the model for most eighteenth-century apocalyptic and 'tellurian' poetry, though criticized for his "enthusiasm."
in furious love. What the reader is experiencing, with all his senses, is the re-embodying of Albion, his scattered cells purging themselves of spectrality and migrating like birds or salmon back to their origin. But one must remember that this purgative aspect can only be known in retrospect, after the death of each single thing forces a new birth to emerge. Only Albion and Urizen know the wider significance at this stage, and even they are never quite certain what this incandescent release of energy will become. So far as the inhabitants of the Zoa worlds know, for all apparent purposes they might be back in Night I, and in the ultimate sense they still are.

Orc's revolutionary flames, meanwhile, continue to purge social injustice. Just as history "conglobes" in Night VIII into Blake's own England of 1804, so here each act of injustice imprints itself upon the human lineaments: "And every one of the dead appears as he had livd before" (122.41). Blake demands nothing less than total nakedness, stripping history, clothes, skin and bone down to an essential innocence. At this point his outrage is primarily socio-political, directed against tyranny and war, and seems at first a strict application of the Mosaic code, an eye for an eye. The murdered children of six thousand years rend the warrior who begs in vain for mercy; the wrongly condemned
prisoner ignores the judge's appeal for forgiveness, and dashes him underfoot (123.1-32). This is hardly the spirit of mutual compassion which Los displayed at the end of Night VIIA. Does not Blake still believe that every criminal was once an infant love, every harlot a virgin?

But we must realize several factors here. First, Albion (and the Spectre of Urthona before him) sets the precedent for strict differentiation of "error" from "sin" (120.48-9). We have seen how spectrous entities simply burst into self-consuming flame at the beginning of Night IX. The Apocalypse condenses history into single human forms who themselves are painfully compressed into bread and wine, which is then consumed by the Zoas to become the single whole, Albion (who in turn may well be a provisional state blending into the rest of the Eternals, the farthest context intimated by the poem). Whereas the previous seven Nights worked their way back aetiollogically through history to isolate a single Fall, the final two Nights\(^{46}\) carry history forward into single human forms who can only begin to forgive when each becomes a valid centre of perception, not merely a fragment. A kind of purgation through experience results,

\(^{46}\) Blake's practise here probably is indebted again to *Paradise Lost*, where Adam (equatable with Los) is given a condensed vision of future history in the final two books.
where murderers become their victims, and the judge exchanges place with the accused; in turn the victims re-enact the same basic error by tormenting their former oppressors. But in doing so each eventually must learn that he is interconnected throughout all humanity and indeed 'nonhuman' nature. Each must learn to forgive his own Urizen, as Los did at the end of Night VIIA. This dialectic is able to work because it reverts antithetical tension back into each opposite in a dynamic cycle of death and rebirth. Once again we see that nothing ever dies in the dream locus of The Four Zoas, but only changes into something else; either deteriorates or heals. When Mystery's tyrants are rent by their victims, they "reunite in pain" (123.10), like Milton's angels. Pain and joy, disintegration and integration alternate until the final 31 lines of the poem and in fact are never resolved. Finally, overt socio-political confrontation becomes more deeply internalized as Night IX progresses. The lost child who dwells at the core of every single entity is gradually recovered once history burns itself out into a single place and time.

Now Blake's most purely mythopoeic creations begin, the "rural work" (124.14) of plowing, sowing and harvesting. Urizen revives his true persona of farmer, sowing human seed into the rich earth of Urthona. His instruments
of war and profane science are melted down into rural implements; swords are beaten into plowshares. The sowing of seed is undoubtedly meant in a true sexual sense; for before and after the harvest Urizen sexually commingles with his Emanation, alternating the rhythm of moonlight "Rest before Labour" (Blake's own motto for the poem) with the sweat and fecundating sunlight of day. His work is a renewal of the Eternal pattern which has been operating covertly behind the scenes throughout the poem; for as one of the Eternals explains at the harvest feast, when man fell they "cast him like a seed into the Earth / Till times & spaces have passd over him duly every morn" (133.16-17).

Orc finally consumes himself, reverting back to Luvah and Vala who are both cast into their rightful bodily location, "the place of seed not in the brain or heart" (126.8). The ensuing 'Garden of Vala episode' is important because it illustrates what happens within each human seed, hence becomes a paradigm of regeneration. It has been consistently regarded by critics as a lovely but quite irrelevant interlude appearing as an inexplicable digression within the fiery Apocalypse. But far
from being irrelevant, it lies at the heart of the poem, a kind of slow-motion "pastoral fantasy" (to use David 47 Wagenknecht's phrase) dreamt by the sleepers of Beulah. Its context correlates with its content, for it occurs in mid-summer while the seeds are ripening and concludes when the harvest is ripe. In short, it constitutes a close examination of the vegetative process within the microcosmic seed. Its significance increases when we realize that this is precisely the same garden in which the original Fall occurred. As a dream-within-dream it replicates with lyric grace the entire poem. But now it purges the nightmarish aspects of the dream, since it is set within the wider perspective of the Apocalypse, a deliberate surcease from "the terrible confusion of the wracking universe" (126.23), where Luvah and Vala, Tharmas and Enion learn through joy how to reknit their interpersonal split. Each pair is reincarnated into childhood again, where the causes of the Fall are most articulate. In this sense, dreaming is seen as a return to childhood, for no time exists in the deeper levels of the psyche, and those archetypes which Blake traces originate here like the roots of mountains.


48 The Garden of Vala episode contains significant echoes from Songs of Innocence and of Experience and The Book of Thel, and may be considered as a commentary upon these earlier works. See my analysis in Chapter VI, pp. 450-51.
Vala's regeneration is given extended treatment undoubtedly because of her importance in the original Vala. She initially seduced Albion in her garden; now her error is recast in order for her to see truly into herself and differentiate phantasma from reality. The exquisite ecological unity of the garden acts as a catalyst to its inhabitants. Vala learns from the imaginative sun, not Urizen's chained one, pouring out a paean of light based upon Milton's "Morning Hymn at the Door of Thir Bower" (Paradise Lost V.153-208): "The birds adore the sun the beasts rise up & play in his beams / And every flower and every leaf rejoices in his light" (127.12-13ff.). Yet she must learn to accept mutability. At several points in the episode, despair threatens to shatter her crystal world once again. Vala fears she is merely a "phantom" (127.21), passing away like the grass--and in a provisional sense, she is precisely that. But Luvah, in a cloud, acts as the traditional dream-guide to interpret her changes; in turn, Vala guides Tharmas and Enion. The human form is seen as eternal, surviving the entropic fluctuations of nature: "Yon Sun shall wax old & decay but thou shalt ever flourish / The fruit shall ripen & fall down & the flowers consume away / But thou shalt still survive" (127.25-7).
Vala's re-embodiment into a visionary nature is crucial because the other Zoas depend upon her garden to sustain their labours. The first four lines of her hymn to the sun illustrate the subtlety of her transformation:

Rise up O Sun most glorious minister & light of day
Flow on ye gentle airs & bear the voice of my rejoicing
Wave freshly clear waters flowing around the tender grass
And thou sweet smelling ground put forth thy life in fruits & flowers

(128.4-7)

Each element here becomes purified as it realigns into the ecological whole represented by Albion: fire (Luvah), air (Urizen), water (Tharmas), and earth (Urthona). A distinctly Franciscan strain in Blake is given free lyrical expression, following from the Songs through The Book of Thel, Visions of the Daughters of Albion and many passages in Milton: "I am not here alone my flocks you are my brethren / And you birds that sing & adorn the sky you are my sisters" (128.13-14). A single line crystalizes Vala's renewed vision: "O how delicious are the grapes flourishing in the Sun" (128.17). Transience here contains eternity in a single minute particular. We must turn to a passage in Night VII A to recognize the momentous reversion this means: Los mourning over Enitharmon's withered humanity laments, "How art thou Shrunk thy grapes that burst in summers vast Excess / Shut up in little purple
covering faintly bud & die" (81.28-9).

The subtle dreamlike condensations of time taking place here are especially evident when Vala falls asleep, at noon (128.27) as did Albion in his original Fall (VIIA. 83.8); but now she wakes into mature womanhood. Her dream has been of Luvah, and he has impregnated her simply by laying his hand upon her head--an extraordinary change from the copulative frenzies of the previous Nights, where sex is so often the pounding of the demented upon prison walls. When she wakes, childhood has vanished with her flocks, and she now enters the difficult adolescent period which previously engendered so much strife throughout the poem. Now she stops by a river and strips to gaze at her new sexual form: but instead of becoming narcissistically enamoured of her own beauty, as does Milton's Eve (upon which this scene is modelled), "her Eyes were opend to the world of waters" (129.16) and she views her own reflection melting into Tharmas who is the water which holds that reflection. This represents a delicate mergence of the different worlds of two Zoas, for Tharmas' overt sexuality brings with it a weight of historic sorrow, being not yet reconciled to his Emanation. Thus Tharmas and Enion are reborn as children within Vala's "pleasant house" (130.3), playing in the doorway beneath trees (perhaps a dream image for
the vagina). But birth here is a soft transition, not bloody and ejective.

From this point on, Vala takes Enion's previous maternal role, and we return to the domestic situation of Night I where Tharmas and Enion were locked in a disastrous confrontation. Again the possibility for a recurrent Fall looms, for Enion continues to ignore Tharmas. The basic conflict between each Zoa and Emanation, which has been given fullest narrative scope in Los and Enitharmon, is squarely confronted:

He [Tharmas] said 0 Vala I am sick & all this
garden of Pleasure
Swims like a dream before my eyes but the sweet
smelling Fruit
Revives me to new deaths I fade even like a
water lily
In the suns heat till in the night on the couch
of Enion
I drink new life & feel the breath of sleeping
Enion
But in the morning she arises to avoid my Eyes
Then my loins fade & in the house I sit me down
& weep

(131.1-7, my italics)

The danger signal here is how the dream-garden threatens to shatter into nightmare. Blake's solution is not a final resolution at this point (for Tharmas and Enion can regain unity only within Albion), as simply extenuating "Eternal Childhood . . . / In infant sorrow & joy alternate" (131.16-17). Tharmas and Enion are forced to learn the rigors of Eternity through play, sunlight through moonlight. The effectiveness of the whole
'interlude' is seen only when the scene switches back to the human harvest. With Urizen's definitive "Times are Ended" (131.31), he exhales Luvah and Vala "In all their ancient innocence" (131.35)—a superb oxymoron combining age and youth, memory and timelessness. The rather unusual image of exhalation is amplified by its use in Night VIIA, where Enitharmon "mild Entrancd breathd forth upon the wind / The spectrous dead" (90.40-1). Breath becomes birth, the oracular powers of the human voice. It is a perfect image for how each Zoa becomes embodied (rather than "embalmed") within another, partaking of Urizen's regenerated intellect and then exhaled into each Zoa's distinctive timbre.

Enion's downward plunge rises at last, bringing with her man's lost emanative field of visionary nature. There is nothing quite like this exultation expressed anywhere else in English literature, though Blake does echo the Song of Solomon and Milton:

For Lo the winter melted away upon the distant hills
And all the black mould sings. She speaks to her infant race her milk
Descends down on the sand. the thirsty sand drinks & rejoices

49 Blake's description (below) of nature reanimating in the Apocalypse alludes to Paradise Lost's fifth day of Creation: "At once came forth whatever creeps the ground, / Insect or Worme; those wav'd thir limber fans / For wings, and smallest Lineaments exact" (VII.475-77; see 449-504). In both accounts animals burst from the earth; but by changing the context from the Creation to the Apocalypse, Blake implies that the only valid Creation is attained at rebirth.
Wondering to behold the Emmet the Grasshopper
the jointed worm
The roots shoot thick thro the solid rocks
bursting their way
They cry out in joys of existence. the broad
stems
Rear on the mountains stem after stem the scaly
newt creeps
From the stone & the armed fly springs from the
rocky crevice
The spider. The bat burst from the hardend slime
crying
To one another What are we & whence is our
joy & delight
(132.23-32)

The imagery of Enion's past laments turns here into
a burden of praise. Vegetative nature becomes purified,
which we saw the mere beginnings of when Los' "vegetable"
hands destroyed the sun and moon. Actually Enion here
enacts her own final prophecy in Night VIII, where the
Eternal Man gathers his scattered body into the raw
matter of poetry itself:

As the seed waits Eagerly watching for its
flower & fruit
Anxious its little soul looks out into the clear
expanse
To see if hungry winds are abroad with their
invisible army
So Man looks out in tree & herb & fish & bird
& beast
Collecting up the scatterd portions of his
immortal body
Into the Elemental forms of every thing that grows
(110.3-8)

The most **Elemental** of these forms is the poem itself.

Tharmas and Enion merge completely at last, and
in two words Blake capsulates his dialectic of regeneration:
"Joy . . . humanizing" (132.36). We have now returned
to the beginning of the poem, but with the conflict resolved: Enion and Tharmas once again look into and through each other's eyes to a sinless unity.

Now the final stage of the Apocalypse, the human harvest, is given full narrative amplification. Just as the seeds split through suffering and grow upward toward the harsh light of Eternity, so they now commingle through pain, even "the Nations threshed out & the stars threshed from their husks" (134.1). The "winnowing wind furious" (134.20) which has been a constant presence throughout the poem now becomes beneficial, winnowing chaff from the corn. The Vintage enacts the same purification through selectivity (from lees rather than chaff) and condensation. Luvah's unfallen persona is only able to function when the "Vintage is ripe" (135.5), and the grapes painfully crushed into wine. We get a marvelous picture of a Bacchanalian, drunken Christ who lurches up from the Last Supper, causing his crown of thorns to fall from his head--no longer necessary (135.21-3). But once again the narrative dips dangerously close to a disruption of equilibrium between the Zoas. Luvah's sons and daughters carry joy to an unhealthy
extreme, and "Catch the Shrieks in cups of gold" (137.1), a phrase connecting to the doomed cycle of 'The Mental Traveller' as well as to Rahab binding down children in Night VIII to castrate their senses (105.31-53). As a corrective, Luvah is "put for dung on the ground" (137.24). In this homely metaphor, Blake literally re-cycles his Zoas back into the earth, just as the whole regenerative process comes to rest in fresh baked bread and home-brewed wine.

We have already noted how an alternation between suffering and joy occurs in Night VIII as a result of the rapprochement between Los and Enitharmon in Night VIIA. This tension forces, like labour pangs, the Apocalypse to emerge. But it is particularly clear again toward the end of Night IX, where the fallen and eternal cycles intensify to a pitch from which each persona hurtles back into Albion's body only in his own distinctive rhythm, his own individual decision. Blake deliberately alternates these negative and positive planes.

50 The following list of negative and positive perspectives throughout the final part of Night IX illustrates how they explicitly alternate. They can, of course, be traced back through Night VIII, and even to the beginning of the poem if we regard the later revisions showing Eternity hovering over the main narrative as part of the same pattern, which indeed they are.

Negative: 134.1-17; 135.34-39; 136.5-15; 136.21-27; 136.40-137.6; 137.15-24; 137.28-31; 137.35-138.7; 138.11-15.
Positive: 134.18-135.33; 136.1-4; 136.16-20; 136.
28-29; 137.7-15; 137.25-27; 137.32-34; 138.7-11; 138.
16-end of poem.

For example, the Human Odours sing "O trembling joy
excess of joy is like Excess of grief" (136.3); then
Blake switches back to spectrous suffering, "But in the
Wine presses is wailing terror & despair" (136.5).
Regenerated nature dancing around the winepress alternates
with "tears of the grapes the death sweat of the Cluster"
(137.3). This oscillation intensifies until both polarities
emerge from the ending of the poem as equally co-existent
attitudes toward a single reality. Thus man's suffering
is never resolved, as the final negative reference
makes clear:

Nature in darkness groans
And Men are bound to sullen contemplations in
the night
Restless they turn on beds of sorrow, in their
inmost brain
Feeling the crushing Wheels they rise they write
the bitter words
Of stern Philosophy & knead the bread of knowledge
with tears & groans
(138.11-15)

We are here reinstated back into the fallen world of
the Zoas, where Urizen writes his iron books and his
daughters knead the "bread of sorrow" (VIIA.79.28-37).

51 Blake probably also gives his final observation
here ("sullen contemplations in the night") about the
poet who greatly stimulated his own poem, Edward Young.
It is significant that his main emphasis is not satire
but compassion.
In fact the unfallen Eternal cycle exists simultaneously with the fallen one, as the ending of Night I illustrates:

Terrific ragd the Eternal Wheels of intellect
terrific ragd
The living creatures of the wheels in the Wars of Eternal life
But perverse rolld the wheels of Urizen & Luvah back reversd
Downwards & outwards consuming in the wars of Eternal death
(20.12-15)

I return to my original observation at the beginning of this chapter, that Night IX is contained within the previous Nights, buried within "the ruins of the Universe" (IX.118.5), and that, conversely, the fallen world of the first eight Nights co-exists with the final Apocalypse. I have attempted to prove this by extensive cross-references from Night IX into the previous poem, indicating how the same motifs are present. A radical shift of perspective back to Albion's wakeful presence causes the Fall to be perceived in a new light, which literally releases the inherent holiness within every single object throughout the poem. By Night IX, each object stands clarified, shining in its history in order to become divested of that history. All the symbols of the Apocalypse are scattered throughout the poem as the scattered body of Albion; but just as Albion exists as an organic unity behind the fragmented text, so each symbol needs to become appropriated into its ultimate context, joining Albion outside the dream.
This technical device needs further clarification. Throughout the earlier Nights, each presumably fallen entity and object has become subverted into a parody of its Eternal essence. A brief résumé of some of these subversions will make this clear. The fallen seasonal cycle is an incomplete manifestation of the Eternal rhythm of spring sowing, summer growth, autumn harvest and winter sleep as portrayed in Night IX. The corporeal wars of the poem are a perversion of the pure mental and esthetic wars of Eternity, again as portrayed in Night IX. The profane Mills of Satan in Night II are a parody of Eden's mills used for grinding bread, and should indeed be reserved for this purpose. The weaving of Spectres by the Emanations to try to limit the Fall is a perversion of their activity in the unfallen state, when they weave their own winter cocoons. The "fleshly bread & nervous wine" (I.12.44) of fallen sexuality eaten in the profane marriage feast of Night I must become the truly sacramental feast of bread and wine served in Night IX. Urizen's plowing of the Mundane Shell with his golden harrow and Plow of Ages in Night II should be utilized instead for creative "rural work." The deaths and resurrections occurring throughout the poem must find their resolution in unfallen winter's "night of Time" (IX.138.19) and its douce mort. The flickering apocalyptic landscape surrounding particularly
Orc now transforms into actual Apocalypse. The blood pouring from the wounded world of the first eight Nights, murderously released in war, becomes an apocalyptic agent in Night IX when everything flows back into Albion's veins. The casting-away of each Zoa's Emanation is corrected to become the casting-away of error; and the seductive lies of the lyric transform into genuine lyrical beauty. Finally, Albion's nightmare is a prolongation of what instead should be a temporary and refreshing dream for the sleepers of Beulah.

So *The Four Zoas* has two endings: one negative or fallen, the other positive or eternal. Actually each is not a conclusion at all, but rather flows outward as a dynamic process. Albion's dream ends only with the final 31 lines of the poem when the Zoas work as a symbiotic whole, like four members of a string quartet. Now the cycle is cleansed, and the universe perceived at once imminent and eminent. The seasons continue to flow in their never-ending, joyous poem; children are born; the lions of raw amoral energy "converse with Man" (138.38). Man's eyes fuse with what they perceive, the stars; and the sun itself "Each morning like a New born Man issues with songs & Joy" (138.28) to replace the temporal sun which Los tore down at the beginning. Man returns to pastoral innocence, ministering to the growing harvest once again, which is the fallen world
still unable to abandon egocentricity in favour of an intrinsically perfect universe inundating both within and without. The poem begins, actually, with its ending, looking outward with a deep clear gaze. Blake has already moved into his later two epics; The Four Zoas has prepared him for yet further explorations. But now Blake is no longer "the Spectre Los" (139.5), but the mature prophet Urthona:

Urthona rises from the ruinous walls
In all his ancient strength to form the golden armour of science
For intellectual War The war of swords departed now
The dark Religions are departed & sweet Science reigns

(139.7-10)
VI. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE FOUR ZOAS TO BLAKE'S OTHER WORK

The Four Zoas occupies a significant position in Blake's work. It stands halfway between the earlier struggles of the Lambeth books to articulate a mythopoetry and the consummate artistry of his final relief-etched epics, Milton and Jerusalem. Chronologically, then, it is both synthesizing yet formative, and would be of enormous biographical importance even if it were, as consistently criticized, an esthetic failure. Thematically, it expresses an emergence from perhaps the bleakest agonia ever articulated in Western literature into an equally vivid radiance. Though such a pilgrimage of spiritual death followed by rebirth occurs to many serious artists, rarely have the two polarities been so quintessentially fused in a single work. Just as the Apocalypse of Night IX originates from the darkness of the preceding Nights which in turn subsume Blake's earlier work, so the extensive manuscript revisions focus backward, like light bending around a universe to return to its source. In the same manner the later two epics still carry the fresh loam of their parent poem, expanding fragmentary images and ideas in the
pictographic sense of enlarging miniatures, reversing Blake's despised journeyman work for Hayley during the Felpham period.

Considering the vast range of Blake's poetry in terms of style and theme, perhaps its most astonishing characteristic remains its intercoherence. George Quasha's observation is pertinent: "The violent birthlike experience of apocalypse he embodied in a language structure which from our vantage point resembles organic evolution: a cumulative, temporally linear, unpredictably irregular progression toward more complex forms." Like separate species within the flow of evolution, Blake's poems interlink, implying, demanding or explicitly dovetailing into each other in a basically chronological pattern, so that there is considerable justification to consider his oeuvre as a single composite poem which The Four Zoas symbolizes by the "Human form Divine" (IX.126.10). Yet this is not to deny autonomy to the individual poems. Blake constantly refers to the necessity to retain minute particularity of each separate organ and lineament of the human form if it is to function within a whole. My present chapter will examine the relationship of The Four Zoas to Blake's other work, both to further

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1 "Orc as a Fiery Paradigm," in Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic, p. 265.
understand this great "rough basement" and to shed light upon the rest of Blake's career. My basic critical principle remains that each poem must first be considered on an exegetical level as a separate unity, however much it evolves from or toward extraneous work: only when this is accomplished may we examine each poem as part of a totality.

The Four Zoas develops and extends seven broad categories in relation to Blake's other work, as follows. (1) Tropes. Images and symbols from Blake's previous work achieve their full resonance first in The Four Zoas, to be amplified in the later two epics. (2) Personae. The characters of the early work, especially the Lambeth books, emerge into a fully interrelated dramatis personae first in The Four Zoas. (3) Locus. The darkness of the epic's nine Nights and its devastated landscape is prefigured in Blake's earlier work. (4) Dreams. Blake's treatment of dreams, sleep and a central sick dreamer begins as early as Poetical Sketches and continues throughout his work to form his most important structural metaphor. (5) "The torments of Love & Jealousy" (subtitle,

2 J. 2.36.58. Blake refers here to the English language, but it seems particularly apposite to describe The Four Zoas.

3 These first two points have been recognized from the beginning of The Four Zoas criticism, so my study shall consider only those aspects which have been neglected. My primary emphasis will be to assess the relationship between The Four Zoas and Blake's early work, which has been critically ignored for the most part.
The Four Zoas. Jealousy is the central psychological dimension explored in Blake's first epic, but it develops from his earlier work, particularly Songs of Experience. (6) Apocalypse. A thrust toward mimetically creating an Apocalypse reoccurs throughout Blake's work, including many of the individual lyrics; Night IX must be considered within this context. (7) Dual levels. A temporal perspective integrating with an eternal one occurs as structural device throughout all of Blake's work. By considering its other manifestations we better understand its function in The Four Zoas.
The major criticism directed against *The Four Zoas* is that its Apocalypse and regeneration motifs are segregated from its portrayal of the Fall, causing the poem to collapse. But this view ignores the fact that several of Blake's previous works also contain a stylistic and thematic transformation, ending radically different than they begin. *Poetical Sketches*, though normally disregarded as part of Blake's 'canon' because it was not engraved, is a prototype of Blake's future work in two major respects.

First, its modellings upon a variety of literary styles—including the Bible, Elizabethan lyric, gothic, Graveyard school, ballad, children's verse such as Watts', Spencer, Shakespeare, Milton, Thompson, Chatterton and others—amounts to a comprehensive survey and sifting of the main English literary tradition. In the prophetic works, particularly *The Four Zoas*, this command of different styles will take the form of dramatic voice. Blake begins by unquestioningly assimilating a wide variety of literary sources, taking delight in his mastery of these styles as befits a young poet; but by the time of *The Four Zoas*, this delight has given way to Los' anguish in his poetic task, and the tracing
back of literary history has turned into mistrust, satire, or respectful revision.

Secondly, Poetical Sketches progresses from simple lyrics of conventional neo-classical sensibility—the seasons, lost love, the pastoral—but gradually enters a more dense, "enthusiastic" and innovative diction paralleled by a new awareness of despair, at least partially caused by the deteriorating political climate. Now the book makes no overt claim at being sequential, and so far as I know no study has yet considered it in this light: but the difference in style, structure and theme between the early and later parts of the book is striking, ending in three prose poems which are the first authentic anticipation of his later prophetic work. The provisional nature of Blake's juvenilia is implicit within the early poems, where the night of experience looms behind the fragile cadences: "Soon, full soon / Dost thou withdraw; then the wolf rages wide, / And the lion glares thro' the dun forest" ('To the Evening Star,' 10-12): this is precisely what happens on a progressively

4 See Erdman, Blake: Prophet Against Empire, pp. 15-19. "The progression of the volume then is a kind of weather chart of Blake's ripening years."

5 The problem arises in that we cannot assume that Blake was responsible for the organization, nor that the ordering of the poem is in any certain sense chronological. Michael Phillips suggests, in conversation, that it is roughly chronological and intentional on the part of the poet, though this cannot be proved.
massive scale in *Tiriel*, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, the Lambeth books and, most comprehensively, *The Four Zoas*. In 'King Edward the Third' ambition is described as "a little creeping root that grows in ditches" (4.11); in *The Four Zoas*, Enion is seen as "a root growing in hell" (I.4.39), part of a vegetative complex which swathes the world. Blake first uses the image of the couch of death in the prose poem of that title, which is not so melodramatically unrealistic as critics view it, but connects rather to Blake's future adult despair. He will develop this image of the death couch in his illustrations for Gray, Blair and Young, and uses it repeatedly in *The Four Zoas* as the specific area where the Fall occurs in Beulah. Even such a lyric as "How

6 One might compare, for example, 'The Couch of Death' s "I seem to walk through a dark valley, far from the light of day, alone and comfortless! The damps of death fall thick upon me! Horrors stare me in the face! I look behind, there is no returning; Death follows after me; I walk in regions of Death, where no tree is; without a lantern to direct my steps" (Erdman, p. 432) with Blake's mature description of his metaphysical predicament in a letter to Butts from Felpham, 11 Sept. 1801: "I labour incessantly & accomplish not one half of what I intend, because my Abstract folly hurries me often away while I am at work, carrying me over Mountains & Vallies which are not Real in a Land of Abstraction where Spectres of the Dead wander." In both cases Blake is alluding to the Valley of the Shadow of Death in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. By the time of *The Four Zoas*, Urizen does possess a lantern (ball of flame, the fallen sun) to lighten his way through the treeless desert, replaced in *Jerusalem* by Los' lantern in the frontispiece illumination.
sweet I roamed from field to field" begins with pastoral delight and ends with a mature cognizance of the artist trapped in a "golden cage" (12) which, on one level, may be interpreted as the increasing burden of the poetic vocation, where he is separated from "liberty" (16) just as is Albion in The Four Zoas.

The final three prose poems (plus the two manuscript fragments written during the same period, "then She bore Pale desire" and "woe cried the muse") may be interpreted, then, as a partial and experimental abandonment of the eighteenth-century metrical lyric, resolving the contradiction of 'To the Muses' which protests, in consummate neo-classical diction, that it is impossible to write such verse anymore. Instead Blake turns to intensely subjective imagery which reflects more accurately the current historical and social conditions. His suspicion of the limitations of the polished lyric later develops into an almost total rejection of it.

7 I take this esthetic interpretation rather than a more conventional reading based on romantic love ending in "Matrimony's Golden cage" of An Island in the Moon (12.27) because Phoebus, or Apollo, is the classical inspirer of poetry, who "fir'd my vocal rage" and proceeds to "hear me sing" (13) in the cage. Song for Blake always refers to poetry. The cage of "How sweet I roamed" connects to Tiriel, where Har sings "in the great cage" (3.21), his songs already turned senile because they exclude the external world, i.e., the "desart" through which Tiriel wanders and which will become the main landscape of The Four Zoas.
AN ISLAND IN THE MOON (1784)

Blake's first attempt at a cyclic structure, the manuscript fragment "then She bore Pale desire," asserts "in the Smoke of Cities. . . the man['s] face is . . . a mask unto his heart" (85-6). This theme of urban and urbane duplicity is the mainspring behind the merriment of An Island in the Moon: "their tongues went in question & answer, but their thoughts were otherwise employed" (1). An Island is particularly relevant to The Four Zoas, for its rupture of genuine communication, its welter of conflicting perspectives, abrupt transitions and erroneous opinions records on a colloquial and realistic level what the later epic does on a submerged and symbolic. To be sure, its "great confusion & disorder" (10) here results in jollity, with the Swiftian (and even more obviously, Sterne's Shandean) edge blunted by laughter. Yet the presence of violence lurks beneath the mirth: the allusions to the plague sweeping through England (13-14), which Blake develops realistically in The French Revolution and America; the Antiquarian refraining

8 A guide to Blake's future punctuation is provided by An Island, where it is based upon acutely observed and transcribed colloquial speech patterns. For the oral basis of Blake's verse, see Frosch, The Awakening of Albion, pp. 113, 120-23.
from thrashing a citizen because "he was bigger than I" (2); Mrs. Nannicantipot desiring to attack "the passionate wretch" Mr. Huffcap the preacher, who in turn "would kick the bottom of the Pulpit out, with Passion, would tear off the sleeve of his Gown and set his wig on fire & throw it at the people . . . cry & stamp & kick & sweat" (4); the macabre realism of the medical scenes sadistically relished by Jack Tearguts (Quid's song "When old corruption first begun" [6-7] anticipates Blake's later descriptions of the Female Will binding down the child and operating upon his senses, e.g., VIII.105. 31-53); and Quid the Cynic's impulse to dash Obtuse Angle through his chair in fury at his satire of matrimony (may we surmise that Quid is recently married to Catherine?). "This Quid (cries out Miss Gittipen) always spoils good company in this manner & its a shame" (12, deleted lines).

Now the most provocative way Quid disrupts the fun (and perhaps the manuscript itself) is through Blake's insertion toward the end of An Island of three poignant Songs of Innocence. To find these crystalline lyrics within such a sardonic context is startling, and the reaction of the audience to 'Holy Thursday' is significant: "After this they all sat silent for a quarter of an hour" (14). This silence constitutes a
commentary, for the three songs cut like a razor through the "good humour" (14) and, more pointedly, through the reader who has been lulled into false security. The merriment in Quid's parlor, it is implied, becomes as artificial as the Vale of Har in Tiriel where songs are sung and games played with no relevance to the outside world. A further implication is that Blake is not content with caricature, but requires a more mythopoeic form, where the conflict of these self-proclaimed philosophers will jell into the purified dialectic of Songs of Innocence and of Experience. That three poems from Songs of Innocence originate in this satiric and naturalistic context (whether they were written then or later inserted) implies that the whole of the Songs has a deeper critically acute function than is usually assumed. One observes once again that a Blake manuscript ends with an idiomatic tone and content radically different from its beginning and middle, reaching outward (like the endings of The Four Zoas and Milton) toward future work which was probably already in the process of being written. That the manuscript of An Island ends incomplete we may simply attribute to an unfortunate loss of pages. But in a symbolic sense it points to the possibility

\[9\] I am indebted to Michael Phillips for pointing out, in conversation, the parallel between the ending of An Island and the revisions of The Four Zoas.
that a work may, if not be outright abandoned, end naturally in an 'inconclusive' state integral to that work. By abruptly grinding to a halt, it has reached its implicit conclusion which is a kind of anti-conclusion, a rejection of the poetic and philosophical stance with which it began. In this sense, the work does not end (in either a complete or incomplete form), but rather dovetails into the next work in progress.

Finally, it is significant that the concluding page 10 of An Island describes Quid/Blake's somewhat quixotic plans for engraving, illuminating and marketing future poetry, a resolve repeated in more realistic terms in the revised ending to Night VIIA of The Four Zoas. Quid's last words are, "I will fall into such a passion Ill hollow and stamp and frighten all the People there [i.e., at such gatherings as the present] & show them what truth is." It is no accident that his project smacks of Mr. Huffcap's behavior at the pulpit, and that his prophetic works will carry the violent search for truth to an extreme, indeed disrupting the party.
SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF EXPERIENCE (1784-1805)

The first important characteristic to note about Songs of Innocence is that the child's world of innocence parallels Blake's unfallen level of Eternity in The Four Zoas. To use the terminology of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, the child's perceptions are cleansed, so he sees nature as it is, infinite. His flexible senses contract and expand like the Eternals; through play he participates on a minor scale in the artistic wars of Eternity; wherever he is is the "center" so long as he does not consider it as such and start to draw existence toward him in Cartesian vortexes, as does Urizen.

Songs of Innocence depicts a pastoral world peopled with sheep, birds, grasshoppers who laugh, and clouds who speak. Its children are animistic; everything they perceive is alive. Now this is parallel with unfallen man as Blake envisions him in The Four Zoas:

10 Actually Songs of Innocence should be considered after Tiriel and The Book of Thel, since it was printed in 1789, and Songs of Innocence and of Experience after The French Revolution; but since the writing of these poems occurred 1784-1805, the present sequence is used.

11 See FZ VIIA.90.11, and the extended development of this image in Milton I.29.4-26.
A Rock a Cloud a Mountain
Were not now Vocal as in Climes of happy Eternity
Where the lamb replies to the infant voice &
the lion to the man of years
Giving them sweet instructions Where the Cloud
the River & the Field
Talk with the husbandman & shepherd
(VI.71.4-8)

In Blake, every man recapitulates the history of his race. The child's animism in Songs of Innocence is equivalent to primitive cultures as described in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive.

(11)

But here too imaginative innocence carries the seed of its own destruction:

Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects; thus began Priesthood ... Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.

(11)

Another characteristic of innocence replicated in Blake's Apocalypse is its sensuality in the broadest meaning, including synaesthesia. In 'Infant Joy,' the two-day-old child has no name partly because it is

12 The first evidence of this commingling of the senses in Blake would be the marvelous line in 'To the Evening Star' of Poetical Sketches: "speak silence with thine glimmering eyes" (9).
not yet frozen into a single sex, corresponding to Jerusalem's "Man in the Resurrection changes his Sexual Garments at will" (61.51). The illumination to 'Spring' shows a naked child hugging and kissing a lamb: "Come and lick / My white neck . . . / Let me kiss / Your soft face" (21-3, 25-6). This parallels unfallen Eternity, where

> every Minute Particular is Holy:  
> Embraces are Cominglings: from the Head even to the Feet;  
> And not a pompous High Priest entering by a Secret Place.  
> (J. 69.42-4)

Each of the Zoas must return to this "ancient innocence" (IX.131.35) in order to recover his lost unity within an Eternal family. Surely this is the significance of the revised ending of Night VIIA, where even Urizen becomes an infant crying in Los' arms in "infant innocence" (90.45). In fact the ending of VIIA inverts Blake's 'Introduction' to Songs of Innocence, where a naked child directs a grown man's (as the illumination makes clear) undisciplined "Piping down the valleys wild" (1) and inspires him to begin conscious artistic discipline, specifically Blake's etching procedure. The abandoning of his pipe, then of "songs of happy cheer" (10), ultimately constitutes Blake's transcendence of the lyric; the piper's final immobility, the vanishing of the voice from his sight, and his
"stain[ing] the water clear" (18) evolves into Los' burden in The Four Zoas. But in Night VI A, instead of a winged child counselling these transformations, it is the hideous Spectre of Urthona who does so—a radical re-evaluation of the motivating force of poetry. And just as the piper and child join in plate 31 of Songs of Experience, the child perched on the piper's shoulders, both gazing calmly toward the reader as a single unit, so Los and his Spectre embrace to begin work together.

An important use of the Songs is made in the 'Garden of Vala episode' of Night IX, where Vala, Tharmas and Enion learn the rigours of Eden through the relaxed animism and intimacy of childhood, tending sheep like the shepherd throughout Songs of Innocence. In fact the whole of 'The Lamb' is capsulated in Vala's query here to her flocks, "Can you converse with a pure soul that seeketh for her maker / You answer not" (127.34-5). Again, the final stanza of 'Spring' is echoed in her "But you do lick my feet / And let me touch your wooley backs follow me as I sing" (128.1-2). Vala's exclamation, "O how delicious are the grapes flourishing in the Sun" (128.17) might be an embodiment of the many grapes illustrating the illuminations to Songs of Innocence; but in The Four Zoas this simple image has taken on profound implications, expanding into the winepress where the Human Grapes are crushed (through experience)
into sacramental wine. If we want to be schematic, it is probable that this "lower Paradise" (128.30) symbolizes childhood, whereas the upper level of Beulah contains a more explicit sexuality. Vala disrobes and looks at her naked reflection, where it blends into Tharmas' sea: a situation replicated by Lyca in 'The Little Girl Lost,' who dreams (she is asleep) a dance of humanized leopards and tygers around her, while her parents remain "Tired and woe-begone, / Hoarse with making moan ... / Trac[ing] the desart ways" (5-6, 8) in 'The Little Girl Found'—just as suffering humanity remains locked in a blind cycle of time throughout Night IX in spite of the Apocalypse. Lyca's parents falsely interpret their daughter as "the fancied image" in a dream; but a "vision" (46) leads them to a kind of millennial paradise where the family is at last reunited, as again in the coda of Night IX. Finally, Enion and Tharmas enact in the Garden of Vala the same childish games of sexual turbulations which many of the Songs of Experience also portray. We see, therefore, that the whole of the Songs is echoed in Night IX, serving a specific function to renovate the shattered senses of three Zoas and help mend their sexual wars:

Thus in Eternal Childhood straying among Vala's flocks
In infant sorrow & joy alternate Enion & Tharmas playd

(131.16-17)
In this manner Blake develops a deliberate homology between childhood and renovated man as envisioned in *The Four Zoas*. But the second major characteristic of innocence in the *Songs* is that it occurs in a state of erosion. In *The Four Zoas*, the flashbacks recovering a dim memory of an arcadian Golden Age, the final Apocalypse and the revisions depicting an upper level of Eternity all reach back to the prototype established in *Songs of Innocence*; but the bulk of the poem corresponds to *Songs of Experience*. The season is spring in innocence. Even the chimney-sweeper, "tho' the morning was cold" (23), warms himself through a dream in which he becomes "naked & white" (17) and "rise[s] upon clouds" (18) like the inspiring voice to the piper, as Urizen will rise rejuvenated in Night IX "in naked majesty / In radiant Youth" (121.31-2). In experience, however, nakedness becomes vulnerability, for

> their sun does never shine.
> And their fields are bleak & bare.
> And their ways are fill'd with thorns.
> It is eternal winter there.
> ('Holy Thursday,' 9-12)

Experience stealthily encroaches upon the "Temporal 13 Habitation" of childhood. *Songs of Experience* is filled with children with haggard adult faces. "Your spring

13 This phrase is from Milton (30.29), describing Beulah and connecting to childhood.
& your day are wasted in play" (7), charges the nurse of 'Nurse's Song,' disillusioned by her own passage into adulthood. Eventually Urizen's winter completely destroys spring. Just as the Emanations are forced to the Margins of Nonentity in The Four Zoas, so here are the children. The schoolboy's protest becomes poignantly urgent:

O! father & mother, if buds are nip'd,
And blossoms blown away,
And if the tender plants are strip'd
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and cares dismay,

How shall the summer arise in joy
Or the summer fruits appear

('The School Boy,' 21-7)

To have no childhood at all is worse than to have it prematurely shattered, for no sustaining memory of lost pastoral unity can guide one to any higher state. The schoolboy is sinking into what The Four Zoas terms the state of Ulro; inversions cover him until, like the mass of men, he is not even aware of his tragedy but accepts his prison as the real world. When this occurs, he in turn will inflict the same distortion upon his own children. The Four Zoas attributes much of the blame for this miseducation upon Urizen, the "Schoolmaster of souls" (IX.120.21). Even the chimneysweep is present in Blake's first epic in attenuated form:

& on the Land children are sold to trades
Of dire necessity still laboring day & night
till all
Their life extinct they took the spectre form
in dark despair

(VIIB.95.26-8)
Songs of Innocence is a doomed world, ringed by wild beasts which become increasingly difficult to control, cruel or indifferent giants, the ominous "darkening Green" of the final line of 'The Ecchoing Green.' That it survives at all is due only to the intervention of 'guardians': the nurse, shepherd, "old folk" of 'The Ecchoing Green,' angels (who in 'Night' translate both sheep and lions bodily into heaven when they get too rambunctious), and most of all, mothers. These prevent the total eclipse of innocence in the same way that a limit of opacity and contraction is established by The Four Zoas. The father in Songs of Innocence, however, is either absent, as to the 'Little Boy Lost,' or cruel, selling the chimneysweep when his mother dies. Consequently God takes the paternal role, as in 'Little Boy Found,' 'The Little Black Boy,' and for the chimneysweep who is told by an angel "he'd have God for his father" (20). The question, then, of 'On Anothers Sorrow'--

Can a father see his child,
Weep, nor be with sorrow fill'd?
(7-8)

Only one-third of Songs of Innocence expresses pure joy without any explicit minor tones. The rest all contain negative elements: suffering, slavery, prejudice, old age, social oppression, night, lost parents.

See Joseph Wickstead, Blake's Innocence and Experience (1928), pp. 1-5.
must be answered, yes. The poem's own "No no never can it be" (11) is desperate irrationalism in the face of evidence to the contrary.

So the mother must remain the final guardian. She is the central lap in 'The Ecchoing Green' around which her children circle like birds around a nest, the tree of life sheltering the little black boy, or succoring through lullaby in 'A Cradle Song.' Her maternal calm, strength and intuitive wisdom provide the vital "space" (FZ.I.9.9-18) in which innocence may flourish long enough at least to generate anguish when obliterated. A passage in Milton connects her with Beulah:

But Beulah to its inhabitants appears within each district,
As a beloved infant in his mother's bosom, round encircled
With arms of love & pity & sweet compassion.
(II.11.10-12)

This implies that the attraction of sex for the adult male is to return to infancy, the haven of the mother's arms when the world had not yet fallen to pieces. The most mature lyric in Songs of Innocence, 'Night,' actually is a description of Beulah from the child's perspective. But already enough time has passed that the child must "seek" (4) his natural home, foreshadowing the Nights of The Four Zoas. The tragic dilemma of guardianship (and each poem in innocence possesses a hierarchy sheltering each other) is that it can as easily convey oppression
as compassion. The infant's protracted helplessness, requiring dependence upon the grown-up fallen world, quickly becomes man's willing submission to authority and Urizen's doctrine.

Just as the child is siphoned of his energy by a corrupt society, so he in turn absorbs strength from his mother until she fades, as does Enion in The Four Zoas. Her solace is but temporary, another characteristic of Beulah. Again we find that the question of the final poem in Songs of Innocence,

Can a mother sit and hear
An infant groan an infant tear
(9-10)

must be answered by Songs of Experience, yes:

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
('London,' 13-16)

The syphilis referred to here constitutes a kind of original sin: even before birth the foetus is deformed, literally in that penicillin was not used to counteract venereal disease in Blake's time, so the harlot's baby was often born congenitally blind or malformed.

In fact the mother's own blind love and generative power which causes the cycle of births to grind senselessly onward becomes the explicit source of suffering. 'To Tirzah' contains the rudimentary cycle of 'The Mental Traveller':

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Thou Mother of my Mortal part
With cruelty didst mould my Heart,
And with false self-deceiving tears,
Didst bind my Nostrils Eyes & Ears.
(9-12)

Yet simply to reject one's birth is not to achieve any solution. Even if one remains childless like Blake and his wife personally, this but localizes the dilemma.

Not only is the child threatened by a malevolent exterior; an interior evil grows "in the Human Brain" ('The Human Abstract,' 24). Once again Blake is forced toward the internalization of the prophetic books; the mental tree will be fully rooted in Night V11A of The Four Zoas. One stanza omitted from 'A Cradle Song' undoubtedly because it belongs more to experience shows how intermingled both states are:

O the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep
When thy little heart does wake
Then the dreadful lightnings break.

(Erdman, p. 459, 13-16)

Hence peace can only "beguile" (12), and the murmurings of the mother to "Weave thy brows an infant crown" (6) becomes the weaving of form by Enitharmon, a crown of thorns. The nurse's charge that winter and night are wasted in "disguise" ('Nurse's Song,' 8) is proved accurate. The invisible night-worm attacks the deepest centre of the child:

My mother groan'd! my father wept.
Into the dangerous world I leapt:
Helpless, naked, piping loud;
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.
Struggling in my fathers hands:
Striving against my swaddling bands:
Bound and weary I thought best
To sulk upon my mothers breast.
('Infant Sorrow')

The Fall here is simply human birth. The fiend in the cloud and the piping child contrast to the inspiring child in a cloud and the happy piper in innocence's 'Introduction.' The baby is born head-first: that is, Urizen falls first and farthest. Not swaddling-clothes and the manger of 'A Cradle Song' greet him but what we now term the Oedipus complex, auto-eroticism and neurosis. The child's contamination even during birth, childhood and adolescence is amplified by Blake's treatment of Orc in The Four Zoas, who is bound by his father, Los; in their own infancy Los and Enitharmon likewise "sulk upon her [Enion's] breast" (I.6,8). In innocence, the world is the child's body indistinguishable from a soul; nature is humanized, as in the coda to Night IX. But in experience this body has become diseased, and in self-defense one retreats from the world, an activity all the fallen Zoas exemplify. Truly Tharmas' observation to Enion in Night I is substantiated:

The infant joy is beautiful but its anatomy
Horrible Ghast & Deadly
(4.31-2)

At least nine of the poems of Songs of Experience deal with sexual awakening, with disastrous results. Each is a variation on a theme of repression and jealousy.
It is not sex per se that awakens one to the nightmare of experience, but "free Love with bondage bound" ('Earth's Answer,' 25), "the Youth pined away with desire, / And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow" ('Ah! Sun-Flower,' 5-6), the Garden of Love with "Thou shalt not. writ over the door" ('The Garden of Love,' 6). This motif is developed further in Visions of the Daughters of Albion and the notebook lyrics, receiving its fullest analysis in "The torments of Love & Jealousy" of The Four Zoas.

Furthermore, it is significant that Blake's treatment of sexual jealousy in Songs of Experience often occurs within the context of a dream. We have already considered 'The Little Girl Lost' and 'The Little Girl Found' s use of dreams to convey Lyca's apocalyptic freedom contrasted with her parent's sexual fears. Once again in 'The Angel' a girl dreams she is a "maiden Queen" (i.e., virgin) hiding from a sexual angel (who will invert into a devil in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell), arming herself like Thel against sexual experience until she wakes to find herself trapped in vegetation (as the illumination indicates), her youth gone and the naked winged boy of innocence's 'Introduction' spurned rather than taken on her shoulders. This dreamlike condensation of time reoccurs in The French Revolution and Europe, and again in the multiple dream levels of The Four Zoas where any erroneous attitude is portrayed.
as a dream-state capturing its dreamer. In 'A Dream' of *Songs of Innocence*, the lost emmet "Troubled wilderd & forlorn / Dark benighted travel-worn" (5-6), wandering within a dream, becomes all mankind in *The Four Zoas*.

Yet along with this negative use of dream, Blake also portrays dream as a positive vision of Apocalypse, again paralleling the visions of the Daughters of Beulah in *The Four Zoas*. The chimneysweep dreams he has been released from the "coffin" (14) of his restricted life (compare the "narrow house" [120.3] of Albion in Night IX from which he is resurrected) to dance and sing in the sun, rising upon clouds to become as the boy of innocence's 'Introduction.' The accompanying illumination (pl.12) shows a haloed figure bending over the chimneysweep to raise him, an allusion to the Lazarus myth used throughout *The Four Zoas*. By the time of the 'Introduction' to *Songs of Experience*, this freedom of the dream has come to grip the earth itself as a "slumberous mass" (15) which the bard attempts to wake, just as does Los in the epic. The earth answers she cannot wake because she is "Prison'd on watry shore" by "Starry Jealousy" ('Earth's Answer,' 6-7) -- prefiguring Thamas' sea of

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16 Hazard Adam's remark, in *William Blake: A Reading of the Shorter Poems* (Seattle, 1963, p. 209), that "Dreams in innocence are of experience, while dreams in experience are of innocence," is correct, illustrating how the dream motif joins the two parts of the work together.
time and space, as well as Urizen's presence behind human jealousy. But at this stage Blake is still optimistic about an impending Apocalypse, as the stars in the illumination to experience's 'Introduction' make clear—it is early dawn:

In futurity  
I prophetic see,  
That the earth from sleep,  
(Grave the sentence deep)  

Shall arise and seek  
For her maker meek:  
And the desert wild  
Become a garden mild.  
('The Little Girl Lost,' 1-8)

We need not belabour the obvious connections here to Los engraving his lines in copperplate, and the desert of The Four Zoas turned into a garden in Night IX. The most important fact is that many of these lyrics point toward or mimetically create an Apocalypse as the only valid solution to the children's suffering, and this is often achieved through the medium of the dream.

17 Urizen is implied once again in 'A Little Girl Lost,' where he is the "father white" (25) who condemns love as a crime.

18 This is particularly explicit in the apocalyptic conclusions of 'The Little Black Boy,' 'The Chimney Sweeper,' 'The Little Boy Found,' 'A Cradle Song,' 'Night' (with its humanized animals), 'On Another's Sorrow,' 'The Little Girl Found,' and 'The Little Vagabond' (a founder of the new church of good English ale, with God and the Devil kissing in the final line—certainly prefiguring The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, as well as the ending of Night VIIA).
Two bibliographic facts about the Songs need to be emphasized. First, Songs of Innocence was issued separately as a book complete in itself, though the same was virtually never done for Songs of Experience which is printed with the former work. This implies that innocence as a spiritual state may exist autonomously, and does not necessarily require the state of experience. Second, the illuminated plates of the Songs were placed in a different sequence each time that Blake issued both books. What implications may we draw from this in relationship to The Four Zoas? I have indicated how Blake's first epic deliberately draws upon Songs of Innocence through specific 'borrowed passages' and allusions to describe the unfallen state, and that the post-lapsarian state corresponds to Songs of Experience. My reading of The Four Zoas argued that the Apocalypse remains implicit throughout the entire poem: this parallels the fact that Songs of Innocence was issued separately. In a real sense, man is not fallen in The Four Zoas except insofar as he perpetuates this dream-illusion; his task is to discover that he retains Eternity within his extant human form, just as the play, songs and naive faith of the children in Songs of Innocence

19 For a list of the different orderings, see Erdman, The Illuminated Blake (Garden City, N.Y., 1974), pp. 69-70, 96-7.
are not necessarily destroyed by the critique of experience. Furthermore, that Blake changes the sequence of the Songs so often suggests that sequence is important to him here and that it is mercurial, existing in many different variants, emphatically not depending upon any fixed text. The implication for the manuscript poem The Four Zoas, the most fluid of all Blake's work in this basic textual sense, would likewise be that no single demarcated sequence is meant to apply. It is possible, for example, that the presence of two Night VIIIs did not bother Blake in the least, but are simultaneous ways of reaching the Apocalypse. The Four Zoas inverts the Songs, beginning with experience (Vala), and attaining innocence (The Four Zoas). It is almost certain that Blake had in mind to counterbalance Songs of Innocence with Songs of Experience when he began the former work. In the same manner, Vala necessitates its completion and dynamic polarity in the later revised poem: yet, as with the Songs, neither negates the other but rather co-exists, together creating yet a third pattern, the subsequent work which rises naturally from this fruitful conjunction.

20 This is further emphasized in the manuscript notebook, which shows that the poems of Songs of Experience went through painful revisions, and that many lyrics were excluded though they are still superb. It is worth noting that Gilchrist regarded the Songs as "unfinished" (op. cit., p. 73), but considered this to be part of their naive beauty, like the deliberate flaws in a Chinese vase.
Indeed, the most profound significance of the Songs may be this contrapuntal structure, used again in Blake's future work. Each section not only defines but also intensifies the other, creating a kind of ascesis whereby innocence and experience become more vivid because mirrored by a contrary. Each is like the separate prong of a tuning fork oscillating sound waves back and forth until Blake reaches the rarified frequencies of the prophetic books. If we take Songs of Innocence and of Experience as a whole, as they were clearly meant when bound together, the same dialectic applies toward Blake's later work. Because the Songs reach such a zenith of melodic simplicity, it follows that they freed Blake to achieve an equal purity of density, symbolic complexity and poetic dissonance. The very perfection of the Songs marked the end of their usefulness to him as a structural form. The bitterness of Songs of Experience grows until it expands from the short lyric into the cadential line where, Blake sensed, the only cure could be found. His task after the Songs becomes increasingly to make darkness conscious, rather than to articulate light.
In Tiriel for the first time Blake establishes the idiom of his prophetic books. Its directional symbolism, use of esoteric proper nouns, tortured syntax, apocalyptic imagery, mutations of personae into animal and inanimate forms, and despair debouch into The Four Zoas. In An Island, each character exists at odds with each other, society at large and with himself, revealing a mental vacuum disguised only by elaborate masks. Tiriel intensifies this split of man from man and from his own psyche. Rather than separate psychological faculties into professions or specialities which each character in An Island displays to define a self, here Blake links his fallen world genealogically to Tiriel, who in turn gradually uncovers his own descent from Har at the conclusion. Part of the narrative thrust is to decipher the familial relationships of the various personae, who at first deny their heredity. This leads, as in The

21 See esp. 4.50-60, where Tiriel fighting with Ijim passes through the forms of a lion, tiger, river, thundercloud, serpent, toad, newt, rock and poisonous shrub. This device, perhaps influenced by Ovid's Metamorphosis, reaches its greatest development in The Four Zoas, where it is linked to the flowing mutations of the dream.
Four Zoas, to situations of conflict causing abrupt recognition. But such self-knowledge tends to further fragmentation: Tiriel ends by cursing his entire family, four of his senses and finally the fifth, Heva (symbolizing touch/sex). As a consequence he becomes incapacitated, like Albion in The Four Zoas. The desert through which he wanders is caused by epistemological distortion. "Blind to the pleasures of the sight & deaf to warbling birds" (4.28), he naturally perceives the world as a wasteland. "My Journey is oer rocks & mountains. not in pleasant vales / I must not sleep nor rest because of madness & dismay" (3.25-6). This desert will become the landscape of Blake's epic, a darkness of the occluded senses. Yet it cannot be restored through the decadent paradise of the Vale of Har, despite the pastoral aspects of this dimension which The Book of Thel sheds further light on as a state of childhood innocence becoming stultified when it is over-prolonged, dependent upon memory and refusing to integrate with experience. We may justly draw an analogy here to the cause of the Fall developed by The Four Zoas: Beulah becomes malignant only when its delights cause one to forget Eternity because of the similarity between Beulah and Eden.

Just as Poetical Sketches, An Island and The Book of Thel end in a new note which inverts to satirize the previous work, causing it to be interpreted from
a different perspective, so **Tiriel** also concludes in a manner different from its substantive text. Tiriel achieves his quest for self-knowledge by recognizing Har as "weak mistaken father of a lawless race" (8.7). What has seemed to be, throughout the poem to this juncture, a non- or inhuman world (a true island in the moon) suddenly shifts into focus as the everyday world which Everyman inhabits:

Why is one law given to the lion & the patient Ox
And why men bound beneath the heavens in a reptile form
A worm of sixty winters creeping on the dusky ground
The child springs from the womb. the father ready stands to form
The infant head while the mother idle plays with her dog on her couch
The young bosom is cold for lack of mothers nourishment & milk
Is cut off from the weeping mouth with difficulty & pain
The little lids are lifted & the little nostrils opend
The father forms a whip to rouze the sluggish senses to act
And scourges off all youthful fancies from the newborn man
Then walks the weak infant in sorrow compelled to number footsteps
Upon the sand. &c
(8.9-20)

Several implications rise from this impressive long passage (which I have not quoted in full). It connects the previous murky narrative into explicit social commentary, suggesting how (but not "why") the internecine warfare and devastated landscape of the main poem has occurred: through the epistemological distortions
inflicted upon childhood. Whereas here Blake is almost clinically analytical toward infancy and adolescence, in the *Songs* he explored the same problem by allowing the children to speak for themselves, practically becoming a child in the mimetic sense which Los of *The Four Zoas* realizes as the poet's gift and curse. Combined with this discovery is a new concern with the history of man, particularly in terms of scriptural reference, which Blake will amplify in the historical scope of his mature prophetic works.

Three separate focuses are thus present in *Tiriel*: the desperate, incoherent, ranting world of the first 333 lines; an examination of childhood epistemology as the reason such conflict seems to be caused; and a synopsis of scriptural history as the vehicle for this corruption (8.21-8). The poem's conclusion is interrogative, submitted not primarily to Har (who disappears at this point in Blake's work), but rather to Blake himself as the question he must answer in his subsequent work. It remains to be added that this conclusion, representing the anti-conclusion to which I referred earlier, displays an idiom markedly different from the rest of the poem, in a different script with another pen, which leads Erdman to suspect that it was written two or three years later "and may represent an attempt to improve an unsatisfactory ending, or
to bring the poem into line with Blake's style and expression of the period 1799-03." The similarity with the manuscript of *The Four Zoas* is evident: both are revised at a later date in a manner radically different from the original draft. But just as the revisions in *The Four Zoas* serve to re-interpret the entire poem from a positive perspective, so here Blake's intent is to re-interpret the despair of his earlier text in the positive light of specific questions. What is most impressive about the ending of *Tiriel* is its graphic lucidity, and I suggest that the final section 8 represents a Last Judgment upon Har, *Tiriel* and mankind. That this 'negative *Apocalypse* causes immediate extinction to *Tiriel* later develops into the "consuming" of *Spectres* in Night IX. The positive implication is that Blake has used dramatic personae to discover a fundamentally epistemological area which requires further exploration. Despair becomes Blake's main agent for regeneration.


23 See David Ketterer, *New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature* (1974), pp. 7-8, 13ff. Ketterer emphasizes the demoniac and chaotic aspects of the classical apocalypse. In his view, Blake's *Apocalypse* (he considers only *America*) questions the fundamental epistemological assumptions of the human situation; the moment of juxtaposition between the new and old modes of thought destroys the former completely. The Apocalypse is reached through this destruction which at first seems wholly negative. My reading of Night IX supports this interpretation.
The Book of Thel combines the tensile fragility of the Songs with (in Pt. IV) the symbolism and tortured imagery of The Four Zoas. Like Blake's epic it is transitional in both style and theme. Thel is like a child skipping rope: she tentatively steps into experience, but it proves too much for her and she retreats. But her respite is only temporary, for in Visions of the Daughters of Albion she is reincarnated as Oothoon who does pluck the sexual flower, with the disastrous consequences prophesied by the voice from the Pit.

Thel's twofold quest--Why do we die? and What use am I?--is a continuation of the embarrassing child questions of the Songs. To know the maker of the Lamb is to know when the Lamb was unmade: one follows him into the jaws of the Tyger. In 'A Little Boy Lost' of Songs of Experience, when a child asks how he can love God more than a bird picking up crumbs at his door, he is burned to death for blasphemy. The Book of Thel implies that both death and sex are taboos trapping the child in perverted definitions. So Thel looks for answers first in the natural world. The poem describes, on one level, how a child first becomes aware of death.
She leaves her "sunny flocks" (I.1) of innocence to enter the "secret air" (I.2) of incipient experience, realizing that the "children of the Spring" (I.7; i.e., of Songs of Innocence) are "born but to smile & fall" (I.7). Significantly, innocence has begun to disintegrate around her "like dreams of infants" (I.10) because of her dawning self-awareness, penetrating observation and the sexual changes of puberty within her own body. Its dream-world has become restricted; she can no longer join with abandon the games of the other daughters of the Seraphim. That process of etiolation has set in which will consume Blake's future Emanations in The Four Zoas, and it is noteworthy that Thel seeks escape through intensifying her dream: "Ah! gentle may I lay me down, and gentle rest my head. / And gentle sleep the sleep of death" (I.12-13). But since her senses are still cleansed, she views the imaginative forms of nature in human form. One by one the Lily, Cloud, Clod and Worm appear before her to answer her query, as to the child-hero in fairytale quests. Each insists, however, that her question is formulated nonsensically, hence cannot receive a satisfactory answer. Death is a human illusion not shared by Eternity—as expressed

24 Thel is "mistress of the Vales of Har" (2.1), an ominous sign linking to Tiriel, where Har and Heva "in the night like infants slept delighted with infant dreams" (2.9).
also in The Four Zoas (1.22.25-6); and in order for Thel to understand she must awaken from her dream, however beautiful it might appear on the surface.

Hence Thel's despair at mutability unearths a deeper reason for her dilemma—unfulfilled loneliness:

But I feed not the little flowers: I hear the warbling birds,
But I feed not the warbling birds. they fly and seek their food:
But Thel delights in these no more because I fade away,
And all. shall say, without a use this shining woman livd.

(3.19-22)

In fact her feeling of uselessness results because she hasn't a "partner" (31). She still remains a virgin; whereas the Lily is clothed, fed and comforted by God; the Cloud by day and Dew by night court and wed, "link'd in a golden band, and never part" (3.15); the Worm is married to God (or perhaps God to the Matron Clay?), bound "with nuptial bands" and "cherish'd" (5.2, 10); and the Clay suckles her baby Worm.

Which is to say: each natural thing receives only by giving. "Every thing that lives, / Lives not alone, nor for itself" (3.26-7). To give is to give oneself wholly to dying—what The Four Zoas terms "Self annihilation" (VIIA.85.34). Only after one annihilates one's "spectrous" self does one discover there is no such thing as death, there is only dying, which is a conjunct
of artistic creation, as Los and Enitharmon affirm in Night VIII. The Lily must be literally deflowered, melted, eaten by lambs and scatter her perfume; the Cloud likewise must "scatter its bright beauty" (2.15), descend each night and "pass away" (3.10)--only then does it rise "to tenfold life, to love, to peace, and raptures holy" (3.11). The Worm is absolute mute nakedness, bruised by feet, reduced to protoplasmic need--only then can it be succored by God and Clay. In imaginative nature these rhythmic cycles occur continuously, open-ending into each other. The Book of Thel is deeply ecological, based upon acute observation of nature, referring to the oxygen/carbon dioxide, hydrological, carbon and food cycles.

So the only answer to Thel's quest is to become food. The Worm symbolizes natural death (the corpse) and sex (the penis). The mystery of the universe and of the Incarnation centers in the Worm who is loved by God but, like the Lamb of Songs of Innocence, remains unselconscious of its innocence: "But how this is sweet maid, I know not, and I cannot know, / I ponder, and I

Blake's emphasis upon 'ecology' not because this is one of contemporary man's most relevant concerns, but because it exists as a valid dimension in Blake, which so far as I know has gone unrecognized. Blake's poetry is truly prophetic. I suggest that just as he anticipated Freud and Jung in many respects, so future criticism will uncover many large dimensions which remain totally ignored now because we do not yet have any formal concepts to apply to them. This particularly applies to his analysis of the dreaming psyche.
cannot ponder, yet I live and love" (4.5-6). By accepting its deification in Pt. III, Thel is in a sense impregnated, consequently descends toward human birth in Pt. IV. This uterine descent is but a continuation of her downward movement at the beginning of the poem. She must lose her seraphic beauty, her birthright to the Vale of Har. Only by passing into such dissolution will she be able to pass through it to discover her as yet unknown male counterpart or Zoa. Only by being broken can she gain genuine wholeness ("Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?" [6.20] probably refers to the hymen). The former three sections reveal that this death is essentially but another transmutation of form such as we see in the Lily/Light, Cloud/Dew, and Worm/Clay. It is only the ultimate or rather most vivid symbol of change occurring every instant. As in The Four Zoas, nothing ever dies; it only changes.

But the terrible question from the Pit, originating from Thel's own graveplot (i.e., herself if she accepts experience), shows how impenetrable experience is, allowing none of the above insights to filter through. A human by definition seems severed from the upper world of the Lily, Cloud and even Worm, for he possesses an underworld where "the fibrous roots / Of every heart on earth infixes deep its restless twists" (6.3-4). This is the Pit referred to in the Motto, "Does the Eagle
know what is in the pit?" Thel now represents Chaucer's eagle, and her voice from the grave the mole. Significantly, the Pit is cut off from the sun; hence she cannot perceive the final great cycle in the chain of being, solar energy transformed into organic life into the paradox of 'inorganic life' back into light. Her fear of the earth element is fear of death-in-life. The very fact that she must confront her own grave is a striking difference to the unity of nature, the free love gift of one's body to the weeping Worm (see 3.25-7). As Hegel said somewhere, man is the animal who stores his dead.

The voice from the Pit, then, is not death per se but rather post-lapsarian existence. At the beginning of the poem, Thel asks why things die; at the end, she asks why things live. The result is stalemate:

Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction?  
Or the glistning Eye to the poison of a smile!  
Why are Eyelids stord with arrows ready drawn,  
Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie?  
Or an Eye of gifts & graces, show'ring fruits & coined gold!  
Why a Tongue impress'd with honey from every wind?  
Why an Ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in?  
Why a Nostril wide inhaling terror trembling & affright  
Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy!  
Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?  
(6.11-20)

Here each sense tears the living flux into chunks, then petrifies around a separate self. This describes
Urizen's origin, who in The Book of Urizen attempts to find "a joy without pain, / ... a solid without fluctuation" (4.10-11). It is meant to contrast with Thel's images of transience in the second stanza of Pt. I: lotus, children, rainbow, cloud, reflection, shadows, dream, smile, dove's voice, daylight, music. Because Thel does not accept flux as does the Lily and its companions, the distorted epistemology here is inevitable. Indeed, we might say that the child's innocent statement in Songs of Innocence's 'Spring,' "Little Lamb / Here I am" (19-20), has become this horror of "ravening" selfhood. In this respect The Four Zoas inverts The Book of Thel, as it does the Songs. The final part IV, added one to two years later like the ending of Tiriel and sharing Tiriel's thematic emphasis and style, corresponds to the first eight Nights. The difference of proportion here indicates how difficult it will be to enter the Pit yet emerge once again, transforming it into "the Valley of Vision" (J.22.9).

It is small wonder that Thel flees. Her final retreat is not cowardice (as so many critics maintain), but the automatic reflex of a hand jerking away from flame. The implication is that if the human embryo could choose its birth (thelo is the Greek word for will), the human race would have been extinct long ago.
But the former three-quarters of the poem remains a haunting reminder that a humanized nature is the normal condition of Eternity which somehow must be reached through descent into Pt. IV. If Thel is to break the deadlock of her childhood turned Limbo and achieve a higher "organized innocence," she must give without the slightest promise of return, love without the remotest chance of being loved (as do the Emanations in The Four Zoas), or write poetry without any surity that it will endure or even be understood by one's own generation. The final illumination illustrating Pt. IV (pl.6) gives us our final parallel to The Four Zoas, for it depicts a reined serpent ridden by three naked children, surely a symbol for organized innocence, and used once again on manuscript page 4 of The Four Zoas where a winged cupid rides a serpent. The implication for Thel is that if she enters the Pit—or in the terminology of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, embraces the flames of hell—it too will dissolve into a dream, and she will become the girl riding the phallic serpent. The

26 Written on the left margin of page 93 of The Four Zoas: "Unorganiz'd Innocence, an Impossibility. / Innocence dwells with Wisdom but never with ignorance." Most critics take this authorial note as unrelated to the poem, but it is a distinction Blake develops in Night IX, where the program for regeneration is established: "then in stern repentence / They must renew their brightness & their disorganizd functions / Again reorganize till they resume the image of the human" (126. 13-15).
corresponding implication for The Four Zoas is that post-lapsarian suffering is based upon an illusory self, and once one sees this clearly that self dissolves, turning the pastoral innocence which had previously seemed but a lost dream into actuality.

Certainly Blake realized these implications. Perched on the precipice of the prophetic books, The Book of Thel is his farewell to the delicate beauty of the lyric before he descends to harrow hell. Thel flees with a shriek, but she is, after all, an Emanation belonging in Beulah and will sustain Blake in his own future struggle to traverse the Pit. The voice from the Pit, answering question with question, indicates finally that the poet can never personally know whether he is "useful" or not. All he can do is become naked.
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION (1790)

As the only one of Blake's prophetic works to be conventionally printed, The French Revolution is directed to the general public using a simplified idiom so it could be related to the unfolding political events on the Continent. Hence Erdman emphasizes it as "the most available key to the historical symbolism of such later books as Europe and The Four Zoas." Much of its imagery occurs again in Blake's first epic for explicit psychological resonance rather than historical. For example, the imagery describing the political prisoners of the Bastille later characterizes the fallen world of The Four Zoas: chains, darkness, plagues, skeletons, iron mask (used for the Spectre), extremes of cold and heat, slime, mutilation, hallucinations, madness, and animal emblems such as snake, scorpion, wolf, worm, vulture and spider. The Bastille containing these horrors expands into the platonic cavern of the fallen body. The "monsters of worlds unknown" which "swim around . . . watching to be deliverd" (9.158-9) achieve full particularity in the dream atmosphere of The Four Zoas. And the "spectres of religious men weeping" (14.274)

27 Blake: Prophet Against Empire, p. 165.
develop into the figure of the Spectre who first becomes a persona in his own right in Blake's epic.

But it is a mistake to regard the 'historical prophecies' as solely concerned with political references, for even this most explicit documentary contains numerous allusions to the human psyche as the primary participant of an underlying drama. Blake's emphasis remains epistemological. Hence his epic cosmogony of the world as a single human form is given its first articulation in *The French Revolution*:

Is the body diseas'd when the members are healthful? can the man be bound in sorrow
Whose ev'ry function is fill'd with its fiery desire? can the soul whose brain and heart
Cast their rivers in equal tides thro' the great Paradise, languish because the feet Hands, head, bosom, and parts of love, follow their high breathing joy?

...for fire delights in its form.
But go, merciless man! enter into the infinite labyrinth of another's brain
Ere thou measure the circle that he shall run. Go, thou cold recluse, into the fires
Of another's high flaming rich bosom, and return unconsum'd, and write laws.
If thou canst not do this, doubt thy theories, learn to consider all men as thy equals, Thy brethren, and not as thy foot or thy hand, unless thou first fearest to hurt them.

Much of the myth of *The Four Zoas* is contained obliquely within this passage. The difference is that here only the intellect is damaged, i.e., the French aristocracy. But by the time of *The Four Zoas* this early prototype
of the Fall implicates all parts of the body, including the prophetic imagination (Los) who writes the poem (prefigured in "the man confin'd for a writing prophetic" [2.26-9] in the Bastille). At this stage in the French revolution Blake still retains faith in the staminal virtues of the common man, his "fire delight[ing] in its form" emphasized as artistic exuberance in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. The Duke of Orleans urges the nobility to enter the "bosum" of his peasantry to undergo a fiery purgation, terms which The Four Zoas amplifies through the heart-gates of Enitharmon and the sympathetic assimilation of each Zoa into Albion. But the "cold recluse" evolves into Urizen, who resists the program here recommended. It will take at least ten years before Orc recognizes that "flames are for growth not consuming" 10.179).

The reason such renovation must take so long, initiated through artistic struggle rather than political, is submitted by The French Revolution as the intransigeance of the King/intellect to permit the health of his countrymen/body. It is significant that when Louis XVI's government calls for rocks to fall on them, as do the damned in Revelation 26.15-16, they counteract the "Consumation" which could result by retreating inward: "Hide in the bones! Sit obscured in the hollow scull" (5.75). In this manner the exterior revolution becomes
internalized as disease, linking to Blake's earlier analysis of the senses gradually hardening and the child retreating from a malevolent world. Blake describes this process more vividly through the Lambeth books, until by the time of *The Four Zoas* the arena of action has become totally intra-psychic, as Los realizes: "in the Brain of Man we live, & in his circling Nerves" (I.11.15).

The major metaphor The French Revolution uses to convey this internalization is, again, sleep and dreams. Louis XVI wakes from diseased sleep at the beginning of the poem, and sinks back into it in more consolidated form at the conclusion. This sleep does not simply refer to a specific abdication of his duty, but achieves mythic proportions as all recorded history: "the ancient dawn calls us / To awaken from slumbers of five thousand years. I awake, but my soul is in dreams" (1.7-8).

That Blake was intrigued by this idea is evidenced by its recurrence in Europe, which we will consider later. Orleans urges man to counteract the nightmare of history through positive vision: "Fear not visions, fear not dreams" (10.180). And a precognitive dream also appears to the Archbishop of Paris, "sighing . . . like the voice of the grasshopper" (8.136). This rhythm of sleep and dream develops into Blake's basic structural metaphor, used extensively in *The Four Zoas*, and it is significant that Louis undergoes a process of dream
condensation, becoming all the "kings of the nations" (700) and finally humanity itself: "Shall man lay his faded head down on the rock / Of eternity, where the eternal lion and eagle remain to devour?" (6.66-7).

These two lines prefigure the situation of Blake's epic, where the Eternal Man lies on the same rock, devoured by the beasts of his own psyche.

Blake predicts the imminent waking of this Man in terms which strikingly anticipate Night IX:

Till dawn, till morning, till the breaking of clouds, and swelling of winds, and the universal voice,
Till man raise his darken'd limbs out of the caves of night, his eyes and his heart Expand.

(11.217-19)

A political Apocalypse continues with the priest blessing the plow (as Luvah's plow is restored to its proper function in Night IX), the shepherd returning to his harvest (as does Tharmas in Night IX), the instruments of war converted into peace, and "the happy earth sing[ing] its course" (12.236: as in Night IX, the sun "issues with songs & Joy / Calling the Plowman to his Labour & the Shepherd to his rest" [138.27-8]).

Again paralleling The Four Zoas, this Apocalypse is accompanied by trumpets causing a premature resurrection: "And the bottoms of the world were open'd, and the graves of arch-angels unseal'd" (16.301). The French
Revolution initiates its Apocalypse through the Assembly of Paris, "a council of ardors seated in clouds, bending over the cities of men, / And over the armies of strife" (14.264-5). But in The Four Zoas the Council of God provides the same panoramic perspective, bending over Los' furnaces. The same metaphor is used for totally different symbolic purposes: the first, historical; the second, spiritual and esthetic. Between the two lies a long and difficult struggle.

VISIONS OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ALBION (1791-92)

We have seen that a motif of sexual frustration, jealousy and chastity gathers force in Songs of Experience to contaminate the children of Songs of Innocence. Part of the horror of the voice from the Pit in The Book of Thel is that Thel's desire to participate in the sensual nature around her becomes balked if she descends into experience. "Why are Eyelids stord with arrows ready drawn, / Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie?" (6.12-13) inverts the classical metaphor of the lover's eye shooting arrows into his beloved. "Why
a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy! / Why
a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?"
(6.19-20) presents the opposite but equally destructive
alternative, sexual restriction imposed by Urizen's moral
code. The importance of Visions of the Daughters of Albion
is that here the Pit is fully entered by Oothoon, who
plucks the sexual flower which Thel (in her title-page
illumination) resisted. Visions emphasizes what is
implicit in the Songs, that childhood contains the core
of unfallen sexuality:

Infancy, fearless, lustful, happy! nestling
for delight
In laps of pleasure; Innocence! honest, open,
seeking
The vigorous joys of morning light; open to
virgin bliss,
Who taught thee modesty, subtle modesty! child
of night & sleep
When thou wakest, wilt thou dissemble all thy
secret joys
Or wert thou not, awake. when all this mystery
was disclos'd!
(6.4-8)

Here a connection is drawn between purified sexuality
as a state of wakefulness, and sexual perversion "taught"
(by Urizen) as a state of sleep. Oothoon continues to
make the identification more explicit:

Then com'st thou forth a modest virgin knowing
how to dissemble
With nets found under thy night pillow, to catch
virgin joy,
And brand it with the name of whore; and sell it
in the night . . . . in seeming sleep:

Religious dreams . . . .
Theotormon is a sick man's dream
(6.10-14, 19)
This passage leads into The Four Zoas where Urizen's web of religion contaminates all mankind, particularly Enitharmon whose sexual fears become a barrier Los must penetrate if he is to achieve artistic growth. Significantly, Visions portrays this state as a "sick man's dream": precisely the situation in Albion of The Four Zoas. The opening cave scene of Visions, with its opposition between male and female, becomes the opening scene of Night I where Tharmas and Enion accuse each other of adultery. But the difference is that none of the Emanations in the epic retain Oothoon's unflagging vision. In fact Theotormon sitting on the threshold of Bromion's cave blocking vision becomes Enitharmon's own recalcitrance to open the gates of her head, heart and loins.

We find the seeds of this reversal in Oothoon's acknowledgement of how adamantly the forces of society and religion have tried to subvert her:

They told me that the night & day were all that I could see;
They told me that I had five senses to inclose me up.
And they inclos'd my infinite brain into a narrow circle.
And sunk my heart into the Abyss, a red round

David Wagenknect, Blake's Night (pp. 205-12), gives an extended and convincing reading that Night IV replicates the personae of Visions: Enitharmon takes the role of Oothoon; Tharmas parallels Theotormon, raping Enitharmon from Los; and Los enacts Bromion's role.
globe hot burning
Till all from life I was obliterated and erased.
(2.30-4)

This constitutes a synopsis of the Fall in The Four
Zoas, where the senses (Tharmas) swallow up Albion in
chaos, the intellect (Urizen) circumscribes infinity,
and the heart (Luvah) is imprisoned in a blast furnace.
The result is that all the feminine Emanations become
"obliterated and erased," their voices dwindling from
Oothoon's final magnificent ode to joy into faint cries
from the Margins of Nonentity. Oothoon, in fact, treads
perilously close to this extinction of spirit, envisioning
herself as "A solitary shadow wailing on the margin
of non-entity" (7.15). And the "Daughters of Albion"
who follow the narrative to "echo back her sighs" (e.g.,
2.20), beginning and ending the poem as a kind of
Greek chorus, become transplanted into the Daughters
of Beulah in The Four Zoas who follow the main action
weeping, more fully integrated into the poem.

But at this stage of writing Visions Blake does
not yet anticipate the full extent of the Fall as poisoning
even "Love! Love! Love! happy happy Love! free as the
mountain wind!" (7.16), partly because on the historical
level Oothoon symbolizes the slavery of the American
colonies and actual slavery of black Africans. Her
final release from the cave in the illumination for
plate 8 shows her soaring across the Atlantic to initiate the American revolution. There is still every reason to be optimistic. The major discovery of *Visions* is to link sex with epistemology. Sexual restriction deadens the senses, resulting in a cave where the faculties are bound back-to-back; but sexual freedom renovates the senses, as Oothoon's final hymn to the sensuality of all existence indicates. Here the senses conjoin as they do in Night IX and again in the Apocalypses of Milton and Jerusalem. Sight and sex fuse in the daring image, "there my eyes are fix'd / In happy copulation" (6.23-7.1). Oothoon has taken on the role of the mole in the Motto to *The Book of Thel*, and answers that question now: "Does not the eagle scorn the earth & despise the treasures beneath? / But the mole knoweth what is there" (5.39-40). She is the first prototype in Blake of a journey through darkness into light, revitalizing that darkness to co-exist with Apocalypse: "Sweetest the fruit the worm feeds on. & the soul prey'd on by woe / The new wash'd lamb ting'd with the village smoke & the bright swan / By the red earth of our immortal river" (3.17-19). Here suffering is praised not merely as the means whereby the Apocalypse is reached, but as the actual embodiment of the eternal. *Visions* is a profound epistemological discourse, sharing structural parallels with Plato's dialogues and amplifying the
interrogative conclusions of *Tiriel* and *The Book of Thel*, with Oothoon's view emerging triumphant. The 102 lines of her final speech portray an impending Apocalypse of sensuality, enacting the terse program given in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*:

...the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite, and holy whereas it now appears finite & corrupt. This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment. But first the notion that a man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this I shall do... (pl. 14)

But the transitional stage here, requiring Los the blacksmith/poet as the fulcrum, unfortunately becomes extended. The delay is caused not by Los' failure, for Blake's strategy in the Lambeth books and *The Four Zoas* is to convey psychological and historical motifs through imagery of the body, but rather because "an improvement of sensual enjoyment" itself becomes ambiguous.

In this context it is instructive to turn to a passage in Night II: "Arise you little glancing wings, & sing your infant joy / Arise & drink your bliss / For every thing that lives is holy" (34.78-80). Enitharmon's song here transcribes the final lines from Oothoon's speech in *Visions* (8.9-10). But whereas in the earlier poem Oothoon's sensural vision transcends the Mosaic code, and she offers "girls of mild silver, or of furious gold" (7.24: i.e., blonds and redheads?)
to her lover, Enitharmon's song is radically undercut by its context, for it includes, "The joy of woman is the Death of her most best beloved / Who dies for Love of her" (II.34.63-4). Jealousy and exoneration of the medieval tradition of fine amour here corrupts lyric sexuality; in fact Enitharmon uses her song to seduce Los. Finally, whereas Oothoon's senses are enclosed by an anonymous "They" (2.30-2), in The Four Zoas it is Tirzah, a manifestation of the deadly Female Will, who performs this act of mutilation (VIII.105.31-53).

THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL (1790-93)

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell develops three motifs which reach fruition in The Four Zoas. First, the personae of the later epic start to proliferate, gaining symbolic resonance. Second, dual levels of time and eternity are implied once again as the necessary structure Blake must amplify in a larger work. Third, a sexual and historical Apocalypse is staged with a positive exuberance containing none of the minor chords of the Lambeth books, which will serve as a model for Night IX.
The whole ironic inversion of heaven and hell in this poem suggests the basic structure of *The Four Zoas*. "As I was walking among the fires of hell, delighted with the enjoyments of Genius; which to Angels look like torment & insanity" (pl.5): Blake here takes on the role of the "Regenerate Man" (IX.126.3) who at the end of Night IX "walks forth from midst of the fires the evil is all consumed" (138.22). The flames represent both the Apocalypse's "bright visions of Eternity" (IX.118.18-19) yet the hellish fallen world depicted throughout the main poem. Humanized lions in the coda to Night IX converse with man, "How is it we have walked thro flames & yet are not consumd" (138.39). The author of *The Marriage* would instantly know the answer to this question, but admits in a Proverb of Hell, "The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves . . . are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man" (pl.8.26).

These emblems indeed prove too great for Urizen's optical sense to tolerate, particularly in Night VI where he roams through his dens attacked by these animals in their dehumanized form (71.1-10). It requires the aid of the other three Zoas to perceive eternity as an implicit presence in love with the productions of time. The drive toward extremes which we see in the Proverbs of Hell propels Blake into *The Four Zoas*, where he

29 See esp. proverbs 3, 15, 18, 46, 64, and "Enough! or Too Much" (12.70).
attempts to enact the same role (strolling through hell) from a fallen perspective through conflicting personae. Yet the split into separate faculties is implicit even in *The Marriage*. "The head sublime [i.e., what will become unfallen Urizen], the heart Pathos [Luvah], the genitals Beauty [Tharmas], the hands & feet Proportion [Urthona]" reconstruct Nebuchadnezzar's dream, dis-integrating into their opposites in *The Four Zoas*. Again, that "All deities reside in the human breast" before they harden into an institutional "system" (pl.11) points to the figure of Albion in Blake's epic. Blake was attracted from the beginning of his apprenticeship to Michelangelo's giant figures, linking them to the biblical account of man before the flood as possessing greater stature than contemporary man. Now he elaborates on this theme: "the Giants who formed this world into its sensual existence and now seem [my italics] to live in it in chains, are in truth. the causes of its life & the sources of all activity" (pl.16). This is a cogent summary of the principles behind the chthonic personae of *The Four Zoas*. But *The Marriage* does not take their apparent imprisonment seriously, maintaining that it can be reversed.

30 See Daniel 2:31-45.

The potential of a dream format to express this idea is implied throughout The Marriage with its levels of ironic inversion. The dreamlike switch of the Leviathan who seems diabolical to the Angel but possesses "all the fury of a spiritual existence" to Blake transmutes into a calm river, moon and harper. "Thy phantasy has imposed upon me," charges the Angel, to which Blake counters, "We impose on one another" (pl.20). It is intimated here that neither perspective is real but occurs within separate dream-worlds which only a genuine Apocalypse can pierce.

Blake proceeds to enact such an Apocalypse in 'A Song of Liberty.' Its historical topicality is directly initiated by a sensual opening of the body, as in Visions, reaching back to Isaiah's "My senses discover'd the infinite in everything" (pl.12). The transitional stage (pl.24) to 'A Song of Liberty' is significant: the Angel "embraces" the flames, is "consumed," and rises as Elijah, at which point he inverts into Blake's "particular friend" reading the Bible together in its infernal sense (i.e., Blake's radical revision of scripture throughout the Lambeth books), rewriting a new "Bible of Hell [The Four Zoas, surely]: which the world shall have whether they will or no." Now this emphasis upon artistic renewal, which ends An Island as well, recurs
in remarkably parallel terms in the revised ending to Night VIIA where Los embraces his Spectre and Emanation, achieves "Consummation," and begins work on composing and illuminating. The Spectre here becomes Blake's journeyman helper just as does the Angel in plate 24 of The Marriage; and the Apocalypse which immediately follows in The Four Zoas as a result of this radical conversion back into esthetic work likewise occurs in 'A Song of Liberty.'

If we examine 'A Song of Liberty,' its singular new development is a proliferation of what will become the dramatis personae of the Lambeth books and The Four Zoas. Here for the first time Urthona is cited (25.16), Orc the "new born terror" (25.7) makes his appearance, the "Eternal Female" (1) gains prominence, and the "starry king" (8) who will become Urizen "promulgates his ten commandments" (18). Significantly, these figures already struggle in "jealousy" (25.10). The Apocalypse here refers, of course, to the historical revolutions in America and France; but its "falling, rushing, ruining! buried in the ruins" (26.16) already implies the prehistoric fall of all mankind in The Four Zoas, inextricably linked with Apocalypse ('A Song of Liberty' also combines the two). Its final proclamation, "Empire is no more! and now the lion & wolf shall cease" (pl.27) is revised in Night IX to Urizen's cry, "Times are Ended!" (131.31).
'A Song of Liberty' was added two to three years after the original poem: a significant fact, for the same procedure has been followed in *Tiriel* and *The Book of Thel* and will occur in the revisions to *Vala*. The sudden appearance of Blake's mythopoeic personae here puts into action his earlier manifesto in the poem concerning giant figures within the human breast, now unchaining them into history. Erdman is surely correct that the poem "mocks those who can accept a spiritual apocalypse but are terrified at a resurrection of the body of society itself." Finally, the abrupt switch to a new idiom in 'A Song of Liberty' likewise becomes an integral part of *The Four Zoas*, achieved through revisions. It is significant that Night VIII, the last complete Night to be written, introduces a totally new epic style, including AngloHebraic nomenclature, elaborate genealogies and catalogues which point toward *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. Yet just as 'A Song of Liberty' conveys through dramatic conflict the principles advanced by the main poem, so Blake's revisions in *The Four Zoas* complete yet lead outward from *Vala*.

32 *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, p. 178.
THE LAMBETH BOOKS (1793-95)

We builded Jerusalem as a City & a Temple;  
from Lambeth  
We began our Foundations  
(Jerusalem, 84.3-4)

The six poems which have come to be referred to  
as the Lambeth books contain most of the themes, images  
and personae of The Four Zoas in abbreviated form.  
These poems taken as a sequence constitute the sketched  
outline of an epic, with their deliberate splicings  
and cross-references to each other. Blake uses many  
"borrowed passages" in The Four Zoas from this Lambeth  
period, and in each case (contra Bentley's criticism)  
his self-quotation reaches back to its original context  
either to enrich its present application (in somewhat  
the manner of the footnotes at the end of Eliot's The  
Wasteland), or to revise the quotation by inserting it

33 See Erdman, ibid., p. 252. "Blake's whole  
myth is assumed in the Lambeth books. But it is only  
fragmentarily alluded to in them, and its early form  
must be reconstructed with the help of later texts."  
Since this has long been critically recognized, my study  
will not consider each Lambeth poem with the same degree  
of detail as Blake's earlier work.

34 William Blake's Vala, or The Four Zoas: A  
Facsimile of the Manuscript, pp. 176-79. "In general,  
the borrowed passages in Vala demonstrate Blake's casual  
and almost haphazard manner of composition and correction.  
With the exception of Urizen, the borrowings do not appear  
to be deliberate or to serve any clear purpose . . .  
Frequently they positively disrupt the flow of the  
narrative."
into a different context. The Lambeth books lay the "Foundations" (J.84.4) for The Four Zoas, building interrelated personae which encompass multiple dimensions by the time of beginning to write the epic. One should interpret these poems as the struggle both to create a workable esthetic form, probing the ground for an epic structure which once begun will acquire its own momentum, and to answer the riddle of man's suffering in a fragmented world. In this sense The Four Zoas not only amplifies the Lambeth books, but resolves them as well.

AMERICA (1793)

The personae released in 'A Song of Liberty' continue to expand in America. The "nameless female" (1.4), an early prototype of Vala, succors Orc referred to as a "Spectre" (5.6), a figure later acquiring a personality of its own in The Four Zoas. "Albion is sick!" (4.3), his condition reflecting the mental illness of King George III, amplified in the "Eternal Man's" sickness

35 Blake's position before beginning The Four Zoas is aptly expressed by Frye, Fearful Symmetry (p.270): "The moment in which the epic poet finally chooses his subject is the crisis of his life, as Dante and Milton at least show very clearly; and his choice, once made, almost precludes the idea of ever finding another."

in Blake's first epic. The illumination for plate 13 is particularly germane in this context, depicting two prone figures: a naked female at the top, washed by surf and preyed on by an eagle, and at the bottom a naked man beneath the sea, coiled by a snake, with great jawed fish swimming past him. Already his fingers are turning into claws or rooting into the earth. This becomes Albion's iconic stance in *The Four Zoas*, captured by Tharmas:

> The Eternal Man is seald never to be deliverd
> I roll my floods over his body my billows & waves pass over him
> The Sea encompasses him & monsters of the deep are his companions
> Dreamer of furious oceans cold sleeper of weeds & shells
> Thy Eternal form shall never renew
> (IV.51.15-19)

But the corresponding woman at the top is not elaborated in the epic, for she becomes Jerusalem; though she joins Albion's fall, she is not given status as a character in her own right until *Jerusalem*. America's confrontation between Albion's icy madness and Orc's fires occurs again in a more epistemological context in Night VIIA. Orc is presented as a harvest figure in the earlier poem, particularly in the illuminations: plate 2 shows him rising from a furrow (i.e., Blake's

37 Hagstrum suggests, *op. cit.*, p. 125, that this male figure might be based on Milton's *Lycidas* lying beneath the watery floor.
engraving process) with grapes and sprouts of wheat. But in Night IX he only helps germinate the seeds, playing no further role in the actual growth and reaping. The movement of the Lambeth books is from historical symbolism toward a more 'pure' psychological myth.

We have seen that even the explicitly historical The French Revolution implies that the Fall is caused by degradation of the senses, and that political revolution depends upon the staminal virtues of the peasantry which remain pure. The same innocence is maintained in The Book of Thel and Visions of the Daughters of Albion, despite a counterforce of religion, history and education which attempts to pervert it. Once again in America an Apocalypse is conducted in terms of sensual renovation. The poem ends:

But the five gates were consum'd, and their bolts & hinges melted
And the fierce flames burnt round the heavens,
& round the abodes of men
(16.22-3)

Here the revolution spreads through the world. The result is an Apocalypse primarily historical but with epistemological undertones:

Let the slave grinding at the mill, run out into the field;
Let him look up into the heavens & laugh in the bright air;
Let the inchained soul shut up in darkness and in sighing,
Whose face has never seen a smile in thirty weary years;
Rise and look out, his chains are loose, his dungeon doors are open.
And let his wife and children return from the oppressors scourge;
They look behind at every step & believe it is a dream.
(6.6-12, my italics)

This entire passage is quoted verbatim (with modifications of punctuation) in Night IX's Apocalypse (134.18-24).
But in the epic, social oppression literally takes place within "a dream," and the Apocalypse is primarily epistemological with historical undertones. Blake is coming to realize that true revolution can only be achieved on a subjective level.

It is probable that two plates were cancelled from the final America because, like certain of the lyrics in Songs of Innocence transferred to Songs of Experience, they are too negative. Plate b expands the genesis of Urizen: "In that dread night when Urizen call'd the stars round his feet; / Then burst the center from its orb, and found a place beneath / And Earth conglob'd, in narrow room, roll'd round its sulphur sun" (5-7).
This becomes the opening scene of Night II originally beginning Vala, where Urizen usurps Albion, rises "like a star" (23.9), and constructs the universe into Cartesian form (the sun becoming a "sulphur orb" [28.18]). Vala thus begins exegetically from this cancelled plate, a sign that the shape of the future epic gradually coagulates while Blake composes the Lambeth books. The second
cancelled plate c actually reverses the ending of America: men "shut the gates of sense & in their chambers, / Sleep like the dead" (22-3). Finally, the revolution of the colonies is enveloped by dream: "In vain the dreamer grasps the joyful images" (d.2). The dream has become more malignant; America sinks into a trance-like sleep, like Chaucer's Black Knight. This ominous development leads directly into Europe.

EUROPE (1794)

Of all Blake's previous poems, Europe contains the deepest structural parallels to The Four Zoas, for it occurs on two separate levels interpolated by a long dream. The opening preface with its whimsical explanation of how the poem came to be written establishes a literal, contemporary and subjective plane where "every particle of dust breathes forth its joy" (iii.18), linking back to the world of Songs of Innocence, The Book of Thel and Oothoon's concluding vision. Its humanized nature, where fairies sit on tulips and dictate poetry, corresponds to the 'Introduction' of Songs of Innocence, where a child-muse gives the piper specific directives to write.
The preface of *Europe* implies that this level contains the renovated condition of man because Blake himself enters the "five windows" of the melted senses (concluding *America*) sung by the fairy (iii.1-6), including touch/sex, where one may "pass out what time he please, but he will not" (iii.5). This willful neglect of sexual liberation reoccurs in Enitharmon of *The Four Zoas*. The preface, then, contrasts vividly with the ensuing narrative dictated by the fairy, and constitutes a millennial vision which will be paralleled in the coda to Night IX and in the Eternals of that epic, who at times laugh at man trapped in dream illusion just as the fairy "laugh'd aloud to see them [flowers] whimper because they were pluck'd" (iii.21: he is mocking Thel's fear).

It must be remembered that the desperate narrative of the rest of *Europe* literally originates from this level of delight, and must in some way be conceptually related to it.

The primary way that the different levels of the poem mesh occurs through Enitharmon's dream (9.1-13.8), where she sleeps "Eighteen hundred years: Man was a Dream! / The night of Nature" (9.2-3). We have seen how Blake's use of dream develops complexity throughout his poems. Here it becomes an integral structural device merely hinted at in *The French Revolution*, and evidently
worked so well that he returns to write a complete epic as a dream-vision poem, with its dream at last attaining (and ending with) the visionary level with which Europe begins. But in *The Four Zoas* Albion dreams the poem, whereas here it is "a female dream!" (9.5). Contrasting vividly with the fairy laughing at plucked flowers is Enitharmon's sadistic presence behind her dream: "Enitharmon laughed in her sleep to see (O Woman's triumph) / Every house a den, every man bound; the shadows are filled / With spectres" (12.25-7). Her dream, enveloping history from the birth of Christ but referring to events of Blake's own day, contains many terse references to scenes and images which *The Four Zoas* amplifies.

Enitharmon wakes only to return history to its sterile circularity, molding her children into a powerful counter-revolution of negative sexuality. Thus the fifth window of the Apocalypse—which remains open to Blake, the fairy and potentially all men in the preface--here is closed. We further see that Oothoon has been unable to complete her flight across the Atlantic, and remains imprisoned in the cave: "I hear the soft Oothoon in

A further parallel to *The Four Zoas* is that 'A Prophecy' of Europe inverts Milton's 'Nativity Ode,' just as *The Four Zoas* inverts Paradise Lost.
Enitharmon's tents: / Why wilt thou give up women's secrecy my melancholy child?" (14.21-2). Blake here takes a step outward from his perspective in *Visions*, and views Oothoon's vision as not sufficient to spark an Apocalypse. Since Oothoon remains in Enitharmon's tents, the historical Female Will envelops her lone voice of protest. Furthermore the "cavernd man" of the preface also is subject to Enitharmon's dream, "secret dwellers of dreamful caves" (14.26).

At this stage, however, Oro seems to possess more than enough vitality to dissolve Enitharmon's dream. Europe ends, as do all Blake's minor prophetic poems, in the pre-dawn darkness before Apocalypse. We return to the familiar portents resolved only in Night IX:

The sun glow'd fiery red!
The furious terrors flew around!
On golden chariots raging, with red wheels dropping with blood;
The Lions lash their wrathful tails!
The Tigers crouch upon the prey & suck the ruddy tide;
And Enitharmon groans & cries in anguish and dismay.

(15.3-8)

At this point a new figure enters the drama: Los, who calls his sons to the battle of Armageddon. His

39 It should be noted that Blake refers to his previous poems as still existing in the present, not as having already occurred. In this manner all the poems have immediate relevance to each other, and blend together into *The Four Zoas*. See my analysis of the same device used in *The Song of Los*, p. 506.
exultant cry concluding the poem is far removed from Thel's "shriek" (BT 21) as she retreats from experience.

THE SONG OF LOS (1795)

The Lambeth books' project to portray history from Adam to contemporary Deism in order to subsume history within the focus of what might be termed the 'apocalyptic present' continues in The Song of Los. Only by working within history can Blake hope to penetrate the amnesiac dream which each poem increasingly uses as the vehicle of the Fall:

These were the Churches: Hospitals: Castles: Palaces:
Like nets & gins & traps to catch the joys of Eternity
And all the rest a desart;
Till like a dream Eternity was obliterated & erased.

(4.1-4)

The second part of this poem, Asia, takes place once again within Enitharmon's dream of history in Europe.

40 The illuminated plate 5, depicting sleeping Titania and Oberon from A Midsummer Night's Dream sitting on a white lily, emphasizes the dream narrative of this poem. The two dream-figures correspond to the fairy of Europe; but whereas that fairy dictates the poem (which contains a dream), here Titania may well be dreaming the poem directly. Erdman's surmise, in The Illuminated Blake (p. 178), is provocative: "Is the history surveyed in 'Africa' a dream in Titania's memory
(as it is for Enitharmon's in Europe)? . . . If so, the lily bud bending forward among the stars must hold the spirit of the time to come, not a king but a joy. These perfect lilies foretell a paradisal regeneration."

Blake uses an unusual literary device. "The Kings of Asia heard / The howl rise up from Europe!" (6.1-2): the howl surely refers to Enitharmon's dream in Europe, where Albion's Angel (i.e., Parliament) "howling in the flames of Orc" (12.12) attempts to initiate an Apocalypse but fails. Here an event occurring in a previous poem penetrates into the subsequent work, linking them through a kind of temporal joint whereby both poems fuse in order to revolve in different directions; yet by sharing this common element they become simultaneous narratives. Blake uses this device most effectively in the early Nights of The Four Zoas. For example, in Night II Albion asks, "Whence is this Voice of Enion that soundeth in my Porches" (23.4); it originates from Night I in Enion's first lament (17.1-18.7), an indication of the simultaneous tense of much of the action. One might go further, and speculate that Blake's treatment of the individual Lambeth books, seeking to link them into a cumulative narrative, is carried over into his first epic where each Night becomes equivalent to a separate poem, now fused in a much more homogeneous way.

Once again Blake concludes The Song of Los with
an Apocalypse:

Forth from the dead dust rattling bones to bones
Join: shaking convuls'd the shivering clay
breathes
And all flesh naked stands: Fathers and Friends;
Mothers & Infants; Kings & Warriors
(7.31-4)

The first two lines here are transferred to Night IX:

All things reversd flew from their centers
rattling bones
To bones Join, shaking convuls'd the shiverings
clay breathes
(122.27-8)

Yet the negative undertones of the final stanza of

The Song of Los are disquieting:

The Grave shrieks with delight, & shakes
Her hollow womb, & clasps the solid stem:
Her bosom swells with wild desire:
And milk & blood & glandous wine
In rivers rush & shout & dance
On mountain, dale and plain.
(7.35-40)

On one level a cosmic orgasm indeed occurs. But the
erotic animation given to the grave, reaching to the
womb/tomb homology which Blake was developing at this
time in his illustrations to Young, does not merely
compel a resurrection of "the solid stem" of the phallic
wheat sprout, Orc. Rather the womb controls this male
germination, reminiscent instead of the onanistic
behavior in Visions (Blake literally refers to
masturbation):

The virgin
That pines for man; shall awaken her womb
to enormous joys
In the secret shadows of her chamber; the youth shut up from
The lustful joy shall forget to generate, & create an amorous image
In the shadows of his curtains and in the folds of his silent pillow.
(7.3-7)

In retrospect, this passage applies to Enitharmon's perverted pleasure with her own sexual dream in Europe, and Vala's creation of "an amorous image" in a dream to capture Albion. Clearly the shrieking grave/womb which concludes The Song of Los possesses demoniac proportions, and remains finally "a wild desire," inter-mingling milk, blood and wine rather than separating them as does the final harvest in Night IX. The error described here returns in Night IX's dance of Luvah's children around the winepress (136.21-137.24), where excess of joy is carried to Dionysian extremes and must be modulated by Luvah being cast back into the earth as "dung" (137.24). As in Revelation, the Apocalypse can occur only through the "ripening" of time. Otherwise the wheat remains green, and the harvest decimates rather than creates flour for bread.
America ends with the gestation of Urizen as a character requiring further development, since he opposes Orc; Europe ends with the emergence of Los. The Book of Urizen explores the relationship between these two personae, reaching backward to recover the mythic dimensions of the malaise of Blake's century. The full-scale analysis of Urizen in this poem prepares the way for his dubious distinction as arch-villain in The Four Zoas. Blake shifts outward yet another step to implicate religious law as the force undergirding the Female Will portrayed in Europe. The first feature germane to our study is that Urizen's solipsistic activity is once again dream-like. As "A self-contemplating shadow" (3.22), his battles with his own psyche lead directly into the depth imagery of The Four Zoas:

For he strove in battles dire
In unseen confictions with shapes
Bred from his forsaken wilderness,
Of beast, bird, fish, serpent & element
Cumbustion, blast, vapour and cloud.
(3.13-17)

These "ruinous fragments of life" (5.9) populate the wasteland of Blake's epic. Yet another passage links them to a mutilated dream:

Portions of life; similitudes
Of a foot, or a hand, or a head
Or a heart, or an eye, they swam mischevous
Dread terrors! delighting in blood
(23.4-7)
Urizen confronts these phantasma in Night VI as his own "children ruined in his ruined world" (70.45). In both The Book of Urizen and Night VI, Urizen cannot tolerate these self-projections, so he retreats inward into "a stony sleep" (6.7) which at first exists even beneath the level of concrete dream imagery as "a dreamless night" (7.7), but through Los pounding him into esthetic and human form achieves a "horrible dreamful slumber" (10.35). In The Four Zoas this dream grips all the participants, originating not merely from Urizen but rather from Albion in whose dream Urizen exists. The amnesia gripping Urizen at various stages through his poem--"And now his eternal life / Like a dream was obliterated" (14.32-4)---later strikes all the Zoas, erecting a barrier which they cannot surmount.

But The Book of Urizen develops a counterforce at the same time as it strengthens Urizen's malignance: Los, the "Eternal Prophet" (15.1). Blake transfers the long passage describing Los' binding of Urizen into Night IV, but there adds an important positive note, that Los "became what he beheld / He became what he was doing he was himself transformd" (55.22-3). Whereas this scene in The Book of Urizen ends with "the expanding eyes" (15.11) of the Eternals passively observing the action but unable to do much except isolate it, the same context in The Four Zoas interpolates the Council
of God which descends as the "Divine Vision" (IV.55.13) to comfort the Emanations rather than condemn them, and provides Christ to bend over Los' furnaces. Though the emphasis is different, the two levels of fallen time versus Eternity occur explicitly and at length in The Book of Urizen; hence it is puzzling why so many critics condemn this same structure in The Four Zoas when, we have seen, it is present in various forms throughout Blake's work.

The Four Zoas uses The Book of Urizen in a more explicit structural way than any of his previous poems. Chapters I-III expand into Night II, further enriched by Ahania's separation from Urizen rather than Los'; chapter IV (the binding of Urizen) corresponds with Night IV; chapters V-VII.5 (Los, Enitharmon and the birth of Orc) with Night V; chapters VII.6-VIII (Urizen exploring his dens, ending with his Net of Religion) with Night VI (ending with his Web of Religion); and the final chapter IX with Night VIIIB, both describing the atrophied activity of Urizen's sons.

41 Since Blake follows the sequence of The Book of Urizen in his Nights as I have indicated, and Night VIIIB correlates with the final chapter IX, this supports the view that he originally wrote this Night to follow VI. But it is possible that he wished a direct confrontation between Urizen and Orc to follow VI, as would be natural in The Book of Urizen as well; this might be the reason why he wrote VIIIA, which begins with Urizen and Orc debating.
Significantly, *The Book of Urizen* modifies Blake's previous apocalyptic conclusions. The following description of history waking when it hears Orc's voice occurs not at the end of the poem but rather in chapter VII:

The dead heard the voice of the child
And began to wake from sleep
All things heard the voice of the child
And began to awake to life
(20.26-9)

The final chapter itself depicts a contamination of the senses, rather than bursting their gates. It is in this negative context that Fuzon as a pillar of fire leads the children of Israel into the wilderness. That wilderness, of course, becomes *The Four Zoas*. An arduous journey must result before Moses can view the Promised Land.

**THE BOOK OF AHANIA (1795)**

Blake's increasing emphasis upon historical and epistemological failure as reflected within the alienation between man and woman returns in *The Book of Ahania* to explain why Urizen has engaged in his lonely restructuring of Eternity. The portrayal here of Urizen's rejection of his mate, Ahania, is important to *The Four Zoas* in two respects.
First, it links The Book of Urizen's analysis of how Urizen is "rent" (6.4) from Los' side to Ahania's separation from Urizen, elaborated again in Night III. The process of splitting into fragments originally part of a seamless unity has begun in earnest, its most disastrous manifestation being the rejection of male and female from each other. The flashback technique used so extensively in The Four Zoas occurs here in Ahania, who remembers the Golden Age before she was torn from Urizen:

Then thou with thy lap full of seed  
With thy hand full of generous fire  
Walked forth from the clouds of morning  
On the virgins of springing joy,  
On the human soul to cast  
The seed of eternal science.

(5.28-34)

Here the unfallen state is couched in explicit sexual terms, making possible a sexual interpretation of Night IX; for Jerusalem too insists that "the Loins [are] the place of the Last Judgment" (44.38). Ahania's rural imagery describing an alternation of labour and rest (35-8) returns to characterize Urizen in Night IX, where the "seed of eternal science" grows into the reign of "sweet Science" (139.10). But The Book of Ahania's final illumination (plate 5), depicting severed heads and torsos (probably referring to the fruits of the guillotine, as Erdman surmises), undercuts

42 The Illuminated Blake, p. 213.
Ahania's vision. Indeed, we may regard this final design as leading into the title-page of The Four Zoas, where the bottom of the page is covered with sleeping and vivesected parts of human bodies, with the trumpeter of the Apocalypse bending to wake them.

Secondly, the positive dimensions of the Emanation return in the figure of Ahania to combat the Female Will described in Europe. Ahania's essential innocence is a generic descendent from Oothoon, Thel and Lycia, and leads directly into Enion and Ahania (again) in The Four Zoas. My reading of The Four Zoas has emphasized the structural importance of Enion's laments. Once again this device is foreshadowed by a Lambeth poem: The Book of Ahania concludes with Ahania's sonorous lament as she weeps "on the verge / Of Non-entity" (4.54-5), just as she and Enion do in the epic, all becoming voices with no form. Blake concludes his poem here with a feminine lament, as he does Nights I (in its original form), II, III and VIII. Here as elsewhere, we can literally see the various pieces of the epic taking shape and cohesing in the Lambeth books.

Thus three typical conclusions to Blake's poems to this point can be distinguished: a synopsis of the fallen human psyche and body in epistemological terms, usually expressed as questions; a lament, usually
feminine, evoking memories of a past when the Fall had not yet occurred, asking why this happened and how it may be revoked; and an apocalyptic finale. The first of these conclusions describes man's present condition; the second, his pre-historic past in Eternity, though still within the context of fallen time; and the third, the immediate future. Blake is unable to achieve a genuine resolution until he conflates all three of these dimensions, as he does in Night IX.

THE BOOK OF LOS (1795)

It is significant that this final Lambeth book, "a strange poem, unsatisfactory in its lack of completeness, compelling in a dreamlike logic," abruptly enters the explicit arena of The Four Zoas, and concludes just as abruptly now that its objective has been reached. Eno, the "aged Mother" (3.1) who sings the prefatory speech, is the same "aged Mother" (I.3.1) who sings The Four Zoas. The apocalyptic flames she envisions—

Raging furious the flames of desire
Ran thro' heaven & earth, living flames
Intelligent, organis'd, armed . . .

In the midst
The Eternal Prophet bound in a chain
(3.26-30)

return in The Four Zoas as organized epic verse:

Hearing the march of long resounding strong
heroic Verse
Marshalld in order for the day of Intellectual
Battle

(1.3.2-3)

This day is finally achieved in Night IX:

The Bloody Deluge living flames winged with
intellect
And Reason round the Earth they march in order
flame by flame

(119.19-20)

The Book of Los makes the vital connection between
the Apocalypse and Los, the artistic faculty. It must
have been evident to Blake now that an historical Apocalypse
can only be reached by examining man's psychological
roots; for if revolution could not succeed in one man,
it certainly could not do so on any larger scale.
The final Lambeth book focuses on Los' predicament
as "The Eternal Prophet bound in a chain" (rather than
Orc). His confrontation here with Urizen, and subsequent
contamination, despair, impatience and journeywork

upon the fallen sun remains his major activity in

Los binds Urizen's spine into a sun (5.41-9)
which remains, however, "self-balanc'd" (45), contaminated
by Urizen. Much light can be cast on Los' removal of
the sun and moon to initiate Night IX by considering
his work with the sun particularly in the illuminations
for The Song of Los, where plate 8 shows he has purged
it of Urizen's runes. But in The Four Zoas he must
shatter it completely.
the later epic. In a negative sense, the "Human illusion" (5.56) into which Los binds Urizen at the conclusion of the poem consolidates humanity into a final dream-state where all existence partakes of that dream, "Flowing down into night" (5.55), i.e., into the nine Nights of The Four Zoas. But in a positive sense, that night has now achieved an implicit structure wherein man may struggle, creating the articulations which, though obscured by darkness, exist in perfect minute particularity, and require only the penetration of light to reveal their inherent wholeness.

VALA, OR THE FOUR ZOAS (1797-c.1804)

The apocalyptic nature of Blake's poetry is self-evident. What I wish to suggest now is that a thrust toward Apocalypse is present throughout all phases of Blake's career, and indeed constitutes the most distinctive feature of his work. Not only the concentrated effort of the Lambeth books but also most of Blake's individual lyrics including the Songs attempts to culminate in that radical restructuring of time and space subsumed under the Greek term, apokalypsis. But as we have seen,
until The Four Zoas each of these attempts was an implicit failure, partly because they are incomplete in a poetic sense and require the epic genre. The Apocalypses of the earlier work are premature, lacking an extended treatment of individual regeneration to prepare for the sudden revelation. The importance of the manuscript poem Vala, or The Four Zoas is that it is the specific text where Blake was first able to achieve an authentic Apocalypse, first in Night IX, then spreading like a series of cracks throughout the entire poem.

Considering this context, we may now make a final evaluation of the evolution of The Four Zoas manuscript. The victory of Night IX, and by extension the resolution of Blake's own despair in this poem, caused him to re-interpret the entire poem in a new light. In this sense there are two poems coexisting not in conflict but rather simultaneously, though, of course, this is impossible in a purely technical sense. Every single image, concept and narrative incident of the initial eight Nights is capable of transformation into apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic status, for the simple reason that the Apocalypse is both particular yet absolute. Blake's Proverb of Hell, "Eternity is in love with the productions of time" (MHH pl.7), expresses the creative mainspring behind his epic and its revision more than any remark critics have made. Now Blake did not revise his entire poem to a homogeneous
extent, since this would have resulted in the destruction of the first version, and/or the creation of a new poem meant to coexist simultaneously with The Four Zoas (and in one sense, *Milton* and *Jerusalem* perform this function). Therefore he went only part way, and instead revised it at crucial junctures where his revisions shed light upon the difference between eternal and post-lapsarian perspectives, and how these are essentially a seamless unity. I submit that this was done only judiciously because Blake wished to preserve the full flavour of his initial struggles toward resolution. As the manuscript now stands, it is a testament both to the despair of his earlier work, and the mature exuberance of the later two epics.

*MILTON* (1800-04)

After *The Four Zoas*, Blake's final epics have three primary objectives: (1) to deepen his analysis of sexual

45 It may be that both *Milton* and *Jerusalem* are dated 1804 on their title-pages because they originate directly from the climactic breakthrough of *The Four Zoas*, and Blake wished to document this victory as both a conclusion yet beginning. Blake may have began work on the first plates of both later epics simultaneously.
strife, particularly as manifested in the Female Will, and how this may be solved; (2) to develop a comprehensive psychic cartography both universal yet immediate, a system to combat systems—in this sense, the catalogues and genealogies of Night VIII lead directly into the later epics; (3) to recreate the motif of regeneration and the Apocalypse of Night IX in more esthetic and subjective terms.

The immediate striking difference between The Four Zoas and the 'brief epic' Milton is a new note of confident exuberance and precise synoptic definitions which hone the previous tentative explorations in the Lambeth books and The Four Zoas. Never again does Blake express quite the same fragmentation as does his first epic. He speaks now as a prophet who has emerged through the flames of

I barely mention in this study the numerous transferences of imagery and borrowed passages from The Four Zoas into Milton. What is distinctive is that each image is amplified or inverted into its positive apocalyptic sense.

Alicia Ostriker, in Vision and Verse in William Blake (Madison, 1965, p. 181), virtually alone among critics points out that the firm oratorical style discovered in Night IX is carried over into Milton. "All the styles of The Four Zoas appear at their best in this final Night, saved from the danger of overcrowding by the Night's good structure. As befits the theme of unification, and Blake's conviction that a whole Man was greater than the sum of his parts, something new also appears: a style which combines lyricism with a moderate degree of metrical irregularity to express the higher, firmer beauty of the new life."
The Four Zoas. These flames are no longer destructive but purified mental catalysts. Blake now takes on the role of Albion in Night IX, who called each Zoa from sleep. Instead of conveying this function of "the Awakener" (21.33) in solely dramatic terms, however, he now re-stages it toward two objectives: to resuscitate oblique images and ideas from Vala so they may achieve epic resolution--in effect, this continues the revision of Vala, but into a separate poem instead; and to awaken the remnant of humanity which remained slumbering and suffering throughout Night IX (see esp. 138.11-15). The function of the poet is to commit "Self-annihilation" (41.2) upon himself, and then inspire others to take the same plunge. Hence the Fall into post-lapsarian existence now becomes a formal, voluntary and positive ritual which every man must undergo. Whereas Los initiated this process in Night VIIA, here Milton does so.

The Four Zoas was forced to discover the supportive level of Eternity. But Milton begins with this level (Milton walking in Eternity), and never doubts its existence. Blake's stance now is one of the Eternals bending over Albion's sleeping corpus (VIII.99.1-14); the Hand of God becomes the artist's hand. There is much more interaction

48 Compare FZ 85.32-86.3 with Milton's great pronouncement in 40.28-41.28. Both share the same vocabulary.
with this upper level in Milton. The abrupt narrative displacements of The Four Zoas and those luminous "Spaces" forced as wedges into the compacted original text give way to a subtle reciprocity. Furthermore, the symbolic significance of the Eternal level becomes emphatically esthetic rather than theological. Its most important manifestation, the Divine Vision, is now recognized (clarifying Urizen's recognition of Christ as Luvah) to be the "Human Imagination" or "Poetic Genius" (3.3-4, 13). This is not simply a taxonomic classification, but rather a working principle achieved through The Four Zoas. In Jerusalem this shift of perspective transfers to Los, who remains the only Zoa still used as a major persona. But in Milton, the most overtly personal of Blake's works, Blake himself becomes a persona in his own poem.

A series of condensations into collective personalities occurs, developing from Night IX where each Emanation was absorbed into her counterpart Zoa, and each Zoa into Albion. In Milton, Los enters Blake, then Milton does so, and finally Ololoon enters Milton, centering history and poetic continuity within Blake. Hence the fulcrum becomes the immediate present. Blake straps on his sandals "to walk forward thro Eternity" (21.14), just as the renovated "Man walks forth from midst of the fires" (138.22) in the coda to The Four Zoas. And in a superb final touch,
roused by the sound of his own Zoas' trumpets Blake himself stands at the end of the poem (42.24), replicating Albion's stance in Night IX. Night IX itself condenses in plate 25 of Milton; but here Los takes an active part as reaper, unlike his virtual absence from Night IX, binding sheaves into the three classes of men which seems to have been an important discovery for Blake, allowing the Apocalypse to reverberate (or be totally ignored) on different levels. Certain images from The Four Zoas expand into Milton to achieve contemporary relevance: the winepress into which the human grapes are crushed in Night IX now is identified as both war and the poet's printing press (27.8); the constellations freed in the coda are explored at length in the later epic (25.66-26.1); Enion's vision of a humanized nature is amplified by Los' rhapsodic descriptions of pastoral unity. Those positive implications of The Four Zoas which by definition could not be examined thoroughly in Vala or they would destroy the former structure altogether are now permitted to expand. Furthermore, Milton conflates Night IX with Night VIII's description of the building of Golgonooza, making it clear that an esthetic Last Judgment occurs in the four eternal arts of poetry, painting, music and architecture (27.55-6). Such does not represent a revision of Vala so much as re-emphasizing the subjective basis of its Apocalypse. Blake insists in A Vision
of the Last Judgment (1810) that "When Imaginative Art & Science & all Intellectual Gifts all the Gifts of the Holy Ghost are [despised] lookd upon as of no use & only Contention remains to Man then the Last Judgment begins" (70). This rejection of art which Blake terms apocalyptic is emphasized in Milton, where Blake's struggles with Hayley replace Los' struggles with Urizen in the earlier epic. Most of the narrative expands what takes place in the single instant of a lark's flight; in this sense, The Four Zoas focuses upon the instant of the Fall, whereas Milton uses the same technique to focus upon the instant of Apocalypse. In a remarkable metaphor, instead of Christ descending in Luvah's robes of blood he does so in the garb of the twelve-year-old virgin, Ololoon (42.7-12). Ololoon's fears before her consummation with Milton exactly parallel Enitharmon's before uniting with Los in Night VIIA. But at the end of the poem, once again we remain in a world of suffering and the fumes of factories, with Albion groaning in his sleep.

49 Another passage in A Vision of the Last Judgment links the Apocalypse to the act of reading Blake's poem: "If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought . . . then would he arise from his Grave then would he meet the Lord in the Air & then he would be happy" (82). The emphasis upon a subjective and esthetic Apocalypse is once again apparent.

50 Compare M. 41.30-42.2 with FZ. VIIA.87.16-23, 53-60.
Milton is a prefatory poem leading into Jerusalem. Its function is to prepare Blake to totally enter Albion's bosom, as he has just been entered by Milton, in order to wake England. His own private Apocalypse has been achieved; whatever he perceives at this point either "consumes" into falsity or is purified and undergoes its own Apocalypse. Such an Apocalypse does not represent a conclusion but rather a beginning, leading outward, like the ending of The Four Zoas, "To go forth to the Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations" (41.1).

JERUSALEM (1804-c.20)

We have seen how in Blake's work previous to The Four Zoas he steps outward from each poem in order to recover how that particular perspective was contaminated. In this sense each perspective--be it negative (Urizen), positive (Oothoon), or ambiguous (Orc)--becomes a dream when it is subsumed into a larger perspective seen to generate the first. This takes the form of examining war or social injustice (e.g., the children of the Songs), then supported by this analysis probing deeper to uncover the reasons why such a state exists, which leads into psychology. Jerusalem extends this technique to an extreme, where the universal context behind The Four Zoas
is thoroughly explored. Hence its primary emphasis is upon the upper level responsible for the revisions of the first epic.

The process of writing *The Four Zoas* uncovered the method to solve its dilemma: the act of writing and illuminating itself. In this manner Blake becomes a persona in his own poem, both explicitly (see especially 5.16-23) and through Los. Hence all three epics are self-referential: the reader takes the role of Albion, whom the poet attempts to wake through the poem. *Jerusalem* emphasizes this dimension now that Blake has taken on the mantle of his predecessor in *Milton*. The various techniques whereby such self-reference occur are complex, and can only be intimated here. But *Jerusalem*'s simultaneous narrative, ambiguous tenses, conflation of personae, and obscurity forces the reader to become an active participant in unravelling the text. He is tricked many times by "Systems to deliver Individuals from those Systems" (11.5), and at length endures its purgatorial flames to enter an Apocalypse which occurs at the end only because the reader requires the prior text to purify his own perceptions. This controlled confusion leading to enlightenment also takes place, of course, in *The*

Four Zoas, but there Blake himself was absorbed into his personae; neither the Zoas nor Blake knew how a genuine Apocalypse could be reached. While writing his first epic Blake's own position was exemplified in Albion's nightmare. This is clear by a personal reference in the preface to Jerusalem: "After my three years slumber on the banks of the Ocean, I again display my Giant forms to the Public" (pl.3). Once this slumber was ended, the dream techniques evolved by the Zoas are used by Blake in Jerusalem in direct relation to the reader, rather than through a large dramatic cast.

There exists virtually no dramatis personae in Jerusalem: primarily Los (who is Blake, the poet) and Albion (who is the reader, England, all humanity). The cast of The Four Zoas has largely disappeared: not because Blake regards that manuscript poem as an experimental failure, but rather because victory has already been achieved on this level, and the exploration of history and psychology which before was conveyed through four distinct Zoas now becomes subsumed into two main antagonists. The genre is no longer drama, but dialogue; no longer dream-vision, but anamnesis.

52 The personal relevance here is again substantiated by Blake's letter to Butts from Felpham, 25 April 1803: "But none can know the Spiritual Acts of my three years Slumber on the banks of the Ocean unless he has seen them in the Spirit or unless he should read My long Poem descriptive of those Acts."
Albion literally conflates all the other Zoas. We have seen this occurring obliquely even in *The Four Zoas*, where each Zoa partakes of the characteristics of the others. Though Urizen's chief feature is rationality, he yet feels emotion, physical sensation and imagination; though Tharmas represents the body, he yet can form logical sentences. Since any single faculty cannot be technically expressed in its pure sense without the aid of the other faculties, this is an inevitable distortion. In *Jerusalem*, however, Albion has become the major 'villain' rather than Urizen. His own guilt for the Fall is emphasized, and in fact whereas he directed his own regeneration in Night IX, here he tries to impede it while the other Zoas at first attempt to save him—a startling reversal. But this situation is actually implicit in *The Four Zoas*: each Zoa reunites with his rejected Emanation, yet though Albion's own Emanation (*Jerusalem*) has fallen with him, Blake does not extend his program of regeneration to her. Albion enters the fires of Eden in Night IX by sympathetically assimilating all the Zoas; but no mention is made

53 This is evident in many instances, but we may take one example to illustrate the conflation: the Tree of Mystery grows beneath Urizen in *The Four Zoas*, but here beneath Albion (28.13-19).

54 Urizen's malevolence has been largely nullified in Night VIIA, and he never displays the same negative importance as he did in *The Four Zoas*. In *Jerusalem*, Urizen actually helps Los build his esthetic structures, "delivering Form out of confusion" (58.22).
of Jerusalem. Jerusalem rectifies this omission, and may indeed be indebted to Pt. II of Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress, where the focus is upon Christiana's journey rather than Christian's. As Albion conflates all the Zoas, so Jerusalem conflates all the Emanations of The Four Zoas. Albion's rejection of Jerusalem perpetuates the same error of each Zoa in the first epic, carried to such an extreme that he ends by murdering all the Zoas except Los, who laments: "I alone withstand to death / This outrage!" (38.71-2). Instead of directing the harvest, Albion is finally plowed into the ground in plate 57, a variation on Luvah cast back into the earth as dung.

In one sense this seems an even more pessimistic view than The Four Zoas, for the only salvation possible in the world remains the artistic faculty. But actually Jerusalem here develops the conclusion to Night VIII where all the Zoas are incapacitated yet give their strength to Los (see J.39.28-35), who tears down the sun and moon. Los' single act here remains his sole function in Night IX. But in Jerusalem, Los becomes an active participant in the Apocalypse. Once again, this shift results from Blake's insight in The Four Zoas that regeneration occurs through the act of writing and reading the poem, which properly belongs to the imaginative faculty. The action of The Four Zoas takes place within a dream; in Jerusalem, it occurs
within dream levels contained by Los' furnaces, with Los standing outside this context though he remains always in danger of being drawn into it by Albion's contagious sickness (33.1-5). The dream is monitored by the artist. Los' difficulty in straddling time and eternity remains immense. The poetic form of Jerusalem, in fact, intensifies this problem: "Reasonings like vast Serpents / Infold around my limbs, bruising my minute articulations" (15. 12-13). Vision itself becomes a burden, and at one point Los/Blake even breaks his long-standing credo, regarding his work as merely "a poetic Vision of the Atmospheres" (63.36-40). But Los remains capable at any time of returning to his eternal status as Urthona achieved in The Four Zoas (see 33.1-5, 36.1-2), somewhat like Milton in Milton who attains Eternity but returns to revise the historical error his own sexual incompletion has perpetuated. Los continues the activity of the coda to The Four Zoas, forging "the spiritual sword" (9.18). He is similar to the Buddhist concept of the Bodhisatva: one who attains nirvana but deliberately returns into the cycle of suffering to remain there until every single being is saved. Hence Jerusalem emphasizes his heroism, and his position blends into Christ's incarnation and atonement at the end of the poem, "the Divine Appearance was the likeness & similitude of Los" (96.7).
The Apocalypse which climaxes *Jerusalem* uses the imagery of Night IX (particularly in plate 94), but with several important differences. Blake emphasizes its instantaneous quality rather than the modulated musical structure of Night IX. Albion achieves final consummation by throwing himself into Los’ furnaces, at which point the flames invert: "All was a Vision, all a Dream: the Furnaces became / Fountains of Living Waters" (96.36-7), a dream transition occurring as early as *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (pl. 17). Whereas Night IX reaches a millennium only in the final 31 lines, *Jerusalem* contains Blake’s most extended analysis of renovated or millennial man. The final rapturous embrace between Albion and Jerusalem depicted in the illumination for plate 99 indicates that this Apocalypse has occurred on an interpersonal level, swinging rhythmically back from eternity into time, infinity into the minute articulations of London, and sleep into wakefulness:

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    living going forth & returning wearied
    Into the Planetary lives of Years Months Days & Hours reposing
And then Awakening into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality

    And I heard the Name of their Emanations they are named Jerusalem
              (99.2-5)
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The final line here is provocative, for only at this point is ultimate union achieved. Albion does not fully unite with his Emanation until the final line of the poem,
though she has awakened him through her historical manifestation of Britannia. But Blake does not attempt to describe her climactic appearance, instead linking her to his own perspective ("And I heard") as a visionary onlooker solidly present on the ground ("I write in South Molten Street, what I both see and hear / In regions of Humanity, in London's opening streets" [34.42-3]). Instead, the final line of this final epic looks outward, like the conclusions to The Four Zoas and Milton, its scope intimated only through Blake's sense of hearing, which he has identified all along as the imaginative faculty which writes the poem. The two levels of time and eternity finally knit, substantiating Blake's synopsis of the resolution first achieved in The Four Zoas: "O holy Generation [Image] of regeneration!" (7.65).
VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

My study of The Four Zoas began with an examination of its textual problems. A knowledge of the physical manuscript was considered an essential preliminary to interpretation, since the poem's internal sequence occasionally remains problematical, and neither an original fair copy nor a final authorized poem can be recovered. But as near as can be determined, the original Vala differs from the final version in two ways: its starkness, with relatively few symbolic names or historical allusions, replaced by a series of aria-like laments and dreams; and its absence of explicit Christian motifs. Rather than brand Blake's revisions as ipso facto anomalous, I suggested that the poem exists on two simultaneous levels: the fallen world of the Zoas, or time, and the unfallen universe of Albion's original context, or eternity. Blake's "Spaces" are deliberate transitional gaps cutting through our habitual mode of reading, ultimately opening the cesura through which the Apocalypse originates. I examined the two versions of Night VII, concluding that both must be organic to the text, particularly since Blake never discarded either one or cancelled it with the
full-page strokes he often used. I pointed to the danger of relegating interpretive difficulties to presumed textual flaws, and suggested that dramatic voice narrative, dream techniques, psychic internalization with its flow of autochthonous images, and a deliberate modulation of linear sequence could better explain the poem's 'inconsistencies.' I chose to use Erdman's text because it recovers many deleted passages and reproduces Blake's own punctuation and spelling; but I disagreed that Night VIIB should be placed in an appendix.

Chapter II surveyed critical estimates of The Four Zoas. It was seen that critics from Ellis & Yeats onward regard the poem as a qualified failure, primarily because it never seems to coalesce its two variants, Vala versus The Four Zoas. Since the latter consists mainly of Blake's revised Christianity, most critics assert that Blake abandoned the poem in favour of his later two epics, which share the same preoccupation. I objected to this view, pointing out that the multiple levels contained in the poem recur in several other of Blake's works and are structurally integral to The Four Zoas, rising out of the narrative rather than superimposed upon it. I proposed that we should look rather to the literary tradition of the dream-vision poem as providing the model for Blake's epic. The most promising critical
change toward a positive reading from the critics I surveyed comes from recognition of The Four Zoas' use of dramatic voice, psychomachia, a deliberate absence of referential meaning, and a nonsequential time scheme. But the emergence of a positive Apocalypse from eight negative Nights is almost uniformly criticized as a flaw. I maintained that this misconception rises from not reading Blake's epic closely enough on its own terms as a radically experimental work possessing its own unique heartbeat (as Emily Dickinson said every poem has), and that Night IX in particular must be given close consideration. We must allow the poem to speak for itself.

Chapter III attempted to assess how the literary tradition of the dream-vision poem influenced and was modified by The Four Zoas. I considered only material with which Blake was familiar (Langland being a possible exception) and utilized with sophisticated skill in his own dream-vision poem: Chaucer's The Boke of the Duchesse, The House of Fame and translation of Roman de la Rose, Langland's Piers Plowman, Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress and Milton's Paradise Lost. Each of these works was discovered to contain remarkable parallels or generic influences to Blake's poem. Blake's central dreamer, Albion, is prefigured by a sleeper behind each dream-work we considered, who contains and is contained by his dream.
The interplay between the two levels of dream and wakefulness was seen to lead directly into epistemological motifs. This dialogue is conveyed through vivid concrete imagery, for abstractions cannot exist in a dream unless personified, and operates entirely through dramatic conflict, making it ideally suited for the epic. I argued that the apparent inconclusiveness of The Four Zoas results from deliberate modelings upon the structural devices of the literary dream: abrupt conflation of personae, multiple perspectives dissolving in flux, fluid tenses subsuming past and future into a mercurial present, contraction and expansion, and dreams-within-dreams. The jagged quality of Blake's epic is intentional, for it describes the process of thought itself, not a finished artistic product. In each of the authors I considered, the figure of a Dreamer appears who remains too long in his dream and thereby becomes trapped, inverting the dream into a false reality. The locus of each work conjoins a pastoral vision with a diabolical nightmare, two polarities between which the Dreamer alternates. The process whereby the dream-garden transforms into the nightmare of history constitutes an implicit analysis of man's Fall from innocence. I observed that since the dream-vision poem is intra-psychic, it is not restricted to explicit realism or even allegory but rather takes a wide variety of
surrealistic manifestations which recur in The Four Zoas. The Dreamer does not recognize at first that the phantasma which he encounters are reflections of his own mind; but if he accepts rather than attempts to vanquish them, the underlying unity of the dream emerges—vividly illustrated by Los' embrace of his Spectre. By confronting the personae in his dream, the Dreamer's own stasis is confirmed, and he is enabled to wake by achieving regeneration through his dream. This means the end of the dream and hence of the poem, but heralds his waking to a reborn world, which Blake links to the resurrection.

However, I noted that each dream-vision poem prior to Blake utilizes the figure of an authoritative guide who interprets the dream—conspicuously absent in Blake's epic until Night IX, when Albion achieves this role. Finally, each of the authors we examined was seen to step partially into his dream but quickly withdraw to a safe vantage point of premature wakefulness where the dream could be molded into poetic form. In contrast, The Four Zoas fully enters the dream, refusing to emerge until it transcends itself through its own imagery into a truly wakeful state.

It was my further contention that The Four Zoas was influenced by Paradise Lost to such an extent that its correct reading requires Milton's epic to be kept
in mind as a substructure. I traced these influences through five basic categories, as follows. (1) Milton's blindness becomes his methodology, and is transferred to the Nights of Blake's poem. His radical inversion of sight as inward-directed parallels Los' ability to uncover imaginative "Worlds within" (VIIA.86.7). A series of dreams throughout Paradise Lost links to the rest of the narrative in such a way that the entire poem takes on many qualities of the traditional dream-vision. Eve's precognitive dream of her temptation replicates in synoptic form what unravels in slow motion four books later. But whereas Milton separates Eve's dream from its reflections backward to Satan's insurrection and forward to her actual sin, Blake fuses Albion's dream with his Fall to form the nucleus of his epic. (2) Milton develops two simultaneous perspectives of Eternity and time, a structure duplicated by The Four Zoas. (3) Milton's angelology accounts for many of the perceptual qualities of the Zoas. (4) The locale of both epics correlates in their treatment of hell, chaos, war in heaven, ruined Eden and the post-lapsarian world; Blake coalesces these to form a single Fall. And (5) The Four Zoas conflates the various personae of Paradise Lost. Each Zoa is an amalgam of Adam and Eve and of the fallen angels; Urizen subsumes Jehovah and Satan, in this way liberating Milton's epic.
In Chapter IV I assessed *The Four Zoas'* indebtedness to the Graveyard school of eighteenth-century English poetry. Blake's illustrations for Gray's *'Elegy Written in a Country Graveyard'*,' Blair's *The Grave* and Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs* were examined, proving to hold significant linkages to Blake's epic. Blake inverts the Graveyard poets' vivid mortuary images to depict existence rather than death, connecting it to dreams. Their emphasis upon religious dread, decay and the need to emerge from sleep was seen to lead directly into apocalyptic poetry. Each Graveyard work climaxes in an Apocalypse, a structure replicated by *The Four Zoas*. Therefore my study also included Blake's Last Judgment designs, particularly in relation to Night IX.

In the second part of Chapter IV I conducted a comparative study between Young's *Night Thoughts* and *The Four Zoas*, utilizing Blake's series of watercolours now in the British Museum. Explicit correspondences were discovered between each poem's themes, style and methodology. I traced parallels between their respective treatment of sleep, dream, night, sun and moon, time and eternity, the homology of womb/tomb, the Fall of man, and the Apocalypse with its striking common usage of rural imagery and the vintage. Each poet's style was seen to share a similar intensity, epic scope, depth imagery, subjectivity,
epigrammaticism, paradox, animism and brilliant surrealistic effects. I concluded that Blake's two years' work on Night Thoughts greatly stimulated his own epic, and that his illustrations exploited the rapidly evolving ideas behind Vala to satirize yet at the same time amplify Young's poem.

My reading of The Four Zoas in Chapter V examined three major motifs: the Fall, regeneration and Apocalypse. I proposed that the first eight Nights extend thematically throughout Night IX, and, conversely, the Apocalypse exists as an implicit dimension in the earlier Nights. Just as the Fall is instantaneous, so is the Apocalypse; the arena separating them remains the agonizing lie of time. The original Fall was seen to occur structurally in two ways. First, each Zoa and Emanation are locked in a face-to-face confrontation which causes them to shatter, re-enacting Albion's central Fall through the alienation of male and female, variations upon the "torments of Love & Jealousy," and the emergence of a Spectre. Second, Blake conducts a series of flashbacks whereby each character's dream-world disintegrates, casting him back through time to his true persona; in this way, Albion's Fall is gradually reconstructed. The final account is never definitively isolated because it is pre-historic and pre-individualistic. Yet it turns out to occur in Beulah through an unhealthy extension of sexual joy:
hence the tactical necessity for each Zoa to re-enter Beulah through his Emanation.

In addition to perpetuating a single Fall, each Zoa was regarded as locked into a conundrum which he must solve to become regenerated. I considered Tharmas' conundrum as instinctual cohesion/chaos, Luvah's as love/hate, Urizen's as rational stability/flux, and Los' as prophetic vision/immoderation (rage). I traced Enion's regeneration through three stages: mating with the Spectre of Tharmas, childbirth and maternal love, and learning compassion on the Margins of Nonentity. Enion's four laments were discovered to have important structural implications to the poem. I followed Los' regeneration through four distinct transitions, each having analogies to a historical literary period and to Blake's own development as a poet: childhood, adolescence, the binding of Urizen, and mature prophetic stature. Since his final breakthrough depends upon resolving his difficulties with Enitharmon, I traced Enitharmon's regeneration through the image of her breaking heart-gates. Night VIII was seen to climax the Fall by crystallizing each Zoa into Blake's own time, creating antinomian tension which forces the Apocalypse to emerge.

My third motif, the Apocalypse, emphasized the importance of Los tearing down the sun and moon at the beginning
of Night IX. I examined Orc's positive role in destroying social injustice as preparatory to a deeper internalization which follows. The single most important factor in reaching Apocalypse was regarded as the awakening of Albion, who is the only authentic character in the poem. The final absorption of each Zoa, Emanation and all nature back into Albion was interpreted as a distinct progression occurring in stages. These stages include a vocal summons, waking, full self-knowledge of error, recanting that error, forgiveness, consummation, and acceptance of a seemingly desperate present which suddenly inverts back to pre-lapsarian eternity, childhood, nakedness or true sexuality, and the purification of each Zoa's sensory content. My commentary analyzed the Garden of Vala episode at length to illustrate how it is integral both to its immediate context and as a microcosm of the poem. I attempted to indicate how the basic metaphors of the Apocalypse recur throughout the first eight Nights, where each exists as a parody of its essence. A radical shift of perspective represented by Albion's unity, volition and "Science of Wrath" transforms the Fall into a creative leap, such as we see in Blake's final manuscript illustration of a woman poised on the earth like a pirouetting dancer. Finally, I observed that Blake alternates the two planes of spectrous suffering and joy faster as Night IX progresses. The poem never resolves human suffering but only the
suffering of one man, Albion. In this sense, The Four Zoas has two endings: one reverting back to the beginning where each Zoa reiterates his own cyclic Fall, and the forward gazing final 31 lines where the unified Zoas move confidently into Blake's later work.

Chapter VI assessed the relationship of The Four Zoas to Blake's other work, with particular emphasis upon his early poems. My basic argument was that The Four Zoas is both synthesizing yet formative, fusing the despair of the previous poems with an apocalyptic breakthrough continued into the later two epics. I maintained that Blake's oeuvre interlinks sequentially, though each poem must be considered first as a separate unity. My commentary discovered The Four Zoas develops from and extends seven broad categories in relation to Blake's other work, as follows. (1) Tropes from Blake's previous work achieve their full resonance first in The Four Zoas, to be amplified in the later epics. (2) The personae of the early work, particularly the Lambeth books, emerge fully interrelated first in the epic. (3) The locus of Blake's wasteland in his epic is prefigured in the earlier work. (4) Blake's treatment of dreams begins as early as Poetical Sketches, developing complexity until it culminates in his full-scale dream-vision. Each poem steps outward to focus upon the reasons why it has failed to achieve an Apocalypse. In this manner
each poem becomes more internalized or mythic, entering the pure dream matrix of The Four Zoas. (5) Jealousy, the central psychological dimension explored in The Four Zoas, develops from Blake's earlier work, particularly Songs of Experience. (6) Each of Blake's poems prior to his epic attempts to reach an Apocalypse but fails because it is conducted primarily in terms of historical revolution, and requires an epic format to explore individual regeneration. (7) The revisions which caused Vala to mutate, embodying an Eternal level integrating with the temporal, occur as a contrapuntal structure throughout all of Blake's work, and therefore should not be rejected out of hand as a flaw.

I illustrated these seven points by examining each poem in detail. My study emphasized that the conclusions of Blake's poems are important, often transforming into a radically different style which leads into the subsequent poem. This transformation was seen to link to Blake's gradual abandonment of the short lyric for the cadential line. I noted that several of Blake's other works possess an ambiguous or fluid text, and therefore The Four Zoas is not unique in this respect but rather the most extreme embodiment of the necessity for variant sequences. The children of Songs of Innocence and the visions of Thel and Oothoon were suggested as providing the model upon which The Four Zoas reconstructs unfallen
man, but with the difference that experience must be traversed if it is to achieve a higher state. I examined the Lambeth books as containing the implicit outline of Blake's epic; 'borrowed passages' in The Four Zoas were seen to link to their original context either to enrich or revise it. A cross-fertilization occurs: the Lambeth books support the foundation for the epic, and in turn the epic liberates the earlier personae trapped in their limited perspectives. I proposed that Milton and Jerusalem have three primary objectives: to deepen Blake's analysis of sexual strife; to develop a comprehensive psychic cartography upon the world established by the first epic; and to recreate the Apocalypse of Night IX in more esthetic and personal terms, expanding its millennium. Blake now partakes of the role of Albion, either as a persona in his own poem or through the figure of Los, while Albion himself conflates the fallen Zoas and must achieve consummation with his own Emanation, Jerusalem. But whereas in The Four Zoas Blake struggles primarily to achieve his own resolution, thereafter he attempts to save all mankind through the act of entering the poem. Thus the process of writing The Four Zoas itself caused its own resolution.
It is tempting to correlate Blake's personal transformation from despair to joy with the initial Vala's dramatic emergence into the Apocalypse. The stylistic and conceptual breakthrough which Night IX embodies lends itself to such an hypothesis. But equally the breakthrough could have occurred as a separate visionary experience or experiences (such as recorded in Milton, or the 23 Oct. 1804 letter referring to Blake's visit to the Truchsessian Gallery), in Los' domestic reconciliation with Enitharmon and his Spectre in Night VIIA, or in simply delineating the Fall to such a lucid degree that it becomes translucent, revealing an Apocalypse always present. In any case, Blake's poetic achievement is what matters most. The fact that each individual reader may reproduce Blake's regeneration through any of the above emphases may indicate that they are interconnected and equally valid. Just as Blake himself emerges from his original epic into renewed creative vision, so the reader is compelled toward a renovating vision of literature and life. The catalysts generated by The Four Zoas were so potent they transcend their original draft, just as the Apocalypse blossoms from the darkness of the previous Nights. Their expanding implications demanded new poetry and
new explorations. *Vala* created this radical epic form, and it outgrew her, as children do. The poem succeeded precisely because it was left behind. I feel certain that Blake refused to definitively finalize or engrave his first epic—and apart from the practical difficulties, this would have been natural to do, for it exists in a perfectly coherent state as it now stands—simply for this reason: it held the record of his own Fall and Apocalypse, and he wished it to remain a private testament of his most personal struggle. In the last analysis, it is one of the most magnificent achievements in literature. The *Four Zoas* is a poem which nests in the core of the sun, suckles void as a mother's milk, converses with the dead and with the luminous tonalities of animals and plants and minerals, traverses the underworld of dreams to emerge clothed in nakedness, translates the sensual language of the unfallen body, and summons Angels and Demons to sleep together in the words and leave their single imprint.
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The undersigned declares that this thesis has been composed by himself, and that all research is his own.